"In to Stay"
Selling Three-Strip Technicolor and Fashion in the 1930s and 1940s

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Abstract
This study investigates the relationship between the fashion and film industries during the classical era between the early 1930s and mid-1940s. It focuses on the three-strip Technicolor process as the binding force upon which these two industries relied in collaborations during that time and looks at technical challenges the new process presented to productions in terms of wardrobe design. Another issue explored is fashion’s role in the actual development of the three-strip process, allowing the Technicolor laboratory to improve the technology through a popular, marketable, and readily available product. Using Technicolor as a point of focus and continuity, this dissertation explores different types of productions filmed in the three-strip process, including shorts and newswreels, industrial and sponsored films, as well as feature-length films.

Drawing from a wide range of archival material and a highly interdisciplinary approach, the study delves into the relationship between the fashion and film industries. While the ties between them have been strong since the advent of cinema, previous research has approached their relationship almost exclusively from a promotional perspective. Technicolor’s multifaceted affiliation with the fashion industry, however, warrants a more thorough investigation and this dissertation takes steps towards expanding that research area through a series of case studies.

The first chapter provides an overview of color film methods that preceded three-strip Technicolor and outlines some of the key discourses involving color and realism. Chapter 2 addresses the intertwined relationship between the fashion and film industries through a study of fashion department in the popular fan magazine Photoplay and also examines the use of color in that publication. Chapter 3 investigates the fashion short as a vehicle for demonstrating the commercial potential of the three-strip process. It does this by examining the making and promotion of Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecast series. This chapter also looks at the specific work carried out by Technicolor’s Color Control Department. Chapter 4 explores industrial and sponsored films in three-strip Technicolor for the fashion industry with an emphasis on those made to promote rayon. The second half of this chapter examines the 1930/1940 seasons of the New York World’s Fair, focusing on the presence there of Technicolor and the American rayon industry. Lastly, Chapter 5 looks at three-strip Technicolor in feature-length films by considering its collaborations with the fashion industry that took place in the classical era. This chapter also examines design considerations made regarding wardrobe in those films.

The study concludes that color’s versatility made it incredibly influential on consumer culture and was key to ventures between the fashion and film industries in this era and beyond. It also ultimately demonstrates the ways in which color, fashion, and film intersected and complemented one another in terms of their aesthetic and commercial commonalities.

Keywords: Three-strip Technicolor; fashion, color, consumerism, promotion, fashion history, rayon, film history, American history.

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Introduction

In June 1935, Pioneer Pictures released the first full-length film made in Technicolor’s new three-strip process, *Becky Sharp* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1935). Upon the film’s release, Kathryn Dougherty, *Photoplay*’s Editor-in-Chief, predicted:

…a certain delectable shade of blue is going to sweep the country.
And like so many new fashions we have the screen to thank for it.
This shade happens to typify the second great change that has taken
place in motion pictures in the past eight years. Indeed, “Becky
Sharp blue” is symbolic of the revolution that has overtaken us prac-
tically overnight.¹

While not explicitly named in her column, “the first great change” in motion picture technology to which Dougherty obliquely refers was the introduction of sound. The “second great change” of which Dougherty writes was the successful employment of color on the screen, brought forth by the three-strip process developed by Technicolor. According to Dougherty, Technicolor’s technicians had, in *Becky Sharp*, at last “mastered every color from scarlet to
green.”² That Dougherty identifies “Becky Sharp blue” as being indicative of
Technicolor’s progress is significant. According to Dougherty, this particular shade—featured in the costumes worn by actress Miriam Hopkins, the film’s
eponymous lead—stood to “enchant” audiences viewing “her blonde loveli-
ness in perfect harmony with her clothes,” thereby setting an educational ex-
ample for audiences. That Dougherty predicted the same shade would “sweep
the country” is also significant, in that it forecasts a potentially larger cultural
impact on what women might desire in the consumption of garments, post-
viewing. Furthermore, her sentiments turn our attention to the improvements
made with the technology itself. The three-strip Technicolor process involved
adding a blue film record to the red and green components of Technicolor’s
two-color process, and was a crucial step forward in the development of color
motion pictures. By focusing on the “delectable shade of blue” present in Hop-
kins’s costumes, Dougherty in turn praised the process’s successful represen-
tation of the hue on-screen—one that had been especially difficult for Techni-
color to accurately depict up until that point.

² Ibid.
Dougherty’s comments function as a productive point of departure for this study, as they provide a multi-layered discourse of what I aim to explore in the following chapters: the multifaceted relationship between the fashion and film industries during the classical era, focusing on three-strip Technicolor as a binding force upon which these two industries relied in joint promotional efforts between the early 1930s and mid-1940s.

The historical analysis presented in this dissertation is guided by three correlative questions: 1) How did the introduction of the three-strip Technicolor process challenge productions in terms of mise-en-scène? The Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation sought to incrementally improve its product from its inception in 1915, with the ultimate goal of presenting the full color spectrum on-screen. The transition from filming in black and white to color presented costume and production designers with challenging technical issues, particularly within the wardrobe department. In order to more fully examine the hurdles presented by three-strip Technicolor, this dissertation considers the role of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation’s Color Control Department, exploring the efforts made by the company to maintain authority in the pre-production and production phases. While this dissertation considers elements such as set design, lighting, and makeup, the majority of explorations surrounding mise-en-scène in the following chapters concern wardrobe. 2) In what way was color used as the key selling factor in the collaborations between Technicolor titles and the American fashion industry? This question encourages a discussion about color from a multidimensional perspective, including the ways in which Technicolor was used in films with an emphasis on fashion, not only in fashion shorts and feature-length films, but also within films promoting American industry and innovation. Second, color will be examined as the logical thread linking Technicolor films with color trends in fashion, expanding the possibilities for color-specific promotions between select Technicolor titles and the American fashion industry. While the relationship between the fashion and film industries was firmly in place by the 1920s, the introduction of three-strip Technicolor in 1932 allowed the visual element of color to become a new promotional link. 3) How did the American fashion and film industries collaborate to promote new Technicolor processes? The

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3 The Classical Hollywood era, as defined by David Bordwell, Janet Steiger, and Kristin Thompson, spans the years 1917 to the early 1960s, with Bordwell, Thompson, and Steiger designating 1917 as the year in which historians can begin to see the consolidation of Hollywood’s characteristic approach to visual storytelling. The See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

4 Discourse as used in this study is defined in its more general sense or, as Eirik Frisvold Hanssen terms it, “referring to texts or utterances placed in a specific context, as dialogue, exchange of ideas, and how the meanings of these texts or utterances are defined by industrial cultural and historical context,” in Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, *Early Discourses on Colour and Cinema. Origins, Functions, Meanings* (PhD dissertation, Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2006): 10.
Technicolor laboratory consistently worked to improve the three-strip process after its release and this dissertation positions fashion and collaborations with the fashion industry as logical means through which Technicolor could demonstrate the capabilities of the new technology. This question also allows for a discussion surrounding fashion as a significant factor in establishing the Technicolor brand via displays of color vibrancy and accuracy. Furthermore, we will see how technological progress within the American rayon industry coincided with the introduction of three-strip Technicolor, encouraging mutually beneficial collaborations between the fashion and film industries in a variety of innovative promotions targeting female consumers.

The remainder of this introductory chapter provides an overview of previous research on color’s multifarious relationship with film, fashion, and consumption in the 1930s, as well as the methodological considerations that contributed to this study. As an extension of this discussion, a section of this introduction is devoted to evaluating the material consulted during the research process, as well as considerations taken regarding their accessibility and current preservation status. Lastly, I will present an overview of the chapters in this dissertation.

The Aesthetic and Promotional Functions of Color in the American Fashion and Film Industries in the 1930s: Considerations on Previous Research

Color and Modernism: An Overview

The premiere issue of Fortune magazine included an article commenting upon the “suddenly kaleidoscopic world” in which America found itself in 1930, remarking, “In this post-war period of broken precedents, of weakened traditions, it is not surprising that the old chromatic inhibitions should be shaken off and that the American people should gratify its instinct for color by bathing itself in a torrent of brilliant hues.” 5 While color has long been a crucial element in industries concerned with style, aesthetics, design, and taste, the late 1920s and early 1930s mark a significant time period in the use of color in both American design and, more broadly speaking, American culture. In the early 1930s, businesses heightened the amount of research that went into the technical perfection of color—obtaining it, reproducing it, and transmitting it. 6 Consequently, a greater variety of products, amusements, advertising, and

publicity employed color to increase public demand, encouraging new opportunities for cross-industrial collaborations. The Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation was one such company that dedicated a great amount of time, financial resources, and effort to perfecting its product in order to introduce the most advanced and accurate color process for the screen to date.

This project’s timeframe was chosen after considering several factors, including not only the goal of remaining within a reasonable timeframe, but also to focus on the undeniably lasting impact of the explosion of color in consumer culture in the 1920s which has lasted well beyond the scope of this project. While this project considers material spanning the years 1925 to 1948—falling into a period described by Miriam Hansen as “the modernity of mass production, mass consumption, and mass annihilation”—it situates itself in the mid-1930s to early 1940s. These years mark notable degrees of experimentation and exploitation in the history of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation as well as the American fashion industry in their efforts towards creating affordable, alternative materials and developing standards regarding color.

The relationship between modernism and color has been the subject of research in several disciplines, including art history, philosophy, fashion studies, and film studies. In her theorizations on modernism, Miriam Hansen proposes that vernacular modernism “encompasses a whole range of cultural and artistic practices that register, respond to, and reflect upon processes of modernization and the experience of modernity, including a paradigmatic transformation of the conditions under which art is produced, transmitted, and consumed.” In this sense, the history of color motion picture processes may be viewed as modernist because they exploited the new possibilities of production, perception, and cultural engagement brought about by the modern world and transformed by the spirit of modernity at different times. In his research on the earliest days of color in cinema, Joshua Yumibe has demonstrated that the increase of color goods and media, as well as the development of color theory, had a fundamental impact on modernism, with color functioning in

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10 Ibid., 243.
various ways: “from dispensing sensual pleasure and/or edification to disciplining bodies through pleasure, stirring up passions, and instigating consumption.”\footnote{11}

Tom Gunning is among the scholars who have discussed the “invasion of color into all areas of daily life” at the turn of the century, which constituted “one of the key perceptual transformations of modernity.”\footnote{12} As Yumibe and others have pointed out, the development of more economical synthetic dyes, inks, and print processes in Europe during the mid-nineteenth century was indispensable for manufacturers in producing various goods, contributing to a more color-saturated mass culture.\footnote{13} Most significant to these developments was Mauveine, a synthetic aniline dye, was produced in 1856 by William Henry Perkin, and followed by the production of synthetic dyes “by the ton,” leading to a revolution in the dye industry.\footnote{14} The textile industry was key to the growth of aniline dyes, with their extensive use in clothing and furniture, and the similarities between aniline dyes used in film and textile technology has been noted in previous research.\footnote{15} Aniline dyes were indeed used in the film industry, not only in their usage of dying film, but also in various products surrounding the cinema, including photographs, lantern slides, and postcards. Yumibe encourages an understanding that “differing spheres of modernity—from physiological studies of color to the emerging mass culture to modernist art—were reciprocally related” and this becomes particularly evi-


\footnote{14} William Henry Perkin, “Proceedings of Societies: Chemical Society, Thursday, May 16, 1861,” \textit{The Chemical News and Journal of Industrial Science} 3, no. 79 (June 8, 1861), 347.

\footnote{15} Not only did the stencil process have connections to the sewing machine, but the cellulose nitrate used in film stock had a base of cotton and, like textiles, was dyed with aniline dyes. See Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, “Symptoms of Desire: Colour, Costume, and Commodities in Fashion Newsreels of the 1910s and 1920s,” \textit{Film History: An International Journal} 21, no. 2 (July 2009): 108; Yumibe, \textit{Moving Color}, 25–26; and Michelle Tolini Finamore, “Color Before Technicolor: Colorized Fashion Films of the Silent Era,” in \textit{Colors in Fashion}, eds. Jonathan Westerman Faiers and Mary Bulgarella (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 112.
dent when considering the development and subsequent employment of aniline dyes. The introduction of these synthetic dyes impacted the fashion and film industries in various yet similar ways, expanding the role of science and technology into the sphere of consumption and marketing.

Historians of consumer culture have demonstrated how an increasing number of manufacturers and firms began to capitalize on color in various commodities in the early twentieth century, including photographs, magazine illustrations, catalogs, advertising, electric lights, buildings, and interiors. While color became a more common factor in everyday life, as well as an element of brand identity and consumer choice, the turn of the twentieth century witnessed changes in class taste concerning color. Gunning recognizes the shift in taste during this period, with bright, garish colors becoming increasingly associated with the working class and lower-middle class, while the middle class, upper-middle class, and upper-class exhibited more restraint in their use of color.

From the nineteenth century and beyond, tastemakers in Europe and America associated loud color combinations with people belonging to the poor and working classes and identified pale hues with good taste and refinement. David Batchelor explains his idea of “chromophobia,” or a fear of corruption or contamination with color, in the following passage:

Colour has been the object of extreme prejudice in Western culture…It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that, in the West, since Antiquity, colour has been systematically marginalized, reviled, diminished, and degraded. Generations of philosophers, artists, art historians and cultural theorists…have kept this prejudice alive, warm, fed and groomed. As with all prejudices, its manifest form…masks a fear: a fear of contamination and corruption by something that is unknown or appears unknowable. This loathing of colour, this fear of corruption through colour, needs a name: chromophobia.

In addition to its wider applications to color in Western culture, Batchelor’s concept is particularly useful to this study, contributing to an overall understanding of the production and reception of color cinema, with the technology

16 Yumibe, Moving Color, 18.
praised for the visual pleasures it provided while simultaneously chided for causing eye strain in spectators through the 1930s.

Chromophobia, as Batchelor presents it, also informs Technicolor’s approach to color design in the 1930s and beyond. “Color Consciousness,” an essay written by Natalie Kalmus, the director of Technicolor’s Color Control Department, is a useful document to ascertain Technicolor’s approach to color not only in terms of wardrobe and set design, but also an overall philosophy distributed by the company beginning in the mid-1930s. Kalmus’s text included warnings against a “super-abundance” of color, recommending neutrals to provide a “foil for color” and an overall push towards intrinsic color harmony among viewers. Written in 1935, “Color Consciousness” reflects a shift in Technicolor’s principles on color that coincided with the release of the three-strip process, as well as a shift in development of the Color Control Department. I will return to Kalmus’s text consistently throughout the dissertation to stress the company’s emphasis on the education value of color in Technicolor films, as well as the considerations Technicolor made towards color design—considerations that were in line with prevailing aesthetics, but that often conflicted with attitudes held by directors, costume designers, and production designers.

The 19th century work of French chemist Michel-Eugène Chevreul is also particularly useful in this context in its explorations of color harmony, a central concept in considerations of color as applied to wardrobe, makeup, and Technicolor’s overall aesthetic. *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colours, and Their Applications to the Arts* is the result of his research on color contrasts and color harmony based on visual perception. Working with a variety of natural dyes, Chevreul learned to modify formulas to achieve certain color effects. He recognized the susceptibility of the eye and how it could be manipulated into perceiving colors via optical illusion in product design rather than tinkering with dye formulas in order to achieve particular shades.

In his work, Chevreul specified certain types of color combinations resulting in “agreeable impressions” which were grounded in either closely related or strongly contrasting colors. While his books were translated to English in the 1850s, his ideas and theories continued to impact design well beyond the Victorian era in their application to women’s dress. As Charlotte Nicklas displays, fashion writers often recommended Chevreul’s ideas regarding fashion to their women audiences throughout the mid-nineteenth century, applying his ideas on “harmony” and “contrast” to dress combinations. Notably,

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22 Ibid.
Chevreul offered specific advice regarding color selections, cautioning placing red flowers against complexions of similar shades, noting “Rose-red cannot be put in contrast with even the rosiest complexions without causing them to lose some of their freshness. Rose-red, maroon and light crimson have the serious disadvantage of rendering the complexion more or less green.”

To this end, Chevreul’s ideas can easily be applied to filmmaking, particularly the work of Natalie Kalmus and Technicolor’s Color Control Department as explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

Researching Technicolor and Claims of “Natural Color”

Discourses on color in film have existed almost since the birth of cinema itself. Color in film, however, has proven to be a problematic area in research amongst theorists, historians, and practitioners given its unstable, transitory nature, which is probably why, as Brian Price suggests, color has received less scholarly attention than other aspects of film style. As historian Nicholas Hiley points out, many of the issues surrounding research on color films stem from the prints themselves, arguing that the preservation and restoration of early color films is a matter of “historical taste.” Hiley contends that it is the archivist’s “own sense of history” that limits our ability to view “an exact recreation of the original,” posing problems to conducting research about these titles. In terms of archival practice, time and budget constraints—and, perhaps more notably, shifting views regarding restoration methods—have left us with a large number of titles that were originally filmed in photographic color processes, only to be duplicated on more stable black and white film stocks. It is perhaps the accumulation of these factors that has contributed to

26 Nicholas Hiley in ‘Disorderly Order’, 22.
27 Ibid.
the popular assumption that color film did not enter the public sphere until the advent of three-strip Technicolor in the 1930s. Despite this, research on color in cinema has seen consistent output from various perspectives in recent years, including: examinations of color’s technical development; considerations of the aesthetics and design properties of color in film; and research on color preservation and restoration.²⁹ Furthermore, the number of conferences and workshops on color film organized in recent years evidences a strong interest in the topic, encouraging not only further research, but also collaborations with neighboring areas of study, including fashion studies.

The 1930s are popularly characterized as Hollywood’s “golden age” and critically characterized as an era of “full equilibrium,” with Thomas Schatz contending this period saw “a delicate balance” among “various social, industrial, technological, economic, and aesthetic forces.”³⁰ The late 1930s witnessed the wider adoption and acceptance of Technicolor in the film industry in general while introducing new possibilities for collaborations between the fashion and film industries to take place, with color as the binding promotional factor. The 1930s and 1940s are crucial decades in Technicolor’s history, witnessing not only the introduction of the three-strip process, but also intensive marketing on the company’s behalf, with greater emphasis placed on establishing the new process as the most accurate, vibrant representation of color on-screen. As several scholars have maintained, while three-strip Technicolor was the dominant color system from 1935 until the early 1950s, the company battled resistance from the film industry at large, overcoming a series of economic, technological, and aesthetic hurdles.³¹ Outside of developments from the Technicolor labs, the 1930s witnessed an energetic discourse surrounding color, not only in regards to color film, but also in its ability to sell a variety of products. While the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation contributed films, articles, advertisements, and promotional material to the conversation regarding the importance and potential influence of color in the 1930s, the


openness with which color was debated and examined during the decade is notable.

Despite the significance of this period in Technicolor’s history, there have been few explorations dedicated to a specific time period in the history of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation and even fewer which explore the company’s promotional activities. Indeed, most research covering the company’s history does so in broad strokes, leaving ample space for more narrow research into Technicolor’s background and business dealings. Nevertheless, past research is essential for understanding Technicolor’s importance, not only as a commercial product but also as a significant part of American film history. Fred Basten, for instance, produced an ambitious book chronicling the Technicolor laboratory from its formation in 1915 to its operations in the late 1970s. Basten’s book utilizes an impressive collection of material from the trade press, corporate papers, and production histories, creating a survey of Technicolor’s operations and, more generally, of production trends during the selected period. Richard Neupert’s article “Technicolor and Hollywood: Exercising Color Restraint” delves into Technicolor’s aesthetics, narrowing in on the work performed by Natalie Kalmus and her troupe of color consultants. Similarly, Gorham Kindem’s article, “Hollywood’s Conversion to Color: The Technological, Economic and Aesthetic Factors,” addresses the various economic, technological, and aesthetic barriers Technicolor struggled to overcome since the company’s inception, with Kindem designating the 1960s as the decade of industry and public acceptance of color representation.

With a focus on Technicolor’s commercial and aesthetic goals, the research put forth by Neupert and Kindem has proved invaluable to this project, with my thesis taking a more microscopic approach to those two key components of the company’s history.

More recently, James Layton and David Pierce have focused on a narrower period in Technicolor’s history, investigating the developmental years of the company, 1915 to 1935. Layton and Pierce reconstruct this era using an impressive array of previously unpublished material, with a majority of material coming from the 2010 donation Technicolor made to the George Eastman Museum. Aside from their impressive unearthing of revealing archival material, Layton and Pierce also shed light on the oft-undocumented engineers and filmmakers who were crucial in the company’s early years, and offers a much-needed comprehensive catalogue of films made using the two-color process, including features, shorts, and advertising and industrial films. While the research published by Basten, Kindem, Layton, and Pierce explores some of the economic and technical hurdles facing the company, as well as aspects of

32 Basten, Glorious Technicolor.
33 Neupert, 1990.
34 Kindem, 1979.
Technicolor’s approach to color design, their explorations are, for the most part, general and invite further research into specific areas of Technicolor’s operation.

There are, however, exceptions to these overarching studies. Scott Higgins has provided us with extensive research on the establishment of Technicolor’s aesthetics during the 1930s, identifying this period as a decade in which the company developed and articulated the “Technicolor look,” a more restrained demonstration of color that influenced an aesthetic reflected not only in later films, but in our visual culture at large. 36 Through a careful examination of select films, including *Becky Sharp*, the first feature film made in the three-strip process, Higgins examines the three successive “modes” through which Technicolor established its product in Hollywood: demonstration, restraint, and integration. 37 More recently, Kia Afra’s exploration of *Becky Sharp* suggests a less inclusive interpretation of the modes identified by Higgins, with Afra arguing “that aspects from all three modes [were] already present in the earliest three-color films.” 38 Afra further stresses the productivity in taking a microhistorical approach, where exploring production histories versus formalist analyses can be more conducive to understanding a film’s stylistic attributes. 39 The microhistorical approach suggested by Afra is useful to this study, allowing for a deeper understanding not only of a particular film’s aesthetics, but also of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation itself. In addition to exploring specific production histories, my thesis considers a heretofore unexplored area of Technicolor’s business dealings: its extensive collaborations with the American fashion industry.

Steve Neale and Edward Buscombe have each taken an ideological approach to Technicolor’s path towards becoming a standard in Hollywood productions. Neale explores the potential contradiction of color on film: that it at once contains realism and fantasy, therefore “disrupting or detracting from the very realism it is otherwise held to inscribe.” 40 The indexicality of color is a continuous discourse throughout research on the technological development of color motion picture processes. Eirik Frisvold Hanssen addresses these opposing discourses throughout research on the technological development of color motion picture processes. Hanssen argues “indexicality, the manifestation of ‘natural’ color, also functions as an attraction and novelty” in presentations of photographic systems like Kinemacolor.

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37 Higgins, *Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow*.
39 Ibid., 101.
recognizing elements of actuality and spectacle in travelogues and newsreels. Neale’s arguments, however, focus on later developments in color, particularly Technicolor, with its 1930s advertising slogan “Technicolor is natural color” simultaneously battling the limitations of the technology with discourses concerning artifice. Striving for the most accurate representation of the full color spectrum on-screen was Technicolor’s goal from the beginning, although this was not achieved until the introduction of the three-strip process.

In addition to its selling power, a sensitivity to color has long been associated with women, and there are several noteworthy works that explore this relationship. Sarah Street has discussed the “suitable” placement of Natalie Kalmus as a color advisor, grounded in notions about women and color that were formed long before Kalmus took her position as the head of the Color Control Department. John Gage, for example, has articulated that a feeling for color is “a particularly female province,” and Joshua Yumibe has discussed the relationship between women, color, and film. Yumibe points out that early film colorists were typically female not only due to the repetitive task of coloring, but also to the “gendering” of color, as women were considered “more susceptible” to the affective, sensual impact of color. Eirik Frisvold Hanssen also illuminates the relationship between women audiences and advertising films, especially fashion newsreels, a topic which will receive further discussion in Chapter 3. As the significance of consuming fashionable goods is considered, so too is the idea that shopping was a feminine activity, perpetuated since the late-eighteenth century in newspaper editorials—as well as in advertising and marketing campaigns directed to prospective female customers. The notion that color and consumption were established “female provinces” was firmly in place by the 1920s, the earliest time period considered in this project. In considering color, consumption, and the film industry, this dissertation positions color as part of the film industry’s long-standing practice of tying in with manufacturers. The Technicolor Corporation proved to be keenly aware of the powerful link between women audiences, stars, color, and fashion, and as the forthcoming chapters demonstrate, the company was involved in several successful collaborations with the American fashion industry.

41 Hanssen, Early Discourses on Colour and Cinema, 181.
42 Sarah Street, “A Suitable Job for a Woman: Color and the Work of Natalie Kalmus,” in Doing Women’s Film History: Reframing Cinemas, Past and Future, eds. Christine Gledhill, Julia Knight (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015).
44 Yumibe, Moving Color, 45-46, 115.
45 Hanssen, “Symptoms of Desire”.

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With the advent of the mass production of clothing and other commodities, and the democratization of fashion, businesses coordinated methods of distribution and sales, thereby strengthening American consumer culture. The emergence of new technologies ensured the reproducibility of clothing, contributing to what William Leach terms the democratization of desire. Here, democratization means everybody would have “equal rights to desire the same goods.” Indeed, the increase in reproduction allowed consumers belonging to the middle-class to more easily mimic the dress of and trends followed by the upper class. Shopping was transformed from a functional activity into a form of leisure. Similarly, Kathy Peiss argues that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries cinema and fashion became increasingly prevalent in visual culture, contributing to the creation of new consumer identities while assisting in the facilitation of the visual dynamics in class. Peiss’s study on the leisure activities of young working women in turn-of-the-century New York demonstrates that the rising standard of living and compulsory public education provided women with unprecedented free time, enabling them to enter the work force and participate more freely in activities like cinema-going and shopping.

The confluence of new modes of consumption coincides with the rise of cinema and the department store, and with the transformation of capitalism from production-based to consumption-based in the United States. Capitalism commodified desire and contributed to the development of what William Leach terms a “commercial aesthetic” which influenced, among other things, how one dressed. Looking forward, we see businesses embracing new styles of merchandising, display, packaging, and advertising to insure and enlarge consumer demand. The consumption-based market economy, prompted by increasingly curated visual displays of commodities and the illusions they represented, encouraged the consumption of fashion and clothing among all classes. As Leach also contends, color was an important ingredient in the development of the “commercial aesthetic,” drawing attention to Artemas Ward, an American advertising executive, who encouraged business to use color be-

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49 As William Leach explains in his introduction to *Land of Desire*, “commercial aesthetic” refers to the role the exchange and circulation of money and commodities had on the foundation of “aesthetic life” and “moral sensibility,” as well as a shift in focus from civic to religious duty to individual pleasure and fulfillment. Color in particular played an important role in the American “aesthetic life,” as Leach demonstrates. In Leach, *Land of Desire*, 3, 5, 9.
cause it demonstrated “strikingly the grain, the texture, the juiciness, the savori-ness” of items for sale, arguing color created a “desire for the goods displayed.”

Roland Marchand, too, has touched upon the notion that color was a quality that increased the value of style and fashions in the eye of the consumer, arguing that introducing more diverse color choices was a successful way of creating a sense of style. Marchand, like Leach, considers the manner in which department store windows utilized color to present an “attainable world of unlimited pleasure.” As this dissertation argues, in the late 1930s Technicolor would employ similar arguments for using color film processes not only to promote feature-length titles through color tie-ins with American department stores, but also demonstrate the textures and true colors of fashions and fabrics in particular. As Chapter 5 of this dissertation discusses, department store windows provided a particularly effective space in which mutually advantageous, cross-industrial promotions could take place between fashion and Technicolor titles via the element of color.

Women’s magazines in the United States from the mid-19th century onwards included lively discussions involving color, with authors describing not only fashionable colors but also guiding readers towards attractive combinations of color in dress. The 1920s in particular saw the rise of what Roland Marchand has termed “the mystique of the ensemble,” an advertising strategy that emphasized coordinated, standardized colors and styles in interior design and fashion. Conversations surrounding color—particularly in regards to its correct use—continued throughout the twentieth century in popular women’s fashion magazines like Women’s Wear Daily (WWD) and Vogue, which devoted features to color trends and, in the case of WWD, featured clever color promotions in department stores.

The “Color Calendar,” as WWD called it, is just one example of the American fashion industry guiding women towards “correct” color combinations. In The Color Revolution, Regina Lee Blaszczyk focuses on design practices following the Second Industrial Revolution, examining the relationship between American industry and the creative professionals offering guidance and advice within the realm of color. Blaszczyk dedicates her attention to the Textile Color Card Association of the United States (TCCA), whose members

50 Artemas Ward quoted in Leach, Land of Desire, 45 (emphasis in original).
51 Marchand, Advertising the American Dream, chapter 5.
53 Marchand, Advertising the American Dream, 132–140. See also Blaszczyk The Color Revolution, 163–190.
worked to standardize colors and forecast color trends in American fashion largely based on what appeared in Parisian openings—balancing “American taste with French style”—ultimately establishing the TCCA as the leading American color authority.54

In addition to the TCCA, there is another significant organization that warrants mention in discussions surrounding the American fashion industry in the 1930s and the development of an American sense of style. Founded in 1931, the Fashion Group Incorporated (since renamed the Fashion Group International) is a non-commercial organization of professionals (originally all women) with three major goals: 1) to dignify and clarify the position of members whose business it is to interpret and promote good taste and good fashion; 2) to help people desirous of entering the fashion field; 3) to assist schools and colleges interested in interpreting and teaching the essential requirements in the field of fashion.55 In her research on the development of the New York fashion industry in the 30s and 40s, Rebecca Arnold underscores the contributions of the Fashion Group during the Great Depression, arguing that they strove to “assert the importance of fashion within the wider social, cultural, and economic sphere,” providing a forum in which insiders could discuss the ramifications of the Depression on the fashion industry.56

As this dissertation demonstrates, Technicolor films, fan magazines, and color tie-ins played important roles in guiding American women towards fashionable color trends—as well as in educating them on color harmony and the development of a “color consciousness.” As Michelle Tolini Finamore contends, from the beginning of the nickelodeon era, a gradual shift took place, from films emphasizing the production of fashion, to those emphasizing the consumption of fashion.57 As demonstrated in Chapter 2, this shift was significant not only for audiences, but also for studio costume designers, with the 1930s ushering in a period of stardom for practitioners in which costume designers regularly provided tips regarding style and color to popular fan magazines like Photoplay and Motion Picture Magazine.

A more thorough investigation of costume designers and fashion designers falls outside the scope of this project, but delineating between the two may be helpful, considering the sale of reproductions of costumes worn by stars on-screen plays a significant role in this dissertation. While the priorities of the costume designer and fashion designer differ in terms of artistry, economics, and purpose, prior investigations into this area of study demonstrate a blurring...
of boundaries between these professions. Costume designer and historian Deborah Nadoolman Landis, however, takes a more pointed stance on the professional and artistic differentiations between costume designer and fashion designer, maintaining the costume designer’s role lies in creating the character’s “who”—whether this involves designing specific garments for that character, or purchasing ready-to-wear garments. As Landis also points out, however, the main function of costume design is to include creations that will “disappear”; will blend in so seamlessly with the production design that they become logical extensions of the characters. This brings up a significant differentiation between costume and fashion as discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation versus Chapters 3 and 4. The lines, however, again become blurred when costumes are designed with the intention of reinterpreting them for ready-to-wear items to be made available for consumption, giving costumes an off-screen life, as well.

Color, naturally, is one of many deliberate choices made by the costume designer and wardrobe department when selecting fabrics or outfits for use on-screen. As color is considered as an element of wardrobe, makeup, and production design, this dissertation examines a particular part of the costume or ensemble presented on-screen that has not received much attention in past research. Since the fashion and film industries approached color as a promotional link in the 1930s and 1940s, this project necessarily reviews the tangled considerations that took place in these cross-industry interactions to allow such promotions to succeed.

Considering the Intersections of Color, Film, Fashion, and Consumption

In her seminal article concerning the limitless nature of researching film history, Barbara Klinger argues, “questions of histories must extend beyond the industry to engage in a potentially vast system of interconnections, from the film and its immediate industrial context to social and historical developments.” Klinger advocates research that forays into “intertextual zones” in order “to depict further formative influences on the film text itself, sets of expectations or desires audience members may have brought to their filmgoing from their participation in other adjacent spheres, and modes of evaluation other media may have brought to bear on the cinema at specific times.”

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60 Barbara Klinger, “Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies,” Screen 38, no. 2 (1997): 111.
61 Ibid., 117.
Klinger identifies the fashion industry as one such intertextual zone that has the potential to illuminate film scholarship. With its rich history of tie-ins for promoting and publicizing films, as well as its influence over the visual aspects of a film, Klinger identifies fashion as a “crucial step” in lending historical meaning to a film.62 When applied to historical research within the realm of fashion studies, Klinger’s recommendations are equally productive. As a work that takes a firmly interdisciplinary stance, this dissertation considers not only the way fashion provides historical meaning to a film, but, conversely, the ways in which a film lends historical meaning to fashion.

In the last decades, a scholarly interest in the relationship between film, fashion, and costume has become increasingly prominent, particularly within the interrelated stages of a film’s journey: production; promotion; and consumption, especially by female audiences.63 As Sarah Berry has observed, the tendency to analyze film texts and cinematic conventions in isolation rather than intertextually has dissipated significantly, particularly in relation to issues of consumer culture and fashion.64 The historical contemporaneity shared by cinema and fashion (as products of modernity) has given rise to several commonalities between the two fields. The industries of film and fashion have developed side by side, creating and confirming many affinities that have contributed to their respective modes of expression and circulation.65

Color’s relationship to advertising and consumer behavior is a rich link through which explorations between fashion and film may be conducted in such an intertextual approach, and is one that is largely absent from historical explorations of these complementary industries. Observations surrounding color film and its association with consumption and consumer goods have, on the other hand, received some attention from scholars, with Eirik Frisvold Hanssen arguing that, “this has to do with colour being anchored in objects (which can be bought or desired), films explicitly thematizing commodities and industrial products, as well as with notions of colour and affect, linked to the superficial, the feminine, and thus a bodily culture of consumption and sensationalism.”66 Joshua Yumibe, too, has recognized color film for its ability to be promoted as an artistic attraction, “sensually edifying for the spectator

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62 Ibid., 117–118.
64 Berry, Screen Style
66 Hanssen, Early Discourses on Colour and Cinema, 183.
both in abstract and narrative cinema,” exhibiting a strong potential “to influence audiences unobtrusively…in advertisements promoting consumption.”

In order to gain an understanding of previous research in these areas, as well as expound upon them, this thesis draws from a diverse range of studies, particularly those concentrating on the history of Technicolor; the intersections of fashion and film studies; color’s design and promotional properties; and issues of consumption in the twentieth century. The interdisciplinary studies explored in this section of the introduction adopt different approaches to the aforementioned themes, thus inviting a widening of previous historical explorations carried out by scholars within these research areas. With these studies in mind, this dissertation explores the intersection of three-strip Technicolor, fashion, color, and consumption, an area has heretofore been largely overlooked in previous research.

While scholarly work considering the overlapping interests of color, films, and fashion has been increasing in recent years, discussions on the relationship between color film and fashion or costume—particularly concerning color’s promotional value—have received far less attention, particularly beyond the period of applied color methods. Gunning and Hanssen are among the scholars who have commented on the more abstract associations between color, early cinema, and fashion. Hanssen has recognized the regularity with which images of clothes were colored by hand or stencil in early cinema, noting that clothing “sometimes [constituted] the only elements in the film” in color, as well as color’s notable presence “in the multitude of fashion films” from this era, both in its photographic and non-photographic forms. Gunning, too, has commented on this phenomenon, asserting that applied color is often associated “with something external, ephemeral, inconstant,” such as flowers and, more often than not, clothing; and Elizabeth Wilson maintains that one of the key features of fashion is its “rapid and continual changing of styles.” In this sense, clothing and color warrant an examination as particularly modern sensibilities, attuned with Charles Baudelaire’s ideas of modernity, meaning “the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent.”

Hanssen’s historicization of color fashion newsreels contextualizes the fashion newsreels of the 1910s and 1920s as derivations of earlier, attractions-

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based film in terms of spectacle and integration of narrative. With this article, Hanssen provides an excellent overview of color’s role as an attraction as well as a commercial asset, drawing several important comparisons between technologies shared by applied color film methods and fashion. Caroline Evans also offers an exploration of fashion as presented in film with her tracing of fashion shows in the silent period. Evans argues for the relationship between the French fashion show and the cinema of attractions, with the desire to capture fashion in motion firmly in place in the late 1800s. The films of Georges Méliès play a poignant role in Evans’s research, drawing comparisons between the filmmaker’s “tricks” of making women “appear, multiply, transform, and disappear at breakneck pace” and early fashion shows in which women appeared, disappeared, and reappeared in a variety of outfits. Notably, clothing and costume often appeared in color in Méliès’s films, via applied methods. Evans and, more recently, Michelle Tolini Finamore consider the Kinemacolor newsreels featuring the extravagant, experimental creations of French couturier Paul Poiret, with Evans approaching them not only from an aesthetic perspective but also their commercial potential, mixing the popular medium of film with high-end consumer tastes.

Hanssen, Evans, and Finamore focus on color as an attraction in early fashion films and newsreels, and the notion of the spectacle naturally lends itself to the research presented in the forthcoming chapters, but I propose that the relationship between color and spectacle in the era of three-strip Technicolor is quite different than in the 1910s and 1920s. Gunning has described color in early cinema as a “superadded feature” in pursuit of a “sensual intensity” rather than realism. The relationship between three-strip Technicolor and color was decidedly more complex, with Scott Higgins pointing out the three-strip process in particular attempted to simultaneously “exploit and overcome” these associations. As the following chapters demonstrate, Technicolor presented the three-strip process as the most lifelike representation of the entire color spectrum on-screen. In advertising the accuracy of the process, however, I argue that it was exactly the faithful reproduction of everyday colors that became the selling factor, the attraction, and a rich link between the fashion and film industries.

This project also considers a different kind of desire and attraction—the producer’s pleasure, or “the pleasure of capital,” as Richard Abel refers to it. Abel references Pathé’s virtual monopoly of the stenciling process between 1905 until 1910, arguing historians “shouldn’t overlook [Pathé’s] pleasure in acquiring capital by exploiting colour.” Looking to Technicolor’s business

76 Higgins, Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow, 2.
77 Richard Abel, in ‘Disorderly Order’, 35.
practices in the 1930s, “the pleasure of capital” becomes one of the central motivators behind their expansion and eventual takeover of Hollywood. This idea, coupled with William Leach’s concept of a “commercial aesthetic,” informs one of the key catalysts behind the enduring collaborations between the American fashion and film industries.

Here, the Fashion Group warrants further mention. Since its inception in 1931, the Group has exhibited a keen desire to deepen the understanding of consumer trends from an economic and psychological standpoint, especially during a period of severe economic depression. From the beginning, the Group has organized luncheons in which prominent individuals from the fields of fashion, business, economics, publishing, and related industries were invited to present lectures on a variety of industry-related topics. In the 1930s, many of these lectures reflected the economic and political culture, but the Group also invited representatives from American textile manufacturers and department stores to give presentations on the subject of color that included “Commercial Use of Color” and “Emotional Appeal of Color.” As Rebecca Arnold and Finamore have also noted, popular culture’s impact on fashion in terms of trends and retail and merchandising possibilities were subjects of interest to the Group who, in March 1933, invited Adelia Bird, Photoplay’s fashion editor, and Ruth Katsch, a representative from Macy’s Cinema Shop, to discuss Hollywood’s influence on fashion. The New York Times reported on this meeting, noting that Bird and Katsch “[spoke] in favor of Hollywood as a style influence,” while fashion designer Elizabeth Hawes argued “that she did not feel that any real fundamental style had yet been promoted by the movie colony,” but that Hollywood’s influence on fashion was ultimately limited to promotion. A more detailed discussion of this meeting takes place in Chapter 2. This meeting is significant to Chapter 2, which demonstrates that the film industry disseminated the discourse that Hollywood exhibited a strong impact on fashion trends since the 1910s—an influence the fashion industry was decidedly delayed in acknowledging publicly. With the American fashion industry turning to related industries to collaborate and increase merchandising opportunities, the introduction of three-strip Technicolor presented a unique moment for collaboration with the film industry.

While such collaborations have been explored from perspectives largely concerned with the promotion and consumption of fashion, color has been mostly neglected in such discussions. Victoria Jackson and Bregt Lameris have, however, recently demonstrated that color has proven to be a

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rich element of design to be utilized in tie-ins to popular culture such as cinema, musicals, fashion and makeup. In their research on the evolution of Alice Red and Phantom Blue, Jackson and Lameris have produced a study exploring two fashionable colors whose meaning underwent changes after being attached to products associated with *Irene* (1926) and *Phantom of the Opera* (1925), two feature-length films made in the Technicolor no. 2 process, the first subtractive two-color process. Jackson and Lameris’s research takes great strides towards exploring the relationship between color, consumption, fashion, and film, and provides an excellent foundation for deeper research, as demonstrated in this dissertation’s further unpacking of the collaborations between Technicolor titles and the fashion industry from a commercial angle.

Education has consistently been a key aim in the history of the fashion and film industries, and there are examples of organizations in both industries disseminating texts (both visual and written) and organizing lectures with an eye on enlightening the public about developments within their respective areas or promoting specific products. As I (and others) demonstrate, there are many examples of the fashion and film industries collaborating in hopes of educating consumers, to various degrees. Anne Hollander, for example, argues that movement became a necessary attribute of femininity and fashionability in the first twenty years of the twentieth century, since “movies taught everyone how ways of walking and dancing, of using the hands and moving the head and shoulders, could be incorporated into the conscious ways of wearing clothes.” Motion was a key element of the cinema of attractions, continuing the Vaudeville and burlesque-inspired performance styles and stage presentation in early cinema. In her assessment, Hollander recognizes the educational value of motion in cinema in that it provided women with examples of how to move in their clothes.

Color, too, has been recognized for its educational properties, and the manner in which the fashion and film industries exploited the educational benefits offered by color for commercial potential will be explored in the subsequent chapters. In his explorations of Louis Prang, a nineteenth-century chromolithographer and educator, Joshua Yumibe establishes Prang as a key figure in promoting art education for children, encouraging “the refinement of students’ color sensibility in order to ready children sensually of the inundation of color in the modern world.” With Prang’s company selling materials pertaining to

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color theory, as well as art materials including chalk, crayon, and watercolors, his interest in color education included a self-serving commercial element. Yumibe analyzes Prang’s writings on color theory, arguing that it “articulates a somatic understanding of color’s influence, delineating how, through its sensual appeal, color can move the mind and emotions of the spectator,” targeting Prang’s utilization of color as an “aesthetic-sensorial conception” not only as “one of the more persistent tropes of modernism,” but also as a way “to uplift the nation.”84

Yumibe finds commonalities between Prang’s approach to color education and Loyd Jones’s who, in the late 1920s, identified an underdeveloped “language of color” in the public. Jones, who worked at the Kodak Research Laboratories in upstate New York, developed applied and natural color systems for still and moving Kodak film stocks. According to Yumibe, Jones saw great value in the color cinema’s potential to refine the public’s understanding of color, identifying its ability to uplift the public’s “color consciousness” through a modern education of the senses.”85 The notion of learning and cultivating a “color consciousness” was a key discourse distributed by Technicolor in the mid-1930s, largely thanks to the work of Natalie Kalmus and her increasing public presence, which earns further attention in subsequent chapters.

Methodological Considerations

In 1939 Margaret Thorp published the sociological study America at the Movies, in which she deemphasized the film text and stressed issues of industry and consumption, particularly from a fashion perspective. Thorp’s research on the film industry’s privileged position to influence and anticipate public taste is derived not from analyzing fashion as portrayed in specific titles, but from the archives of an impressive list of studios, libraries, and museums.86 For Thorp, conducting research on cinema involved studying audiences, practices within the film industry, and the relationships between films and consumers. This dissertation follows a similar research approach, following what Eric Smoodin refers to as “the possibility for film scholarship without films; for using primary materials other than films themselves for examining the history of the cinema in the United States.”87 Douglas Gomery and Robert C. Allen call for a similar approach, upholding the belief that viewing films is not the

85 Ibid., 141–146.
most appropriate research method in all cases. The stance taken by Gomery and Allen encouraged the consideration of documentary evidence rather than of the films themselves. While specific titles are explored and discussed throughout the following chapters, they will be approached from a perspective more concerned with their production, promotion, and consumption in terms of color. Rather than approaching the productions from an analytical perspective, they are considered in terms of how they justified the use of the three-strip process and how its use functioned in a mutually beneficial promotional manner.

In terms of exploring color film, Edward Branigan’s four methodological approaches that address different ways of seeing the history of color are useful to this study. Branigan designates these four perspectives as: the adventure history; the technological historiography; the industrial historical approach; and the ideological historiography. A technological history of color, according to Branigan, could allow for an examination of the interaction between color and other technologies and techniques. This dissertation considers not only the technological improvements presented by three-strip Technicolor, but also issues including the commercial exploitation of Technicolor and its wider impact on American industry, particularly within the realm of American fashion. The collaboration between the film and fashion industries presents us with commercial achievement dependent on the successful marketing of color. The diffusion phase of technological development is significant to this study, as it takes into consideration how other industries—the fashion industry, in this case—reacted to the success of Technicolor.

To that end, this study recognizes Edward Buscombe’s research on the development of color cinematography in which he rejects technological determinism, the viewing of technology as “a separate sphere, developing independently of society, following its own autonomous logic, and then having ‘effects’ on society.” Here, Buscombe’s argument that aesthetic and ideological factors are integral to the creation of or need for new technologies like color film are useful. Furthermore, he argues for the following three ideological imperatives justifying the need for color, all of which will be explored throughout this dissertation: realism; a celebration of science; and an ideology of luxury or spectacle. The economic factors contributing to the development of Technicolor and the collaborations with the fashion industry that took place with Technicolor titles or, in some rare instances, the Technicolor name itself, are central to the research presented in the following chapters. Realism, or the attempt to portray it on-screen, was a particularly important ideological issue.

in the development of all color motion picture processes, with underlying questions of indexicality at play as well.

This study was guided by a few basic assumptions: that a consumer economy was a structural aspect of both the fashion and media industries by the late 1920s; that female markets for cinema and consumer fashion in the 1930s were perceived as largely overlapping; and that there was a recognition of mutual interest between the American film and fashion industries in the cultivation of these consumers. The relationship between consumer fashion and Hollywood cinema cannot be reduced to a simple, economy-driven schema; it is structured by the interplay of marketing strategies, promotional and entertainment texts, and fashion trends. The multifarious negotiations concerning color film and consumer culture presented in this dissertation evidence the complex quilt of issues at stake in culture at large. In an effort to approach this topic with this understanding in mind, Raymond Williams’s three intertwined strands for analyzing historical change present a useful method with which to consider the multilayered discussion taking place here. Williams’s categories of the “emergent,” the “residual,” and the “dominant” are useful concepts to provide a framework for understanding the complex, dynamic ways in which cultures operate as they continuously attempt to establish stability and balance in the face of change.91

David Bordwell also advocates for a consideration of the wider range of factors contributing to the production of a film and to its aesthetics, which include: artistic intentions, craft guidelines, institutional constraints, and social influences.92 Similarly, in his research on the transition to sound technology in Hollywood between 1926 and 1934, James Lastra proposes a reimagining of institutional shifts between social structures, principles, and developing technologies.93 Building on Lastra’s view, Patrick Keating encourages researchers “to imagine the Hollywood institutions as a set of loosely overlapping circles”—a Venn diagram of shared and competing interests.94 Continuing down that path, this dissertation utilizes what John Belton describes as a “nonlinear determination” approach to historiography, which resists traditional narrative tendencies, emphasizing instead the fragmented phenomena of technological histories.95 Belton’s call for an alternative historiography of socioeconomic, cultural, technological, and ideological determinants

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requires the recognition of the status of individual events and their relation to larger themes, acquiescing to their “multilithic” properties.

This project’s roots may also be found in reception theory, and specifically in the theory’s application to the study of historiography, Harold Marcuse’s “reception history.” Marcuse’s interpretation of reception theory is particularly relevant to this project as it traces the evolution of a specific technology and attempts to interpret its impact on its participants—consumers, in this case. Furthermore, the research strives to make those events meaningful for the present and past alike. The aim here is to approach the historical reception of the films, primarily by studying relevant intertexts and critical and promotional discourses. The decision to focus on the promotion of specific Technicolor titles stems from Jonathan Gray’s idea that it is necessary for effective promotions of films to create a text of their own, leading the promotion to become a text itself, which may then be studied. More specifically, it becomes a “paratext,” a textual element studied in a more microscopic manner, but which can be related to a larger text, thereby offering its own meanings. From a non-viewer’s perspective, the promotions are worthwhile to study outside of their relationship to the film because in these cases, they are a text unto themselves. Studying the meanings created by paratexts, and also the branding of the text, allows us to study the life of that text away from the film in a more meaningful manner.

This dissertation is structured around close analyses of four case studies. In his exploration of Technicolor’s aesthetics in the 1930s, Scott Higgins supports his study of the technological history of Technicolor by analyzing specific moments in specific film titles, obtained through case studies. Of his method Higgins argues:

While film scholars have provided technological surveys and broad-spectrum discussions of style, we have generally shied away from the problems of how color is handled moment by moment, what specific duties it serves with respect to narrative, and how it helps shape visual perception. Only case studies, supported by extensive research, can afford the opportunity to examine precise, complex details of color style and to consider how color develops across films in their entirety.

96 According to Harold Marcuse, reception history is “the history of the meanings that have been imputed to historical events. It traces the different ways in which participants, observers, historians and other retrospective interpreters have attempted to make sense of events both as they unfolded and over time since then, to make those events meaningful for the present in which they lived and live.”


98 Higgins, Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow, 19.
The case study is useful to this dissertation because it brings us to an understanding of a complex issue, extending and strengthening what is already known through previous research. The selected case studies presented here represent both key aesthetic and technological turning points in the 1930s and the norms of more routine productions.

In her exploration of color’s infiltration into American industry in the 1930s, Regina Lee Blaszczyk dubs this period “the color revolution.” I argue, however, that this process was not so much a “revolution” as it was an “evolution,” the onset of which can be traced to the early 19th century. The revolution of which Blaszczyk speaks was largely set in motion by the Industrial Revolution, the invention and subsequent improvement of synthetic dyes, and chromolithographic prints and packaging. Referring to the adoption process as a “revolution” has the potential to abet misrepresentation, however, implying a certain “overnight success” narrative. This dissertation approaches the transition from black and white to color film as an evolution, with the transition proving to be more of a slow adoption than a quick one. As John Belton points out, “One of the most intriguing aspects” of predictions regarding the wider adoption of color film “is the relatively lengthy span of time that it took for it to occur...the history of motion picture colour is a history of failures, setbacks, detours and delays.” This was especially true for the Technicolor Motion Picture Company and this dissertation approaches that history with Belton’s argument in mind.

Sources

Overview of Material

I have drawn on various primary resources over the course of the research process, with findings extracted from a wide range of archival material, including: production files, fan mail, correspondence, internal newsletters, fan magazines, trade journals, fashion magazines, contracts, surviving film footage, photographs, costume sketches, wardrobe plots, fabric swatches, patterns, local newspapers, press books, press releases, theater programs, advertisements, and other promotional material. In other instances, eBay proved a rich resource through which I was able to hunt down and purchase otherwise unavailable primary material including magazines, posters, stills, and newspapers. Autobiographies of individuals who worked for the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, as well as employees of Hollywood studios, were also consulted. Most of the archival material required to complete this dissertation has been collected from an assortment of research institutions across the

100 Blaszczyk, The Color Revolution.
United States, with the bulk of pertinent collections housed at the George Eastman Museum (formerly George Eastman House), the Margaret Herrick Library, and the New York Public Library. Material was also collected from several digital repositories and the considerations made regarding this process will be discussed in greater detail later in this introductory chapter.

There is much written on the function, purpose, and value archives hold for researchers, with archivist and educator Terry Eastwood arguing that “archives provide material for the extension of human memory.” Looking at archives in a wider context, they aid in the transferring of information—and thereby sustain our collective memory—from one generation to the next. While bureaucratic obstacles facing archives and libraries—including budgets, curation, navigation, and accountability—lie outside the scope of this dissertation, they certainly influenced the research process, particularly in terms of the accessibility of material stewarded by the institutions consulted over the course of the project. As stated earlier, while this dissertation examines the production behind specific titles from a color perspective, it does not attempt to analyze the films in terms of the use of color or plot. Primary resources housed in various archives, libraries, and museums became the natural material to use to reconstruct the largely unexplored topic presented in the forthcoming chapters.

With a focus on Technicolor, it was clear from the beginning that access to material regarding the company’s history, as well as to productions made in the Technicolor processes would be crucial to this project. Archival holdings related to the history of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, as well as Technicolor productions, were collected from several institutions, with the most extensive amount of material held at the George Eastman Museum and the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Recognized as being two leading institutions for film historians and enthusiasts alike, the numerous and diverse collections I scoured at the Eastman Museum and the Herrick were, naturally, rich sources for material concerning costumes and costume designers, including original sketches, wardrobe plots, inter-office memos, clippings, correspondence, and bulletins. Furthermore, matters concerning fashion promotions and tie-ins were essential to my research and I successfully located material concerning such activities at the Eastman Museum and, particularly, the Herrick. That this material was available at institutions dedicated towards preserving the history and development of the motion picture industry as an art form and an industry is a testament to the interdisciplinary approach that is central to archival mission statements, collection management strategies, and acquisition policies. With many archives subscribing to the More Product, Less Process (MPLP) approach for expediting collections processing, item level description has become less

common in the last decade. With the MPLP method encouraging processing archivists to describe “materials sufficiently for use,” the researcher requesting material from an institution’s catalog must consequently be open to some surprises.103 Naturally, the interpretation of this material varies depending on the aims of the research and the questions that are unique to individual projects. While researching this project, I was confronted with the realities of the MPLP method, in addition to the usual issues surrounding budgets and priorities in processing collections.

Gifted to the George Eastman Museum in 2009, the Technicolor Corporate Archive contains notebooks, research files, drawings, and an extensive amount of correspondence, inter-company memos, and clippings. The material in the corporate collection not only provided insight into productions, but also developments made regarding the two-color and three-strip Technicolor processes and the obstacles technicians and scientists faced in the company’s quest of acceptance and integration in Hollywood. To further my understanding of Technicolor’s carefully crafted image in the late 1930s and early 1940s, I turned to the Richard and Ronay Menschel Library at the George Eastman Museum which houses a sizeable collection of the newsletter Technicolor News & Views. This monthly newsletter was published by the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation and distributed both internally and to personnel at major Hollywood studios and published content including: news about the company; messages from Herbert T. Kalmus, the company’s president and co-founder; articles solicited by Technicolor that were written by screenwriters, production designers, and costume designers regarding the positive ways in which the three-strip Technicolor process shaped their craft; and an amalgamation of favorable reviews of current features filmed in Technicolor. By and large, Technicolor News & Views provided excellent insight into the company’s efforts at shaping the industry’s—as well as the audience’s—opinion of Technicolor and its products.

The Natalie Kalmus papers held by the Margaret Herrick Library span the years 1929-1948, thus chronicling Natalie Kalmus’s entire time at Technicolor. These papers offer pertinent insight into Kalmus’s role as the head of the Color Control Department, the innerworkings of this significant department, and her theories of color harmonies which informed the design aesthetic of all Technicolor films made from 1935 onwards. In Sarah Street’s assessment of the collection, the material proves rewarding in terms of gaining an understanding of the public presentation and marketing of Technicolor at a specific time within the company’s history, particularly Kalmus’s place within that realm, as well as her overall position in women’s film history.104 In addition to allowing for a reconstruction of Kalmus’s role in the company, her


papers also provide rich insight into Technicolor productions made during her time at the company, with interoffice memos, crew calls, correspondence, fan mail, household bills, and fabric samples included among the material considered for this project.

In its coverage of industrial and advertising films, Chapter 4 looks to the 1939/1940 seasons of the New York World’s Fair to explore how the aesthetic and commercial interests between the fashion and film industries intersected and informed each other in that arena. The New York Public Library houses an impressive amount of material covering all aspects of the Fair. Some of the most helpful material in this collection includes information regarding the World of Fashion building constructed for the 1940 season, as well as a healthy amount of correspondence, press releases, and publicity material regarding the role of film at the Fair.

While the Technicolor Corporate Archive, the Natalie Kalmus papers, and the New York World’s Fair 1939/1940 Incorporated records were the three collections containing the most extensive amount of material in one location, supporting information and resources were collected from smaller—but equally important—collections housed in archives across the United States. As is often the case with archival research, collections encountered over the course of the research for this project were lacking in some areas, while being unexpectedly ample in others. Due to the more practical realities facing archives, including budget limitations, records management practices, and differing approaches to processing and cataloging material, files often contained content not described in the database, leading to many surprise findings that undoubtedly enriched my research trips.

Access to Films and Costumes: Advantages and Limitations

Regarding the film footage viewed while conducting research for this project, I was fortunate in that the two series on which I focus in Chapter 3, Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecast and McCall Colour Fashion News were available in near-entirety from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Film Archive and the George Eastman Museum, respectively. In the case of the Fashion Forecast series, however, I use the word “view” loosely. All eight films in the series are currently preserved on nitrate, making flatbed viewing of the films impossible. Luckily, I was allowed to inspect the reels at a winding bench, which provided valuable information regarding the impressive production design that was the series’s trademark, each film’s credits, as well as an overall impression of the color design with respect to wardrobe and set.

As the feature-length titles selected for the case studies in this dissertation were produced outside of the realm of the silent cinema era, viewing them in
their entirety was an uncomplicated process, with several of these titles available on DVD or streaming sites, including YouTube and Netflix.\textsuperscript{105} When researching earlier titles that are considered to be “lost films,” relevant information about them has been collected from various archival collections, including articles and reviews published in newspapers, fan magazines, and trade papers; scripts; film stills; production records; wardrobe inventories; and original costume sketches. Several film preservationists, directors, film historians, and art historians and theorists have discussed the fragile nature of color from various perspectives. A commonality among these discourses is a cautioning against approaching color from a viewer’s perspective given its unstable, transitory status. Joseph Albers has argued that color is “the most relative medium in art,” but that it “deceives continually.”\textsuperscript{106} The deception to which Albers refers is largely due to the imprecision of color memory and vocabulary. In his work on visual perception, Rudolph Arnheim points out the “false testimony” of reproductions of works of art in books and magazines, not to mention the difference between projections of transparencies versus the original artwork.\textsuperscript{107} Here, one could also apply Walter Benjamin’s argument for viewing history as a self-standing experience: “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was.’”\textsuperscript{108}

On a more practical level, the hurdles in preserving color in film are well-documented, with restorationist Ross Lipman positioning the restoration team as individuals in “a long string of ‘secondary authors’ interpreting the work, even as they seek to return it to its original form.”\textsuperscript{109} Similarly, Paolo Cherchi

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{105} It is estimated that roughly 80% of the prints made during the silent film era (lasting between 1894 and 1929) have, unfortunately, perished due to general neglect and disinterest in the films, survive only in fragmentary form, or, as James H. Billington from the Library of Congress notes, exist in copies of such poor quality “that is it almost impossible now to understand why they were often hailed as works of great artistic achievement by the audiences who first saw them. See Scott Simmon, \textit{More Treasures from American Film Archives, 1894-1931} DVD (San Francisco: National Film” Preservation Foundation, 2004), xii; James H. Billington, “Foreword” in David Pierce, \textit{The Survival of American Silent Feature Films: 1912–1929} (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources and the Library of Congress, 2013): vii; Michael Binder, \textit{A Light Affliction: a History of Film Preservation and Restoration} (Michael Binder: 2014).
Usai reminds us that “anything we can say about it comes from a contradictory meditation between memory and present visual experience,” arguing it is “now impossible to experience its actual rendering on the screen.” These issues were taken under serious consideration while conducting the research for this project, and are some of the contributing factors to this work’s dependence on supporting archival material. Hence, attempts to analyze color in the selected titles from the viewer’s perspective have been purposefully avoided, leading instead to a focus on color as an element of design (in its spectacular and problematic forms) and as a promotional device.

Archivists and scholars researching films from this era have recognized Technicolor prints from the 1930s and 1940s to be remarkably stable in terms of color, thanks to the higher quality dyes used in the laboratory as well as to the monochrome properties of the three individual negatives comprising the three-strip process increasing resistance to fading. According to image researcher Henry Wilhelm, “Under normal room-temperature storage conditions, the images of Technicolor dye-imbibition motion pictures will probably last for hundreds of years without perceptible changes in color balance, density, or stain level.” Optimistic as they are, Wilhelm’s comments reflect neither the storage conditions nor the provenance of all existing Technicolor prints. Although the notion of a film archive existed as early as 1898, the consensus among the many histories focusing on the earliest years of these institutions is that the establishment of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) in 1938 marked a turning point in this history, with a spike in worldwide membership in the 1960s and 1970s leading to the establishment of moving image archives around the world. While there are undoubtedly

Filmmuseum, 1996); Henry Wilhelm, The Permanence and Care of Color Photographs: Traditional and Digital Color Prints, Color Negatives, Slides, and Motion Pictures (Grinnell, IA: Preservation Publishing, 1993). Furthermore, The Timeline of Historical Film Colors, project developed and curated by Professor Barbara Flueckiger, has documented the fading and decay of color film, including Technicolor prints. See http://zauberklang.ch/filmcolors/ for clear examples of the problems original prints pose to researchers and restorationists.

113 In 1898 Polish cinematographer Boleslaw Matuszewski called for “the creation of national film archives that would identify, collect, describe, and preserve [film].” Matuszewski quoted in Penelope Houston, Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives (London: British Film Institute: 1994).
greater standards and concerns in place in the current film archivist’s landscape, conversations with and accounts written by practitioners evidence that the best practices regarding film preservation continue to evolve to this day. Furthermore, while the number of laudable restoration projects has increased over the years, restored prints available today are not without their own discrepancies and do not represent an entirely accurate reproduction of the original film. With few complete versions of prints in existence, it is not uncommon for practitioners to (innovatively) track down different versions and patch these segments together in an effort to make as complete a restoration as possible.115 While there have been efforts made towards guiding archives towards standardization, universal standards for documentation in such restorations do not exist, making it difficult for researchers and archivists alike to understand and examine such projects.116

Similarly, while the prospect of consulting costumes from some titles examined in this project was tempting, major issues regarding the accessibility and conservation status of these items was taken into consideration, particularly regarding fading. The greater hurdle encountered during my research, however, was in locating costumes or reproductions of costumes. As Deborah Nadoolman Landis has stated, one of the contributing factors to a lack of research concerning costume is the general neglect and disinterest expressed towards the original objects by studios.117 Similar to their view of film prints, studios did not necessarily see the benefit in preserving costumes in the past, resulting in the majority of original designs being discarded or recycled rather than preserved and displayed. While attitudes towards film prints and costumes are changing, past practices in the film industry continue to impact archivists and researchers today. Attempts to track down original costumes or their reproductions while researching this project often proved fruitless, with specific costumes missing from the collections of studio archives and private


116 In recent years, some archives, including the National Library of Norway, the British Film Institute, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences have made great strides towards introducing templates into their institutions that offer some guidelines on how archivists can best document their work. For examples of these guidelines, see “FIAF Technical Commission Preservation Best Practice;”; Richard Wright, “Preserving Moving Pictures and Sound,” (2012). For an overview of these efforts, as well as suggestions regarding standardizations, see Natalie Snoyman, “In Order to Form a More Perfect Union Catalog” (master’s thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2011).

collectors alike. In other instances, efforts to locate supporting archival material and/or garments yielded zero results, perhaps most notably in Chapter 2, with the example of the Modern Merchandising Bureau’s business dealings with *Photoplay* and R.H. Macy & Co. Indeed, garments and material relating to the tie-ins organized through Macy’s Cinema Fashion Shops were noticeably absent from the company’s archives, necessitating a greater reliance on other visual materials, including sketches, photographs, stills, illustrations, images in popular magazines, advertising, and moving images. Conducting “fashion scholarship without fashion,” then, was not only a considered methodological approach à la Smoodin and Gomery and Allen, but a more practical necessity. Several years ago, costume designer Patton Campbell helpfully discussed costume research in terms of three different areas: “verbal, visual, and actual.”  

Verbal materials—descriptions of costumes and accessories—may include oral histories or interviews with designers and other production employees, performance reviews that comment on costume design, and notation on photographs or other images. Visual materials—design sketches, photographs, stills, paintings, graphics, film, and video—are, according to librarian Diana King, some “of the most essential and desirable types of source material sought by both designers and historical researchers,” as well as some of the most widely dispersed resources.  

Despite issues surrounding the availability of costumes for reference, delving into a diverse range of primary materials, including original sketches, fan magazines, and newspapers, provided not only excellent visual references to garments discussed throughout the dissertation, but the content of these publications allowed as complete a reconstruction of these histories as possible.

The point here is not to disparage discrepancies between archival standards or the valiant work of conservators and restorationists, but to draw attention to some of the considerations taken when determining how to view and interpret materials over the course of this project. Despite the durability and objective beauty of select Technicolor prints from the period of time falling under this project’s timeframe, the practical considerations and reality of surviving prints and restorations clash with an approach in which I believed an analysis of the film’s color schemes could take place. Furthermore, as this project was more concerned with the impact of costumes outside of films—particularly promotional practices and technical considerations regarding color—I identified visual materials, rather than “actual” materials, as being more productive to this study.

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Trade Press, Local Newspapers, Fan Magazines, and Fashion Publications

Trade journals offered me a wealth of information on the contemporary exhibition market, with daily publications providing structure to ongoing developments within the film industry.\textsuperscript{120} Notable titles considered included \textit{The Film Daily}, \textit{Motion Picture Daily}, \textit{Showmen’s Trade Review}, \textit{Exhibitors Herald}, \textit{The Moving Picture World}, and \textit{Motion Picture News}. These publications were established as a resource for exhibitors, providing reviews of new films and offering advice regarding exhibition and production, oftentimes featuring sections devoted to a roundup of successful promotions carried out in American cities, large and small. As Jon Burrows contends, the trade press stands to provide researchers with a rich source of information regarding entrepreneurial trends, exhibition practices, audience composition and the attitudes of regulatory authorities.\textsuperscript{121} Trade journals were particularly useful to this study in their coverage of developments within the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, as well as their consistent reporting on successful and innovative fashion promotions made in conjunction with local department stores and clothing shops. Consulting multiple trade journals published on a daily basis provided reliable coverage regarding specific dates related to a film in terms of its production, as well as its release date. With reviews published in trade magazines proving all-encompassing in terms of genre, consulting these publications proved useful in observing trends in discourses used in regards to color motion picture processes and fashion over the decades.

Scholars like Richard Abel and Jan Olsson have stressed the usefulness of local and regional newspapers in aiding our understanding of the conditions and practices employed by the early film industry.\textsuperscript{122} Delving into daily newspapers from a diverse selection of American cities has proved helpful in reconstructing the promotion of titles explored in this dissertation, leading to a more complete representation of a film’s trajectory at the time. Surveying larger national papers such as the \textit{New York Times} and \textit{Los Angeles Times} provided excellent coverage of the American film industry’s activities in its most deeply-ingrained locales, whereas dailies distributed in smaller American cities proved insightful in terms of how these publications connected disparate communities, combining them into a modern mass public. Furthermore, daily newspapers were useful material in discerning the role of the exhibitor in the promotion process on a local level. To this end, daily papers have been

\textsuperscript{120} For a complete list of trade journals consulted for this project, see Bibliography.
useful in parsing together a film’s run, including information such as which titles it accompanied, in which cities it screened, confirmation of opening dates, as well as a film’s duration in a particular city. Furthermore, the fashion and style sections of American newspapers proved to be rich sources of content for this project, with department stores and local shops regularly running advertisements for fashion tie-ins with current films in that part of the paper. In terms of access, many local and major daily newspapers were available in extensive runs digitally through paid subscriptions, while others were consulted in libraries on microfilm.

As Richard Abel contends, newspapers “played a significant…role in shaping audiences’ ephemeral experience of moviegoing, their repeated encounters with the fantasy worlds of ‘movie land,’ and their attractions to certain stories and stars.” Similarly, fan magazines proved to be important resources while researching this project, providing insight into discourses surrounding Technicolor, key persons, fashion, and specific films. Fan magazines have been used in a number of excellent studies exploring the promotion of fashion in relation to the film industry, as well as their impact on female fans. Fan magazines were a brilliant venue for marketing various areas of the film industry (including productions and stars) to a more diverse group of readers, and consistently engaged readers in dialogues that continue to provide scholars with key texts in the history of fan discourse. With its wide circulation and consistent focus on fashion and technological developments within the film industry, Photoplay was a particularly rich source to examine in this project. Accessing Photoplay, among other fan magazines, was relatively straightforward, with many archives and libraries holding near-complete runs. Furthermore, Photoplay was available digitally through the Media History Digital Library, a project that will receive further attention in the following section. Attempts to locate company records for Photoplay proved fruitless, with pertinent information regarding hiring practices, subscription numbers, and editorial decisions remaining a question mark explored through informed conjecture, most noticeably in Chapter 2.

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123 Abel, Menus for Movieland, 3.
In order to construct a more complete picture of the discourse between color motion picture processes and the American fashion industry, American fashion publications were also consulted while researching this project. Close readings of *Women’s Wear Daily* (*WWD*) provided insight into the business side of the American fashion industry, the results of which could be gleaned from more mainstream American fashion magazines like *Harper’s Bazaar* and *Vogue*. When considered alongside a variety of trade journals from the entertainment industry, *WWD* provided a deep well of information regarding the collaborations between the fashion and film industries dating back to the 1910s, and especially the color promotions with Technicolor titles seen in the late 1930s that continued throughout the following decade. *Vogue* was an especially important resource for understanding several critical elements to this study, including: the American woman consumer; the impact of screen style on “high fashion” sensibilities; and the color trends that were deemed fashionable by respected purveyors of American style.

Considering the “Pleasures and Perils” of Digitized Content

While research trips to a variety of archives located in the United States have provided the majority of material utilized in my research, impressive digitization projects are also deserving of an acknowledgment. Some of the more notable repositories that I have consulted throughout the course of this project included: the Media History Digital Library (MHDL), Lantern (the associated search and visualization platform of the MHDL), Chronicling America, ProQuest, HathiTrust, Fulton History, newspaperarchive.com, the Google Newspaper Archive, the International Coalition on Newspapers (ICON), and the Internet Archive, among others. Furthermore, paid subscriptions to major daily newspapers, including the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, provided access to completely digitized and searchable content. The large-scale and ongoing digitization of archival material carried out by the aforementioned projects and publications allowed for the referencing of material over a wide variety of intermedial sources in an efficient, searchable manner. Naturally, references to and representations of color in fan magazines, trade journals, fashion magazines, and newspapers were important to this dissertation but, for various reasons, are not always included in their digitized formats. Certain digitization projects (particularly the MHDL) have made laudable attempts at retaining color information, but where that information was not available digitally, I turned to the original material if possible.

Digitized sources consulted throughout this project included trade journals, fan magazines, newspapers, fashion magazines, and technical journals. The digitized form of these publications presents an undeniably new convenience to researchers. For example, *Photoplay* and *Motion Picture Magazine*, the two leading fan magazines in circulation during this project’s focus, are available digitally in near-entirety spanning the years 1914–1943 on the MHDL, while
American *Vogue* and *Women’s Wear Daily* have been completely digitized on ProQuest. Large-scale digitization projects proved invaluable throughout the research process, particularly in its earliest stages. As an American living in Sweden while conducting research on a decidedly American topic, digital resources have been fundamental to the historical reconstructions presented in this dissertation. While the progress made by large-scale digitization efforts has been undeniably useful and exciting to researchers, their use is not without limitations.

Given the delicate nature of the primary resources consulted for this project, many were not available for physical handling according to the preservation standards of particular libraries and archives. Digitization projects carried out by institutions across the country have certainly assisted and molded the current research process, with the collocate “digital archive” becoming increasingly relevant and popular amongst researchers and the general public than the more traditional, more tactile “archive.” As Richard Abel points out, however, the ever-increasing efforts put into widening the amount of digitized content—particularly digitized newspapers—are rife with many “pleasures and perils.” While the ability to access digitized material online opens up a luxurious new world of opportunities to researchers, it is also necessary to problematize research efforts relying on material existing in the digital realm. Issues with optical character recognition, proper and relevant terminologies, curated content, and the inability to interact with those most knowledgeable about the collections are some of the “perils” to consider as the digital revolution steams on.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into five chapters exploring significant moments and personalities in the transition from filming in black and white to color, focusing primarily on the technology’s impact on different aspects of the film and fashion industries. The first chapter functions as interlude, providing an overview of early color film methods leading up to the release of three-strip Technicolor in 1932. The subsequent four chapters revolve around case studies through which the multifaceted promotional relationship between the fashion and film industries can be further understood. Using Technicolor as a point of focus and continuity, the case studies presented explore different types of

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productions filmed in the Technicolor process, including short subjects and newsreels, industrial and advertising films, and feature-length titles.

After contextualizing the timeframe and technology discussed throughout the dissertation in the first chapter, Chapter 2 considers the relationship between the fashion and film industries through a study of Photoplay, the most popular film fan magazine during the 1920s and 1930s, a period referred to as “the golden era” of this type of publication by film historian Anthony Slide. Through a close examination of Photoplay’s unique Fashion Department, this chapter maps the evolution of the department while focusing on the promotional relationship the medium of film fan magazines offered to the fashion and film industries. Kathryn Fuller has recognized the fan magazine developing out of a genuine concern for fans, particularly female fans, with the goal of fulfilling their interests and desires. Tracing the earliest and most influential editors in the magazine’s long-lived Fashion Department, Chapter 2 argues that Photoplay provided a logical arena in which fashion could be promoted through film and vice versa. A discussion about the role of color in Photoplay as a selling point and as an attraction will also take place, including a more general discussion of the adoption of color in print media, as well as Photoplay’s increasing use of color in its Fashion Department throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, an exploration of color discourses in Photoplay takes place in this chapter, with particular attention placed on advice given in regard to color, as well as the extent to which the three-strip Technicolor process was discussed in the fan magazine.

The second half of the 1930s marked a particularly significant era in Technicolor’s history in terms of output, aesthetics, and experimentation. During this time, one of Technicolor’s greatest concerns was to demonstrate the commercial potential of the new three-strip process, as well as establish a more regular place for Technicolor in feature-length productions. Between 1936 and 1939, the company focused on improving the quality of its process, and short films proved an excellent avenue for experimentation. Chapter 3 examines the making and promotion of Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecast series, which coincided with this particularly important and exciting moment in Technicolor’s history. The films serve as an example of the concrete relationship the Technicolor Corporation ultimately developed with the fashion industry—one fostered since the 1920s. From a production perspective, Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecast provides some much-needed insight into the inner workings of Technicolor’s laboratory and Color Control Department. While the role of this department has been discussed in virtually all work about Technicolor’s history or Technicolor features, very little has been written about how color control worked in practice.

Chapter 4 turns to a discussion of industrial and sponsored films and their impact on advertising in America throughout the twentieth century. More specifically, this chapter considers industrial and sponsored films made in color for the fashion industry—particularly the American rayon industry. These films represent a significant moment in the history of film, when color proliferated through the industry and black and white began to be considered an outdated form of the past. The first half of the chapter considers a handful of industrial and sponsored films from the fashion industry filmed in color processes, including a more in-depth look at Aristocrats of Fashion (American Bemberg Corporation, 1940), filmed in Technicolor. Continuing the dialogue from the previous chapter, Chapter 4 retains a focus on Technicolor, concentrating on the company’s efforts to become more entwined with the American advertising industry at a time when industrial and sponsored films were perceived as being the most effective way to display and advertise products.

The second half of the fourth chapter considers the 1939/1940 seasons of the New York World’s Fair, which offered advertisers and corporations a new line of thinking towards advertising via films, leading to the production of hundreds of industrial and advertising films, including some of the more impressive and acclaimed productions of this kind filmed in Technicolor. Of the many American industries represented at the Fair, the American fashion industry sought a particularly strong presence during the 1940 season thanks in large part to the construction of the World of Fashion building in which various firms could rent space and design exhibits to feature forthcoming items and materials. The American rayon industry rented the largest amount of display space in the building, featuring new, colorful rayon materials, a live fashion show, and Technicolor films. The relationship between Technicolor and rayon proved a particularly fruitful one, with rayon being presented as the fabric of the future and the Technicolor Corporation vying to establish its three-strip process as the future of filmmaking.

After considering the role of color in shorter presentations, the final chapter of the dissertation looks to three-strip Technicolor in feature-length films. This chapter considers collaborations involving the fashion industry that took place in conjunction with the release of Technicolor feature-length films between the mid-1930s to the late 1940s; these were some of the more elaborate promotional collaborations of the studied period, as evidenced by the production and promotion of Vogues of 1938 (Irving Cummings, 1937), dubbed the “first big color fashion film” by the press. This chapter further explores the relationship Technicolor maintained with the American rayon industry through the feature-length film. Later in Chapter 5, an examination of Cover Girl (Charles Vidor, 1944), the first three-strip musical released by Columbia Pictures, which allows for an exploration of the film industry’s increasing willingness to adopt Technicolor more widely into its feature-length productions. Columbia’s long-range approach to promoting Cover Girl provides a glimpse into the symbiotic relationship between the fashion and film industries and the film’s behind-the-scenes focus on the fashion industry also warrants further
examination. Lastly, this chapter considers the role of the department store in the cinema color promotions that abounded in the late 1930s and continued throughout the 1940s. This section considers not only those promotions made in conjunction with specific Technicolor titles, but focuses on one specific example involving Natalie Kalmus and the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation itself.
1. Overview of Color Motion Picture Processes

While early methods of colorization are beyond the scope of this project, considering their development and application in film and their relationship to fashion is useful to the discussion of photographic methods of color that follows. It is therefore important to acknowledge attempts at exhibiting color on film before delving deeper into three-strip Technicolor in the following chapters. Examining the history behind methods such as hand coloring, stenciling, tinting, and toning is crucial to an understanding of three-strip Technicolor as it is presented in the following chapters. Indeed, the relationship between clothes, fashion, and color captured on the screen may be traced to the late nineteenth-century, or the introduction of cinema itself. While this relationship will receive intermittent attention in subsequent chapters, this chapter presents an overview of early color film to better situate and contextualize the study in its period of focus. In addition to acknowledging color processes that preceded Technicolor in terms of technological and aesthetic shifts, this chapter examines key trends observed among different color processes, including discourses regarding the “natural” and “realistic” representations of color distributed not only by Technicolor, but also earlier processes like Kinemacolor and Pathécolor. Considering the discourses circulated by reviewers, industry professionals, and producers is crucial to understanding the evolution of color in early cinema.

1 Attempts at color fall into two major categories: ‘natural’ or photographic methods (in systems like Kinemacolor, Dufaycolor, Kodachrome, and Technicolor). Applied color methods, on the other hand, see black and white film stock being treated with color dyes after photographic processing. Applied color methods include hand-painting, stenciling, tinting, and toning.

personnel, and the color motion picture companies themselves in describing technological developments allows for the establishment of a continuum within the film industry that spans decades. Furthermore, this chapter briefly examines the relationship Kinemacolor and Pathécolor developed with fashion and the fashion industry, evidencing a consistent association between color, fashion, and film. While the fashion and film industries shared a bond since the earliest days of cinema, this chapter begins to unravel how that bond permutated over the years, as well as the differing ways in which color was used as an aesthetic, commercial, educational, and promotional device—themes which will be discussed in the following chapters in greater detail.

Early Color Methods: 1895–1910s

The years 1895–1929 can be identified as the most formative ones when it comes to surveying the development of color processes. These years witnessed numerous color systems enter the market in attempts to bring “natural color” to the screen to varying degrees of success—each process abandoned once later methods introduced technical or commercial improvements. Successful or not, the earlier systems mentioned in this chapter contributed to the technological and aesthetic progress of the motion picture. While this dissertation focuses on Technicolor’s three-strip method, acknowledging the precedent set by early color methods and subsequent efforts to improve upon them assists in contextualizing three-strip Technicolor’s place in modern culture and its position as “cinema’s undisputed leader in all things chromatic.”

The earliest method of employing color in motion pictures was hand-coloring. This process, most often carried out by women, involved applying color by hand, frame by frame, on the emulsion side of prints using fine brushes. Hand-colored films were produced as early as the late 19th century, with the release of Edison Manufacturing Company’s Annabelle Serpentine Dance (William K.L. Dickson, William Heise, 1894–1897), featuring dancer Annabelle Moore gliding across the screen in a white, flowing skirt outfitted with rods to create a whirlwind of kinetic innovation. Moore’s skirt was hand colored, in hopes of simulating the effect of the colored lights projected onto dancers during on-stage performances. Edison’s was the first in a litany of hand-colored serpentine dance films released by other companies, including the Lumière brothers, Gaumont, Star Films, and Pathé Frères.

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Time-consuming and expensive, hand-coloring was all but abandoned when a method of stencil coloring was developed by Pathé Frères between 1905 and 1908 and continued to be used throughout the 1920s. In terms of applicability, this stencil method proved to be better quality and steadier than hand-coloring, although there were instances of fringing which impeded the overall success of the process. In 1908, Pathé’s system became mechanized, cutting different stencils for each color which were then used in a machine that applied the desired color to the positive print automatically. This method, named Pathécolor in 1911, used up to six stencils, one cut for each color to be applied. As no special apparatus was needed for projection, Pathécolor films could be shown in theaters with conventional equipment, thereby popularizing the process in the United States until the advent of sound.

The most common method of color presentation in cinema involved the methods of tinting and toning, with an estimated 80 to 90 percent of the total production of silent films being either tinted, toned, or both. In tinting, the positive print was immersed in various dye baths, scene by scene, allowing the dye to wash over the entire image, attaching itself without modifying the emulsion. A combination of aniline dyes mixed into a water solution was most often used in the tinting process. It has been suggested that certain colors were used to associate meaning in different settings (blue signifying night, red for fire, amber for lamplight, etc.), but such conventions are not stable enough throughout the available sample of films to flawlessly argument them. Toning, on the other hand, was a more complicated process involving the conversion of the silver image through a chemical reaction, dying the darker areas of the image and leaving the transparent parts white. Like tinting, toning provided an overall color wash, but a wider range of colors could be achieved. Scott Higgins notes that tinting was so prevalent throughout the silent era that it “likely became a transparent convention, going relatively unnoticed by the casual spectator.” The audience’s familiarity with color as an expected element on the screen effectively set the stage for the color motion picture processes which were in a simultaneous stage of development or, in some cases, already in use.

The earliest of color motion picture processes were additive color systems, which entailed filming using black and white stock, which carried the records of the color in the photographed scene. That image appeared in color by means of a color wheel rotating with the film or, in other cases, by using individual dye stains of the appropriate color on individual frames. Kinemacolor was the

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6 Higgins, Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow, 3.
most successful of the “natural” color additive processes developed and exhibited in the era of early cinema. Originally invented by Edward R. Turner and backed by Frederick Marshall Lee, the Kinemacolor process was meant to be a three-color additive process at the outset, in which frames were photographed and projected through red, green and blue-violet filters mounted on a rotating disk. After Lee withdrew financial support, Turner earned the interest and backing of distributor Charles Urban. After Turner’s death in 1902, Urban enlisted George Albert Smith, an inventor-filmmaker, to solve the problem of considerable fringing that plagued Turner’s efforts. Unable to produce successful results, Smith abandoned attempts to produce a three-color process, eliminating the blue-violet filter which reduced it to a two-color process. Kinemacolor, then, consisted of a blue-green filter for green and a red-orange filter for red and made its first public demonstration in May 1908 in London, followed by a demonstration in New York City the following year. While commercially successful (particularly in the UK), there were several limitations to the Kinemacolor process, including parallax, demanding light conditions, and its inability to produce the full color spectrum, all of which ultimately led to its decline.7

While there were a number of other additive processes, including Chronochrome (a three-color system developed by Leon Gaumont), Prizma, Multicolor, Kesdacom, Gilmore Color, Douglass Color, and Technicolor No. 1 (a two-color system unveiled in 1917), the subtractive systems developed and exhibited throughout the 1920s were more lucrative and technically advanced. One of the greatest advantages of subtractive processes was that they eliminated the need for separate projection equipment, meaning the same system used for black and white films could be used while projecting subtractive color prints. Herbert Kalmus recognized the need to improve upon the exhibition aspect, relating that during one “terrible” screening in Buffalo, New York, he “decided that such special attachments on the projector required an operator who was a cross between a college professor and an acrobat…Technicolor then and there abandoned additive process and special attachments on the projector.”8 While Kodachrome, the first motion picture subtractive process, will receive further attention in this chapter, as well as Chapter 3 of this dissertation, this project spotlights Technicolor No. 4, or three-strip Technicolor, a subtractive process that dominated the market for color films from the mid-30s well into the 1950s. The following section provides an overview of the color motion picture processes Technicolor developed before it released the three-strip process in order to establish how they differed from each other, and why three-strip is crucial to the discussion presented in the forthcoming chapters.

8 Herbert Kalmus, “Technicolor Adventures in Cinemaland,” Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers 31, no. 6 (December 1938): 566.
From Number 1 to Number 4: An Overview of the Development of Technicolor

Using the three-strip Technicolor process as a point of focus and continuity, this dissertation explores different types of productions filmed in the process, including shorts and newsreels, industrial and sponsored films, and feature-length films (defined here as multi-reel films lasting forty minutes or longer\(^9\)). While the technical specificities of the three-strip Technicolor process will not be a major area of discussion throughout the remainder of the thesis, it is necessary to dedicate a portion of this chapter to the finer technical points of the process. Providing a brief overview of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation and the color processes that preceded the three-strip processes will provide some essential background information before embarking on a more nuanced discussion of discourses surrounding color and realism in the remainder of the chapter.

Incorporated in 1915 by Herbert T. Kalmus, Daniel F. Comstock, and W. Burton Wescott, the Technicolor Corporation began as a means of developing color motion pictures for the screen. Three of Comstock’s students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—Leonard Troland, J. Arthur Ball, and Eastman Weaver—also worked on the development of the first process, a two-color additive system which recorded two frames simultaneously through red and green filters and fitted a beam splitter in the camera to avoid the issue of parallax. Used in only one feature, *The Gulf Between* (Wray Bartlett Physioc, 1917), the precise adjustment Technicolor No. 1’s projection optical system required proved too complicated for operators and the additive system was soon discarded for a more adequate two-color subtractive process.\(^{10}\)

Subtractive color systems involved containing the colors on the release copy itself rather than added by filters on the projector. A new camera was developed to expose the red and green filtered black and white negative images simultaneously, allowing the hues to be cemented on a single piece of release stock. Simpler to project than Technicolor No. 1, Technicolor No. 2 allowed for an increase in production of color features as well as black and white films featuring color inserts between 1922 and 1927. Many of these films were well-received, particularly *The Black Pirate* (Albert Parker, 1926), whose sepia color palette was influenced by Dutch Old Master paintings. The subdued browns and greens that dominated the costumes and sets led J.A. Ball, one of Technicolor’s primary inventors, to confess that he did “not like *The Black Pirate* as well as [he] would if more color had been used,” but even

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\(^9\) The notion of how long a feature film is has varied depending on time and place. The definition used in this dissertation relies upon the one provided by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the American Film Institute, and the British Film Institute, which identifies a feature film as one running for 40 minutes or longer.

\(^{10}\) Kalmus, “Technicolor Adventures in Cinemaland.” See also Layton and Pierce, 54–57.
he could not deny that the critical praise the film received helped keep Technicolor afloat. Critics were satisfied with the color in *The Black Pirate*, with one commenting on its ability to “heighten, instead of [distract] from” the film, and another noting producer and star Douglas Fairbanks’s decision to “[tone] down his tints to such an extent that the spectator is almost unconscious to them.” The film stock used between 1922 and 1927 was double coated, with emulsion on both sides, and was therefore prone to curling and jumping, leading the film to go out of focus. These technical issues, coupled with the high costs and limited resources, set the Technicolor lab to work on developing a film stock that could be single-coated, resulting in Technicolor No. 3, which debuted in 1927.

In addition to a larger number of features made during this time, there was also an increase of short subjects being made in Technicolor, with the company aiming to perfect the process and prove it viable to the film industry at large. A more detailed discussion about this period of experimentation with the Technicolor three-strip process may be found in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Despite being a limited process in terms of capturing the color spectrum, Technicolor No. 3 was a success in an economic sense and proved sophisticated in terms of technical precision, resulting in a peak in the production of color films. Technicolor, however, could not handle the sudden demand without compromising the quality of its end product, leading to a decline of color films made at the turn of the 1930s—a period which Layton and Pierce refer to as “the color slump.”

With the development of Technicolor No. 4, commonly referred to as the three-strip process, Technicolor developed a new camera designed by Ball and his team of engineers and color scientists. According to Herbert Kalmus and Ball, three-strip Technicolor had been the company’s vision for its product from the beginning; that is, the most accurate representation of the full color spectrum presented on-screen. The three-strip process would photograph the three primary aspects of a scene (red, green, and blue) upon three separate film strips, simultaneously, at normal speed, without fringe or parallax, in balance, and in proper register with one another. These three separate strips were then developed to negatives of equal contrast, considered and handled as one group. From the color-separated negatives, technicians printed by way of projection through the celluloid onto a specially prepared stock that was subsequently developed and processed to produce three separate positive relief im-

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11 Inter-office memo from J.A. Ball to Leonard Troland, January 5, 1927. From the Technicolor Corporate Archive, Motion Picture Department, George Eastman Museum.

12 “Fairbanks’ ‘Black Pirate’ Has Premiere on Selwyn Theatre Screen,” *New York American* (March 9, 1926); “The Black Pirate,” *LIFE* magazine (March 25, 1926)

13 Layton and Pierce, 239–264.

ages in hardened gelatin. These gelatin reliefs were then used as printing matrices that absorbed dye. This dye was transferred by imbibition printing to another film strip which, when it received all three transfers, became the final completed print ready for projection (Figure 1.1). Unlike the two-color system, which recorded a film on one strip of black and white negative, this new camera ran three black and white negatives simultaneously, hence the name “three-strip Technicolor.”

Scott Higgins’s in-depth research on the Technicolor three-strip process offers insight into the design principles the company developed by the mid-1930s, providing an excellent exploration of the guiding principles of color design in Hollywood cinema following the introduction of the three-strip process. Following Technicolor’s introduction of the new process, Higgins demonstrates how Technicolor’s directors and group of color advisors worked from a set of more restrained color principles in terms of design, allowing color to integrate more smoothly into the modes of classical cinema. Higgins’s research establishes three-strip Technicolor as the catalyst for change within the film industry in its three distinct “modes”: a “demonstrative mode”; a “restrained mode”; and an “assertive mode.” These three modes allow for an expanded discussion of the various stages of Technicolor’s history, including considerations regarding costume and fashion.

**Figure 1.1** Diagram of the optical system and films in the three-strip Technicolor camera. From J. Arthur Ball, “The Technicolor Process of Three-Color Cinematography,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 25, no. 2 (August 1935): 130.

15 Higgins, *Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow*.
Discourses on Realism and “Natural Colors”: A Commercial Continuum

In 1936, *Movie Classic* printed a short interview with actor Gene Raymond, with the popular fan magazine posing the question: “Are you looking forward to making a picture in technicolor [sic] or would you choose to make a plain (no color) picture instead?” In response, Raymond offered the following: “Color pictures are in to stay—with great and constant improvements bound to come. Naturally I look forward to making colored pictures.” Raymond’s answer evidences an increasing interest, acceptance, and adoption of color motion picture technology—specifically three-strip Technicolor—in the 1930s and beyond. This multifarious process of interest, acceptance, and eventual adoption is one this dissertation explores through an examination of various productions, personalities, and promotions, with a focus on those collaborations with the American fashion industry. That Raymond’s interviewer specifically mentions the Technicolor process reflects the company’s virtual takeover of the color market that began in the early 1930s with the introduction of the fourth Technicolor process—three-strip Technicolor—and stretched throughout the 1950s.

Raymond’s reply is noteworthy for one more reason, which is that it echoes statements regarding the permanence of color systems that were circulated by the film industry since the 1910s. In 1912, for example, the Kinemacolor Company of America sponsored a page in *The Moving Picture News* in which they declared that Kinemacolor had “come to stay.” As the remainder of this chapter argues, there are several key similarities exhibited in discourses distributed by color motion picture companies not only in terms of how they approached advertising new technologies, but also within the content of those advertisements. Such discussions included highlighting the permanence of the process (as seen in the Technicolor-Kinemacolor example), as well as its ability to reproduce “real,” “natural” colors on-screen. Critics used a similar vocabulary in their reviews of demonstrations of early color motion picture technology.

In his examinations of the history and emergence of cinematic technology, critic and theorist André Bazin contends that cinema was not borne from advancements in technology and economy, but an innate desire to reproduce the world around us in perfect detail. Bazin does concede that economics played an important role in motivating inventors, but his main argument is that the key incentive was a desire to replicate and reproduce the “real” world; to reproduce reality on the screen as it is perceived in life. Bazin explains what he calls “the myth of total cinema,” claiming that:

The guiding myth...inspiring the invention of cinema is the accomplishment of that which dominated in a more or less vague fashion all the techniques of the mechanical reproduction of reality in the nineteenth century, from photography to phonograph, namely an integral realism, a recreation of the world in its own image, an image unburdened by the freedom of interpretation of the artist or the irreversibility of time.19

Bazin’s position that the myth of total cinema is an impulse to reproduce the world in an objective way mirrors the discourses surrounding color motion picture processes, which positioned themselves as capable of reproducing the world unburdened by subjectivity. What is missing from Bazin’s interesting essay, however, is a reflection on cinema as a tool of fantasy and it is this dichotomy that contributes to the complexity of discourses surrounding color motion picture film processes.

Previous research on the history and development of specific color motion picture processes have acknowledged discourses surrounding accuracy in representations of everyday, recognizable objects on the screen. In her research on Pathé’s advertising in the early 1900s, Bregt Lameris notes that the company stressed the ability of its stencil system to produce colors that were artistic as well as “reliable [copies] of nature.”20 Lameris also considers Pathé’s approach to maintaining its hold once Kinemacolor entered the market, with the former attempting to besmirch the latter via advertisements highlighting the shortcomings of the new photographic technique. As Lameris phrases it, despite the “perfection” of Pathé Frères claimed Pathécolor had achieved, it “was not capable of reproducing colours with photographic techniques,” leaving the stencil method incapable of being “anything more than a hypothesis or a suggestion of the colours which the filmed object had in the world,” leading to its ultimate abandonment.21 Similarly, Kinemacolor distributed promotional material highlighting the accuracy of the process, claiming the color process was “the last word in motion pictures” that reproduced “Nature...in all her colors, tints and shades.”22 Eirik Frisvold Hanssen’s exploration of the Kinemacolor catalogue reveals a consistent accentuation of the “realism” of the process, as well “as the spectacle of brighter and more intense colors” in the catalogue’s descriptions of films.23

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19 Ibid., 21.
21 Ibid., 51.
22 Kinemacolor: Nature Reproduced in Motion Pictures (New York: Kinemacolor Company of America, 1904). From the Redpath Chautauqua Collection 1890–1944, University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Dept.
Like Pathé and, later, Technicolor, Kinemacolor took care in the method in which it advertised its product. In 1912, the Kinemacolor Company of America sponsored a page in *The Moving Picture News* to essentially advertise its product, publishing the following acrostic poem:

KINEMACOLOR  
Is the Marvel of the Century  
Nature’s Own Deft Handiwork  
Everything new Under the Sun  
Motion pictures in Natural Colors  
A Revelation in Animated Photography  
Captures the Rainbow’s Rays  
Other Methods Mere Shadows  
Last Word in World’s Wonders  
Outglories the Arabian Nights  
Rarest of All Discoveries

While particularly boastful in content, this bit of wordplay is representative of discourses employed by the more popular and successful companies distributing and developing color motion picture processes. Bregt Lameris provides some insight into Pathé’s claims regarding Pathécolor, with the company maintaining its stencil color system was capable of rendering copies of the colors found in nature on the screen. Lameris demonstrates Pathé’s marketing of these films, just like the discourses on Kinemacolor and other “natural” color processes, emphasized the perfect “rendition of the colours of nature,” the “amazing accuracy” and “absolute reality” provided by the technology.

These were not simply cases of Kinemacolor and Pathé singing their own praises. Reviews of both processes demonstrate that they were, at the time, viewed as genuinely unique contributions to cinematic innovation. Examining the coverage that followed early demonstrations of Kinemacolor in London and, later, in the United States, evidence the process invoked appreciation from spectators. After one such demonstration in London in May 1908, *The Lancet* offered the following review:

> The demonstration referred to, though Mr. Smith impressed upon his audience that the invention was yet in an experimental and inchoate stage, was of extreme interest. Thus, the photograph of a lady in a white dress with red sash and red roses in her hat came out in very pure colouring, while another photograph of a child dressed mainly in green who held up at intervals a tartan plaid, the tartan containing a great deal of red and yellow, came out equally well.

When Kinemacolor made its debut in the United States at Boston’s Palace Theater the following year, *The Morning Post* commented upon some of the successes of the demonstration, noting that “grey, stated to be, as one might

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conjecture, the most shy and retiring of colors, is beautifully reproduced in a
satin dress.” The reviews published in *The Lancet* and *The Morning Post*
highlight the extent to which reviewers commented upon faithful reprodu-
cations of colors found in dress, with Hanssen also noting the regularity
with which the Kinemacolor catalogue described clothes and fabrics as depicted in
films, particularly in terms of textuality. The aforementioned reviews begin
to demonstrate the important role clothing played in the development of color
motion picture processes, with the technology’s ability to effectively represent
patterns and color in fabrics on the screen contributing to the overall success
of the demonstration.

Both Pathé and Kinemacolor displayed more concrete ties to dress and the
fashion industry. Pathé-Frères became one of the most prolific producers of
the fashion newsreel, with Pathécolor used mainly in fashion films during the
1920s until the early 1930s in which hats, lingerie, dresses, and furs were dis-
played in the stencil color process. Those behind Kinemacolor, too, found
fashion to be a worthy subject to capture in the process, with Charles Urban
devising the *Kinemacolor Fashion Gazette*, a “magazine series” highlighting
women’s fashions, in 1913. French couturier Paul Poiret’s extravagant, ex-
perimental designs were featured in one “issue” of the *Kinemacolor Fashion
[Poiret] has found the ideal medium for the display of his costume creations
in all their colour combinations and texture of fabrics.” In another collabo-
ration with the Gimbel Brothers department store, the Kinemacolor Company
of America produced a “natural color” film, *La Parisienne Elegance in Her
Boudoir* (1913), which demonstrated the “correct” manner of how to wear the
latest styles in French lingerie. Due to the nature of these “intimate displays,”
screenings of this film were limited to “special morning matinee performances
for ladies only.” Eirik Frisvold Hanssen has argued that Kinemacolor had
“more in common with earlier film conventions, specifically the cinema of
attractions’ mode of presentation which was based on ‘showing’ rather than
‘telling’ in order to demonstrate the powers of the photographic process.”

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28 Ibid., 69.
(August 27, 1913): 25.
31 “Poiret Fashions in Kinemacolor,” *The Moving Picture World* 18, no. 1 (October–December
1913): 389.
32 “Kinemacolor for Ladies Only,” *The Moving Picture World* 16, no. 7 (May 17, 1913): 799;
33 Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, “Symptoms of Desire: Colour, Costume, and Commodities in the
Fashion Newsreels of the 1910s and 1920s,” *Film History: An International Journal* 21, no. 2
Building on Hanssen’s argument, Caroline Evans asserted that the Kinema-color process consequently found “a natural affinity with the fashion show.” As Chapter 3 demonstrates, the fashion newsreel and short were genres that aided discourses regarding realism for subtractive color photographic processes like Technicolor and Kodachrome, but it is worthwhile to underscore the importance of fashion in a discussion surrounding critical perception of natural, real colors.

In her research on Pathé-Frères’ advertising of Pathécolor, Bregt Lameris deftly points out that “realism always depends to some extent on conventions. For each period, each moment in time, there exist specific norms and rules on what can and cannot be considered realistic and true-to-nature.” This perspective becomes particularly applicable to examinations of comments made by reviewers and industry personnel regarding the merits and innovations of Technicolor and earlier color motion picture processes. It is tempting to interpret the discourses disseminated by color motion picture process companies as being self-indulgent. The point of this discussion, however, is not to disparage the beauty and progress exhibited by the aforementioned color processes, but rather to propose an effective way of reflecting on them in the present. The questioning of reality and perception is one of modernism’s key functions, with Elizabeth Wilson acknowledging “its attempts to come to grips with the nature of human experience in a mechanized ‘unnatural world.’” Considering these discourses as a continuum provides a link between Technicolor and earlier color processes, contextualizing not only their claims of authenticity and progress, but also their place within modern culture.

Technicolor Über Alles

In 1929, trade journals widely reported Technicolor planned to spend between $500,000 and $1,000,000 on an advertising campaign to be conducted in print publications over the next two years, with each advertisement (including artwork and plates) costing a reported $34,500. In response to Variety questioning the need for an extravagant campaign when Technicolor had an “in’
with practically all of the bigger companies.”\textsuperscript{38} Jerome Beatty, Technicolor’s Director of Publicity, sent a statement to the weekly in which he sharply explained, “‘Technicolor’ must be made a box office name…we’re going to make more people go to see Technicolor pictures.”\textsuperscript{39} While Beatty’s published statement effectively served as a meta-advertisement for the costly campaign, it succinctly captures Technicolor’s need to further establish itself within the film industry at that time.

In January 1929, popular magazine \textit{The Saturday Evening Post} printed the first advertisement of this series: a three-page, full color insert featuring two photographs of actress Nancy Carroll, one in black and white, the other in color. The leading line of the advertisement, which reads, “I didn’t know she had red hair,” was meant to draw attention to Technicolor’s ability to “[show] the players in their true human colors.”\textsuperscript{40} The advertisement featuring Carroll was just one in a series published in the \textit{Saturday Evening Post} and, beginning in February 1929, popular fan magazines including \textit{Photoplay} and \textit{Picture Play Magazine} also ran the series (Figure 1.3). Between the various publications, it was estimated twenty million readers would be exposed to the campaign.\textsuperscript{41} While the primary goal of the campaign was to advertise the abilities of Technicolor, a small portion of every advertisement was dedicated to promoting upcoming Technicolor releases as well, printing the forthcoming titles near the bottom of the page; \textit{Variety} commented that doing so stood to benefit “producers on color pictures without cost to them.”\textsuperscript{42}

While each advertisement in this series included photographs of different stars, one consistency found in each ad published throughout the campaign was the slogan it featured: “Technicolor is natural color.” Steve Neale has argued that this declaration is symptomatic of the conventional Hollywood wisdom that color should be used in a restrained manner.\textsuperscript{43} Conversely, Richard Misek argues that these advertisements “[suggest] not an aesthetic consensus but a supplier desperately trying to elbow its product into the market,” arguing that if Technicolor were presenting “natural colors,” the company “would not have needed to emphasize the fact.”\textsuperscript{44} While Neale and Misek take decidedly different interpretations of Technicolor’s slogan, it is perhaps Kia Afra’s recommendation to “not confuse popular and industry discourse on

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{38} “Technicolor Spending $700,000 To Back Trade Edge in Color,” \textit{Variety} 96, no. 11 (September 25, 1929): 7.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Jerome Beatty, “Black and Whites Fading Out, Says Technicolor—That’s Why for Ads,” \textit{Variety} 97, no. 10 (December 18, 1929): 9.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Advertisement. \textit{Picture Play} 31, no. 6 (February 1930): 90.
\item \textsuperscript{41} “Technicolor Launches Ad Campaign; Two New Laboratories Required,” \textit{Exhibitors Herald World} 97, no. 12 (December 21, 1929): 40.
\item \textsuperscript{42} “Tech’s Color Campaign,” \textit{Variety} 97, no. 5 (November 13, 1929): 7.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Richard Misek, \textit{Chromatic Cinema: A History of Screen Color} (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2010): 35–36.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
color design for a reliable account of Technicolor, its narrative functions, or its effects on the audience” that proves most productive for this project. As a project more concerned with Technicolor’s promotional practices than with the narrative, affective functions of the three-strip process, Afra’s suggestion is useful in interpreting advertising material distributed by the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, particularly when combined with supporting primary material.

Figure 1.3 Full color advertisement featuring actress Nancy Carroll, the first in Technicolor’s 1929 advertising campaign in which the company made public its slogan, “Technicolor is natural color.” Published in Picture Play Magazine, February 1930.

Like Pathé-Frères, the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation spent large amounts of money advertising its latest product—a contributing factor to the

success of both Pathécolor, as well as two-and-three-color Technicolor. 

Richard Abel explains that Pathé-Frères’ “primary objective was to exploit the commercial benefits of the new technology,” giving priority to new developments on the condition “they had immediate commercial value.” As mentioned in the introductory chapter, blue became the shade to which Technicolor clung in its initial promotional efforts for three-strip Technicolor in 1935, with Photoplay’s Kathryn Dougherty designating the color as the one “to typify the second great change that has taken place in motion pictures in the past eight years.” As this chapter makes clear, however, audiences witnessed blue on-screen since the late 1800s, via the methods of hand coloring, stenciling, tinting, and toning, as well as the implied blues attempted by earlier photographic color processes. Taking advantage of the opportunity to promote the improved color process, the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation focused on three-strip’s capturing of the shade as being something of a revelation.

Scott Higgins’s assessment that three-strip “Technicolor designs strove to remain ‘new’ while maintaining a margin of familiarity that would allow the fact of color to fade into the background of the viewer’s experience” becomes more complicated when surveying Technicolor’s advertising strategy upon the introduction of the three-strip process. With previous attempts to reproduce blue on-screen proving unsuccessful, Technicolor capitalized on its new development, highlighting the color in advertising the three-strip process. Following Kia Afra’s suggestion of avoiding conflating industry discourse with the audience experience, it becomes difficult to gauge to what extent blue faded “into the background of the viewer’s experience” once three-strip Technicolor premiered.

Prior to the release of Becky Sharp, Technicolor employed a media blitz unlike any they had with previous films in order to promote the film and the new color process. While “Becky Sharp blue” is one example, interviews with important cast and crew members were published in the New York Times and Variety, popular fan magazines like Photoplay, Movie Classic, Picturegoer, and Screenland ran articles heralding a new era of filmmaking with the release of Becky Sharp, and Technicolor employees published articles in more technical journals including American Cinematographer and the Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers explaining the new process and its improvements.

In addition to an increase in advertising expenditure, the 1930s witnessed Technicolor taking strides toward greater control of the three-strip process in terms of how it might be received by the public. When Becky Sharp premiered

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47 Abel, “In the Belly of the Beast,” 364.
49 Higgins, Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow, 3.
in 1935, *Motion Picture Herald* published an article that highlighted the importance of the audience in contributing to the success of the three-strip process, arguing that:

The destiny of color as a medium for enhancing the entertainment value of the motion picture and adding realism to the screen is about to be placed in the hands of the theatergoing public, and whether color eventually can make black-and-white film as obsolete as sound has made the silent picture will be decided solely by that public.\(^\text{50}\)

Advertisements and articles written by Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation personnel and Hollywood figures were two methods the company employed throughout the 1930s to create positive discourses surrounding the three-strip process. Indeed, the company took a very active role in shaping the audience’s experience of color, and the remainder of this chapter explores two such efforts.

The topic of eye strain among cinema audiences was a concern well into the 1940s, and one of which the film industry had been keenly aware since the earliest days of cinema.\(^\text{51}\) In 1926, *Photoplay*’s Harry Thompson interviewed Dr. John H. Bailey, a “nationally known” osteopath and head of a private clinic in Philadelphia, to address the issue of eye strain. Bailey asserted that going to the movies was “good for the eyes,” arguing that attending the pictures provided one’s eyes with “an exercise obtainable in no other way, except with the greatest effort.”\(^\text{52}\) In addition to the act of viewing a film, eye strain was a contentious issue where color—or lack thereof—was concerned. At least one product, the “Emrald-Glo” Moving Picture Glasses, was developed to solve the issue when viewing black and white films, with a 1915 advertisement describing them as follows: “They are made of soft-tinted green glass—the shade of Nature—restful, soothing and protective to the eyes. This tint of green supplies the color to the picture, which the screen leaves out—the absence of which is so trying to the eyes.”\(^\text{53}\)

Concerns about eye strain persisted once photographic color processes entered the market, with technical journals, fan magazines, and trade journals addressing the issue in a progressively reassuring manner. While the issue of parallax in Kinemacolor reportedly led to “intense discomfort, eyestrain, and

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\(^\text{51}\) A blurb in the regular *Film Daily* column “Along the Rialto” addressed “that old bugaboo” issue of eye strain as late as 1947 in which Harold Heffernan, the North American Newspaper Alliance’s (NANA) Hollywood correspondent contended that viewing motion pictures provided “healthy eye exercise.” In “Along the Rialto,” *The Film Daily* 92, no. 43 (August 29, 1947): 3.

\(^\text{52}\) Harry Thompson, “Take Your Eye Exercise at the Movies,” *Photoplay* 28, no. 6 (November 1925): 76.

\(^\text{53}\) *Picture-Play Weekly* 2, no. 6 (November 13, 1915): 33.
severe frontal headaches,"54 many commented on Technicolor’s advantage in this area. Jesse L. Lasky, vice-president in charge of production at Paramount, declared that “Technicolor has so improved its process that there is no such thing [as] eye-strain any more and added progress is being made daily.”55 The Society of Motion Picture Engineers (SMPE) conducted a study in the mid-1920s, ultimately concluding “that eye strain is much less for the average sensitive observer after seeing a colored picture.” The SMPE maintained that eye strain was “usually traceable to prolonged concentration of the eye, defective eye sight, position of the observer, faulty general illumination, poor films, bad project, or faulty operation,” all of which were “avoidable.”56

The Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation took steps to ensure their prints would not suffer under such “avoidable” conditions, issuing over 250,000 booklets to theatre managers, projectionists, and exchange managers during 1938.57 The booklet offered “constructive suggestions” on how to correctly project, handle, and exhibit Technicolor prints “for maximum efficiency and audience comfort.”58 The document addressed theater managers with the following advice:

The full beauty of Technicolor prints will be obtained if running house lights are maintained at the lowest level of illumination consistent with safety and local ordinance requirements.

Illuminating fixtures whose lighting units are visible to any part of the audience detract from screen interest and render impossible complete realization of the beauty of Technicolor.

Sidewall fixtures between the balcony front line and stage proscenium should not be lighted, and where there are boxes in this area and it is necessary to provide lights therefor, such lighting should be at a low level of illumination, preferably with low wattage bulbs of blue or green coloring, which also applies to under the balcony lighting. Red, yellow or orange colored lighting should be eliminated wherever possible…Colored light should not be projected on the screen, screen masking, or stage proscenium during the projection of a Technicolor picture from the beginning of the main title to the final fade out.59

54 “The Saga of Technicolor,” undated. From the Rudy Behlmer Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
55 “All Wide Film and All Color Predicted,” American Cinematographer 10, no. 9 (December 1929): 43.
58 Ibid.
59 “Projection of Technicolor Prints,” undated. From the Technicolor Corporate Archive, Motion Picture Department, George Eastman Museum.
The booklet included the following notice in small print at its end: “THE FOREGOING SUGGESTIONS ARE MADE SO THAT YOU MAY BENEFIT FROM OUR RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE AND WE URGE THAT YOU CONSIDER THEM CAREFULLY.”

The booklet distributed by the company demonstrates a desire to control the look of a Technicolor film beyond the studios, indicating the importance of the public’s perception of the process on-screen. Joshua Yumibe has argued that one commonality between color in the cinema, the emergent mass culture, and modernism is that “color affects us by way of our bodies.” Distributing a booklet guiding theater managers and projectionists evidences the company’s awareness of what Yumibe refers to as the sensuous nature of color. Technicolor’s success depended not only on the industry’s, but also the public’s acceptance of the three-strip process and so it was crucial that screenings reflect the accuracy, the realism Technicolor’s newest product promised.

The distribution of the booklet is also consistent with Technicolor exhibiting greater control over their product in the mid-1930s after the introduction of the three-strip process, with the increasing oversight of the Color Control Department. Officially founded in 1926, the department was meant to aid production personnel in designing for the limited range of the two-color process. With the introduction of three-color in 1932, Technicolor promoted the department as a means of avoiding the purported excesses of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Natalie Kalmus, Herbert Kalmus’s former wife, headed this department, with her name appearing as Color Consultant in the credits for almost every Technicolor film made between 1935 and 1948.

In 1935, Natalie Kalmus presented a lecture, “Color Consciousness,” to the Technicians Branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which was reprinted in the *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* that same year. This piece of writing provides insight into the company’s views on the proper use of color as determined by Kalmus herself, which incorporated psychological motivation and “color harmony” to enhance composition, character, and emotion. Color harmony was long a preoccupation of theorists in the industrial arts since the 1800s, with Michel-Eugène Chevreul’s assumptions about specific types of color combinations resulting in “agreeable impressions” informing long-held conventions about it. In “Color Consciousness,” Kalmus positions color as being the “last step” in faithfully reproducing realism in motion pictures; the implication being that the three-strip Technicolor was the most successful process to do so. In order to maintain the

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60 Ibid., emphasis in original.
realism Technicolor was capable of demonstrating, the work of Natalie Kalmus and her associates was critical from the company’s perspective. Richard Neupert argues that Natalie Kalmus and her associates in the Color Control Department played a significant role in promoting the three-strip process and “the Technicolor look” “by actively convincing critics and potential customers that in addition to being accurate and relatively cost efficient, Technicolor would also be aesthetically pleasing, consistent, and essential.”

Recognizing the work conducted by the Color Control Department has been something of a standard in most former research conducted on the comprehensive history of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation. The specific nature of this work and what it entailed, however, has been decidedly absent from the discussion and this dissertation brings to light the activities of the Color Control Department, particularly in Chapter 3. As this chapter has demonstrated, however, there has been a continuum in discourses surrounding color motion picture processes concerning realism and their ability to reproduce it on-screen. While there is a precedent, the extent to which Technicolor publicly emphasized the need to develop a color conscious and the company’s attempts to guide critics and viewers towards what that exactly was warrants attention. As one of the most active methods in which a company attempted to control the overall look of a color motion picture process, the work conducted by Kalmus and her associates further differentiates Technicolor from other color motion picture companies.

Technicolor’s increasing push for control in the mid-1930s, coupled with the company’s distribution of materials emphasizing the realism of the three-strip process and increasing discourses surrounding the need to develop a “color consciousness” evidence a desire to shape the public’s understanding and perception of realism, as presented by the process on-screen. In “Color Consciousness,” Kalmus writes that one must “develop a color sense...[a] ‘color conscious,’” advocating for the study of “color harmony, the appropriateness of color to certain situations, the appeal of color to the emotions.”

As the following chapters demonstrate, the idea of cultivating a color conscious in one’s wardrobe became increasingly prevalent throughout the 1930s and 1940s, which became one of the productive ways in which the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation could collaborate with the fashion industry. By representing clothing on-screen in accurate colors, Technicolor could assist in educating the spectator on correct color combinations while emphasizing the beauty of the ensembles. Technicolor, then, continued the process of educating through the senses, as outlined by Louis Prang and Loyd Jones. Cultivating a color conscious, as outlined by Technicolor and Natalie Kalmus, cemented Technicolor as a modern product, and the three-strip process’s place within modern culture.

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64 Kalmus, 140.
2. “About This Matter of Fashions”: *Photoplay*’s Rise to Hollywood’s Fashion Authority

The October 1939 issue of *Photoplay* features actor Gary Cooper on its cover, his likeness captured by commercial photographer Paul Hesse. The full-color photograph presents a smiling Cooper wearing a smart border tartan jacket and silky red and blue patterned ascot. The cover is typical of 1930s *Photoplay* save for one new addition; sitting snugly under the red masthead are the words “Hollywood’s Fashion Authority.” With the introduction of those three words to its cover, the magazine formally identified with an idea it stressed to readers since its inception in 1911; not only that there were strong ties between the fashion and film industries, but that *Photoplay* was the most comprehensive and reliable source for all things relating to fashion and film. From the beginning, *Photoplay* considered fashion and the screen as synonymous entities, with the latter strongly influencing the former.

Fashion has long been viewed as a critical element to the fan magazine. In 1939, Margaret Thorp commented on the strong relationship between fashion and the film fan magazine in her book *America at the Movies*:

One obvious way to resemble your ideal is to dress as she does and no fan magazine is complete without its fashion department devoted to the costumes of the stars both on and off the screen. The glamorous ladies are less concerned here with displaying their latest purchases than with expounding their philosophy of dress, adaptable to a fifteen as well as a fifteen-hundred-a-week income, or showing what three outfits they consider fundamental to a perfect weekend.¹

Thorp’s comments exhibit a few of the many reasons film fan magazines are rich sources for researchers. Thorp touches on the role of celebrities and stars as fashion icons and arbiters of style, with fan magazines allowing these public figures to communicate more readily, albeit indirectly, with eager fans. According to Richard Dyer, the film fan magazine was an important arena contributing to the construction and commoditization of the star, as well as a space in which certain ideologies were created that strengthened the star’s profile.

Furthermore, fan magazines were key to the construction of the star persona in that they allowed for the efficient, easy dissemination of information regarding these persons. Notably, Thorp’s *America at the Movies* was published in 1939, the year coinciding with *Photoplay*’s self-proclamation as “Hollywood’s Fashion Authority.” Her comment concerning the necessity of a fashion department in the film fan magazine reflects the important place fashion had carved out for itself in the film fan magazine since *Photoplay* introduced its own in 1920.

In previous research focusing on this significant time period in the history of the fan magazine, there are mentions of the various beauty services offered by the publications, particularly those offered by *Photoplay*. In the past decades, excellent historical research has been conducted on the cultural and historical importance of the fan magazine and the construction of fan culture with a focus on its best customer: women. Anthony Slide provides an overarching historicization of the fan magazine while Kathryn Fuller zooms in to offer an in-depth, historical exploration of *Photoplay*, focusing on James Quirk, the magazine’s Editor-in-Chief spanning the years 1920 to 1932—the years most crucial to this study. More recently, Sumiko Higashi has delved into *Photoplay* during the “long fifties,” stretching from 1948 to 1963, providing a close reading of female Hollywood stars, the relationship they shared with their fans, and mass consumption in the 1950s. The second half of Higashi’s book investigates magazine culture from a postwar consumer culture perspective, exploring women’s consumption of imagery through advertising, citing the fan magazine’s ability to demystify stardom and enchant them into a fanciful Cinderella story of their own. While these researchers acknowledge *Photoplay* as a notable fashion resource for its readers, there is a lack of discussion

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about the establishment and evolution of specific departments within the publication, particularly its fashion department. The absence of discourse surrounding the earliest days of *Photoplay*’s fashion department and its content encourages questions about who its editors were, how fashion was addressed in the magazine, and what such a section may have offered its readers at the time of publication. Furthermore, there remains the larger question surrounding *Photoplay*’s ascent to its self-proclaimed title as the leading authority on Hollywood fashions remains. Of significance to this chapter is the evolution of one of the most lasting and lucrative additions to the fashion department— *Photoplay*’s shopping service. An exploration of these issues allows for an understanding of what followed in subsequent decades.

To better understand the significance of *Photoplay*’s fashion department, this chapter focuses on the early to mid-1920s—the formative years of the department—by beginning with its official introduction to the magazine in 1920, and concluding in the early 1930s. This slice of time was crucial to building a fashion department within *Photoplay*, and an examination of this period provides us with an opportunity to understand why such a department was included in the magazine. This chapter considers the earliest years of *Photoplay*’s fashion department by focusing on the contributions made by the magazine’s first three fashion editors: actress Norma Talmadge, New York socialite Carolyn Van Wyck, and fashion illustrator Grace Corson. There is a notable lack of resources concerning *Photoplay* and its publisher, Macfadden Publications, making it difficult to ascertain each writer’s level of involvement with the publication, including whether or not the columns were actually written by the woman whose name was in the byline. An in-depth exploration of the three earliest rounds of *Photoplay*’s fashion editors allows for a reconstruction of history of the fashion department despite not having access to company records. The magazine itself does provide some clues about changes regarding personnel including, for instance, the hiring of a new Editor-in-Chief who might be keen on introducing a new editorial policy. Nevertheless, the columns themselves are rich sources for determining the aims of *Photoplay*’s fashion department in its earliest days. Despite the lack of information concerning their authors, the columns remain valuable, inviting an examination of their content and how that content reflected and molded American values while appealing to consumer interests. Through an examination of the fashion department’s early years, we can understand how *Photoplay* ultimately established itself as “Hollywood’s Fashion Authority,” where that designation placed *Photoplay* within American culture, and how the fashion department’s formative years placed *Photoplay* on a trajectory focused on consumption and the power of star “types” in the following decades.

This chapter also focuses on the presence of and discussions surrounding color in *Photoplay*, including the value it added to the content of the earliest fashion columns at a time when color was not yet widely used in print or films. The use of color as a visual element in the magazine and its significance to the fashion department will also be discussed. Color motion picture processes and
color illustrations and photographs in advertising and publishing share many similarities from a historical perspective. Technical limitations and high costs proved to be the most problematic obstacles to overcome in color film and print media. Fostering a need for color in advertising and publishing was a boom in the use of color in consumer goods. Regina Lee Blaszczyk’s exploration into color demonstrates a broader range of color was introduced to consumer goods in the 1920s largely due to advances in the dye industry following World War I. The increase of color in consumer goods demanded a need to advertise in color in order to highlight product features and innovations. As a publication concerned with film, fashion, and consumption, Photoplay provides a unique space for a discussion of color, since we can examine color in a few different ways, including: 1) How color film was discussed in the 1920s and 30s—the decades in which color film became a serious consideration within the film industry; 2) Discourses on color in relation to clothing, makeup, stars, and “types”; and 3) The use of color within the publication itself, in the form of photographs and illustrations. While this chapter does address Photoplay’s coverage of three-strip Technicolor and discourses surrounding color, it largely focuses on the fan magazine as a conduit for dispersing information between the fashion and film industries. Such elements help to develop a nexus between these two industries, thereby presenting an in-depth contextualization of the time period and promotional practices explored in the subsequent chapters.

A few comments are necessary here about the fan magazine as a resource, and why Photoplay has been selected as the publication of focus in this chapter. In terms of accessibility, Photoplay is one of the most readily available fan magazines. The magazine is available digitally in near-entirety between the years 1914 and 1943 via the Media History Digital Library. The Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences also has a complete run of delicate physical copies available to researchers. In addition to being a resource with relatively easy access, Photoplay proves a significant publication for this study for other reasons, namely its popularity and heavy emphasis on fashion-related content. By 1918, Photoplay boasted circulation figures north of 200,000, and by the early 1930s that number was said to have tripled. Such numbers reinforce Anthony Slide’s assessment that Photoplay was “the leader in the field” from the 1910s through the 1930s, the time period considered to be the “golden age” of the film fan magazine, and the years this

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7 The Media History Library is an online source of digitized trade papers and film fan magazines in the public domain. There are currently over 2 million scanned pages available for viewing on their website, http://mediahistoryproject.org/ (accessed November 28, 2016).
8 Richard Koszarski notes that Photoplay’s circulation in 1918 was 204,434 (An Evening’s Entertainment, 193) and James Rorty cites a 1930s promotional pamphlet for Photoplay listing a circulation of more than 600,000 in James Rorty, Our Master’s Voice: Advertising (New York: The John Day Company, 1934): 252.
Furthermore, Photoplay was, in many ways, a pioneer in the field, originating content mimicked by other fan magazines in circulation at the time—especially fashion-related content. Perhaps most significantly, Photoplay was the only fan magazine to so closely identify itself with fashion, wearing the badge of “Hollywood’s Fashion Authority” on its cover well into the 1940s.

Overview of the Photoplay Fashion Department: Women Audiences, Star Power, and Consumption

The Photoplay fashion department underwent changes in content and appearance during the 19-year period discussed in this chapter. Despite these editorial differences, the overall tone of the fashion department and its columns remained constant, maintaining the discourse that the screen and its stars were the best resources for obtaining ideas about fashion. In her essay on consumption in the early twentieth century, Kristin Hoganson describes “imagined communities of dress” and consumption larger than the nation which grew as a result of expanding trade connections linking distributors and consumers.

The expansion of the Photoplay fashion department over the years took a similar path, melding the boundaries between stars and their fans while opening up logical paths of consumption. Furthermore, the influence of American fan magazines could be seen on a global scale, with publications like Cine-Mundial (the Spanish-language version of Moving Picture World) and Cinéa, a French film magazine, presenting a similar style and content to those seen in their American counterparts. The fashion department featured in Photoplay represented a literal bridge between the worlds of fashion and film, reflecting an awareness of the power of the two industries combined. With a strong emphasis placed on the power of stars and star style the Photoplay fashion department provided an arena in which the American fashion and film industries could collaborate and promote each other.

By 1920, movie-going had established itself as the most popular leisure activity of the middle-class. Recognized within the fashion industry as key consumers, so too did women present themselves as attractive and integral customers to the film industry following the business boom of the nickelodeon era (widely recognized to last between 1905 and 1915). Kathy Peiss argues that the rise of the nickelodeon allowed large numbers of working-class

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women to regularly enjoy commercialized forms of leisure, estimating that in the midst of the nickelodeon era, 40% of the audience was comprised of women. Like the extravagant department stores built in the United States during the nineteenth century, the movie theaters built in the wake of the nickelodeon era were extravagant, comfortable palaces built with amenities focusing on the female patron. Such features included tea rooms and nurseries staffed with attendants to mind young children, allowing mothers to enjoy the picture, worry-free, to much success. Jack Stebbins, the manager of the Liberty Theatre in Kansas City, enjoyed the success of these offerings, noting “it’s a great policy and I am going to stick to it for a while. The cost of the venture is small, but the results are large.” That these conveniences were included in the cost of a ticket not only encouraged women to patronize the cinemas but also continued to keep the cost of attending the theaters at a minimum. Films, then, were being promoted as a low-cost form of entertainment directed towards women and this notion was echoed in the film magazines, whose content increasingly focused on women’s interests and concerns, strengthening the bond between American women and the film industry.

As early as 1910, Moving Picture World urged filmmakers to dress their actresses beautifully since “women will go to see those dresses as well as to see the play,” advising that “the better dressed the moving picture is, the more it will increase in popularity amongst its vast public.” Recognizing the promotional opportunities between women and fashions seen on the silver screen, tie-ins between the studios and shops across the United States were common practice from the late 1910s onwards. Much like department stores and mail-order catalogs capitalizing on technological progress, manufacturers turned to the cinema as a new medium to exploit the established consumer culture.

13 Major theaters built across America throughout the 1920s were equipped with special tea rooms, or offered “tea matinees,” in which cinemas served afternoon tea to women attending the matinees. When the Vermont was built in Los Angeles, Exhibitors Trade Review noted the new theatre featured a nursery “which will be recognized as a boon and thoroughly enjoyed by the neighborhood mother…where the tired baby may be taken and the mother can enjoy the show from behind glass windows while sitting in a comfortable rocking chair.” Exhibitors Trade Review 11, no. 10 (February 4, 1922): 696.
14 Exhibitors Trade Review 17, no. 4 (February 28, 1925): 43.
Acknowledging this marketing opportunity, exhibitors became increasingly aware of their predominantly female audience and the opportunity to cater to them. To promote *The Red Lantern* (Albert Capellani, 1919), for example, exhibitors in Omaha, Nebraska utilized the windows of the Orkin Brothers’ store specializing in women’s wear in order to display Chinese silks and dresses, with cut-outs and posters of Alla Nazimova, as well as production stills as a backdrop for the clothes. The Burgess-Nash department store was noted for its clever display, situating the window in such a way that if one were to look away from the window, up the street, their gaze would meet the entrance of the Boyd Theatre, where *The Red Lantern* just so happened to be screening. The city of Omaha was praised for such promotions, with Guy Leavitt predicting “the methods used will mark a step forward in the business of motion picture exhibition in Omaha and the middle west.” ¹⁸ Similarly, in advising exhibitors on how to boost interest in the film *Extravagance* (Victor Schertzinger, 1919), *Motion Picture World* counseled them to “Tell that [Dorothy Dalton’s] part calls for the most unusual and magnificent dressing and that her frocks are revelations in the spring styles. Call it ‘a fashion show of beautiful women.’ That will appeal to the women, and they will not be disappointed.” The magazine also advised exhibitors to “tie up with the stores selling women’s clothes for the fashion stuff” and to “get the [local paper] editor to run a paragraph about the gowns in [the] department.” ¹⁹

The formative years of *Photoplay*’s fashion department reflect the magazine’s keen awareness of an opportunity to cater more directly to—and capitalize on—women’s interests in clothes and stars. As Kathryn Fuller and Shelley Stamp demonstrate, the content of film fan magazines skewed towards its female readers since their emergence in the early 1910s. ²⁰ As Fuller argues, more practical and timely stories about the film industry printed in the fan magazines targeted readers of both sexes, but the increasing content on style and beauty illustrates a rising interest in attracting a female audience. ²¹ Indeed, looking through the advertisement section of these magazines, one is bombarded with listings for beauty products, style books, household products, and even special courses targeted towards women. The Gentlewoman Institute, for example, promised to teach women how to cultivate winsomeness and hold the interest of men while illustration and design schools advertised their

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²¹ Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, 115–32.
courses as “fascinating branches of art for which women are peculiarly well fitted.”

In her discussion of James Quirk’s placement as the Editor-in-Chief of *Photoplay* in 1917, Kathryn Fuller outlines his goal of raising the standards of movie fandom by commissioning well-known journalists and fiction writers with the goal of convincing the public to consider movie fans as well-educated, middle-class film consumers. For many years, notes from Quirk appeared in *Photoplay*, encouraging readers to pay special attention to the advertisements. Quirk was a proponent for the further spread of consumer culture, arguing that the movies had created a “perfect consumer” who had an almost complete dependence on motion pictures to generate their needs and desires. In a 1930s promotional booklet directed to potential advertisers, Quirk penned the following, which perfectly encapsulates the idea behind the fashion department, but specifically its shopping service:

When the American woman sees her favorite screen actress and notes with very keen interest every detail of her attire…she is immersed in that mood which makes her most receptive to the suggestion that she must have these lovely things for her own…and she will scheme and plan to have for her own the charming frocks and appealing millinery, the smart footwear, the seductive furs and wraps—all the tempting possessions which the silver screen has so seductively exposed to her view.

With Quirk at its helm, *Photoplay*’s fashion department became increasingly focused on catering to the consumer, with the shopping service providing a direct link between the magazine and consumers.

While fan magazines generally catered to their female readers, some content within the magazines reflects the complex nature of the industry’s relationship with women. Despite the abundance of articles and advertisements targeting the female reader’s interest in fashion, some content featured in the fan magazines mocked these readers. One cartoon illustrated by Harvey Peoke titled “Reel Paris Fashions” published in *Motion Picture Magazine*, for example, shows women wearing absurd hats with names incorporating film industry jargon, such as “A ‘Split-Reel’ Mode,” “A ‘Five-Feet-Of-Celluloid’ Turban,” and “The ‘Five-Part Feature’ Bonnet” (Figure 2.1). That Peoke chose to poke fun at women’s hats is notable given the problematic nature these accessories presented for women at the cinema in the first decades of the twentieth century. Picture hats, with their large size, broad brims, and often-elaborate trimming, became popular in the early 1890s, remaining so until the early

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23 Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, 150.
1910s.\textsuperscript{26} The large size of these accessories made them unpopular amongst theater-goers, with cinemas projecting announcements reminding women to remove their hats before screenings began.\textsuperscript{27} By referencing this trendy yet problematic item, Peoke's cartoon is just one example of the complex relationship between women and the film industry at the time.

When it came to matters of fashion, Photoplay concentrated on women's fashion for the vast majority of its run. There were, however, rare instances in which the magazine turned its attention to men's fashions. In 1918, Photoplay ran an article penned by Sam Levy, a Los Angeles-based tailor working in the film industry, in which Levy pushed the idea that the screen had overtaken the stage as "the criterion of fashion," providing males with proper fashion advice.\textsuperscript{28} The article listed Herbert Rawlinson, Elliott Dexter, Wallace Reid, William Desmond, and Franklin Farnum as some of the best-dressed men on the screen, with Harold Lockwood named as Levy's pick for best-dressed. Almost two decades later, the magazine published a letter from Oklahoman Cecil W. Norman in which he implored Photoplay to start "a department with tips for the men on what to wear."\textsuperscript{29} While the magazine never went so far as to dedicate an entire department to men's fashion, it did feature an article in response to Norman's request in the same issue focusing on style tips for young men.\textsuperscript{30} Despite these limited attempts to address men as an audience, women proved to be Photoplay's target consumer.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure21.jpg}
\caption{Harvey Peoke's cartoon mocking women's hats. In Motion Picture Magazine 10, no. 11 (December 1915): 124.}
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\textsuperscript{26} The article "What Women Want to Know" announced the "small chapeau is in the ascendant," in New York Times (April 5, 1913): 84.
\textsuperscript{27} Michelle Tolini Finanore, Hollywood Before Glamour: Fashion in American Silent Film (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
\textsuperscript{29} Photoplay 74, no. 4 (March 1935): 16.
\end{flushleft}
Since the emergence of the genre, the most popular fan magazines maintained the discourse that the screen influenced women’s fashion. One of the many examples of this type of writing comes from *Motion Picture Magazine* in which the film writer and producer William Lord Wright explained the appeal of the cinema, acknowledging that the women patron “knows that the Motion Picture actresses wear the latest modes, and that she can revel in the style of a gown much better in the picture show than she can in the pages of some fashion journal.” Photographs of actresses like Anna Q. Nilsson, Alice Joyce and Mabel Normand accompanied Wright’s article. Throughout the 1910s, film fan magazines regularly published photo essays in which actresses posed in costumes worn in current pictures, items which the magazine promised were either picked from their own closets or garments demonstrating fashions from the coming season. In addition to photo spreads, most fan magazines included articles like Wright’s and, later, columns concerning fashion from a screen perspective accompanied by photographs of actresses modeling richly-decorated clothes. Beginning with its first issue, *Shadowland*, for example, published the monthly column “What Every Woman Should Know,” written by the anonymous author using the pen name “The Rambler.” In addition to stressing the screen’s influence on fashion, the column published photos of actresses dressed in attractive, higher-end clothes, accompanied by captions providing readers with information such as which stores carried the pictured garments or who designed them.

Beginning with the 1920s, *Photoplay* expanded its content to include more dedicated lifestyle columns, offering readers advice on clothing, makeup, and home decorations while building up a troop of writers whom the magazine dubbed experts and authorities in their field. In his November 1923 letter from the editor, Quirk acknowledged the talented artists and artisans working in the studios noting, “it is natural that the motion picture should have a tremendous influence on the American home.” Quirk went on to note that the magazine would soon feature a column written by William J. Moll, “one of the most inspired, and yet most practical, of interior decorators” in the nation “to guide the readers of this magazine in their efforts to apply…the ideas of the masters

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32 In a two-page spread in the June 1918 issue of *Photoplay*, for example, actress Jackie Saunders flaunted some examples of the “thousand dollars worth of tailleurs, one sided sailors, summer dolmans and beaded bags…all design by Harry Collins” picked up on a recent shopping spree in New York City. In *Photoplay* 14, no. 1 (June 1918): 30–31.
33 The column “What Every Woman Should Know” appeared in the first issue of *Shadowland* 1, no. 1 (September 1919): 51.
34 One caption accompanying a photograph provided by Ira L. Hill read: “Youthful dance frock of satin and georgette, daintily trimmed with hand-made flowers. Posed by Jackie Saunders for Bonwit, Teller & Co.,” in *Screenland* 1, no. 6 (February 1920): 53.
of interior decoration who are devoting their energies to the screen.” Column focusing on matters relating to interior design appeared in the magazine regularly over the years, eventually developing into a shopping service in which readers could purchase items like decorative jars, rugs, and candelabras. The interior design column serves as an example of a practice Photoplay long employed in its pages: to emphasize and promote the screen’s influence on various areas of the lives of the American movie-going public. This chapter, however, focuses on Photoplay’s effort to spotlight a new approach to promoting the partnership between fashion and film when it placed actress Norma Talmadge (1894–1957) as its fashion editor, the first in a string of personalities we will explore who led the magazine’s fashion department. Talmadge’s placement in Photoplay as its fashion editor was the first in a nineteen-year-long campaign to establish this particular publication as “Hollywood’s Fashion Authority.” The three women chosen to represent Photoplay’s fashion department in its earliest days approached and discussed fashion from different perspectives, representing various areas of expertise. The following sections introduce Photoplay’s first three fashion editors, providing an overview of their columns and the manner in which they discussed fashion and style.

“Acknowledged Leader of Fashion”: Norma Talmadge, Photoplay’s First Fashion Editor (1920–1921)

The May 1920 issue of Photoplay featured an announcement introducing Norma Talmadge as the magazine’s forthcoming fashion editor, making Talmadge the first upon whom the magazine would bestow the title, one the actress would hold throughout the following eleven issues. The announcement informed readers that, beginning with the June issue, they would receive “all the intimacies of attractive dressing” from Talmadge, “the screen’s acknowledged leader of fashion.” Despite an early assertion in which Talmadge claimed she did not “care much for fashion and dress, and [was] not always watching the styles, as some do,” Photoplay long recognized Talmadge for her style, often naming her alongside actresses like Mary Pickford, Clara Kimball Young, and Fannie Ward as one of the “smartest and best dressed women of the screen,” alerting readers that films “starring any of these women are full of fashion tips.”

Talmadge’s sudden appearance in Photoplay reflects a wider practice of film fan magazines utilizing stars to promote consumption. During the classical era of Hollywood cinema, the movie houses established themselves as the

37 Photoplay 17, no. 6 (May 1920): 6; Photoplay 18, no. 1 (June 1920): 64.
38 “A Day With Norma Talmadge of the Vitagraph Company,” Motion Picture Magazine 8, no. 10 (November 1914): 109.
most popular destination for Americans to spend their leisure time, as well as a significant percentage of their income. This passion lured the public not only into a flourishing fan culture but also into a quickly expanding consumer culture centered around the most popular personalities in film. At the same time, this culture encouraged the spread of fashion into the untapped territory of the film industry. There was, at this time, an abundance of women’s magazine featuring fashion-related content and advice. Indeed, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *McCall’s*, and *Women’s Home Companion* were specifically marketed to middle-class women in the first decades of the twentieth century, with content including short stories, recipes, dress patterns, and household tips. American women could also turn to *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar* for content specifically focusing on women’s fashion. While Talmadge’s appearance in *Photoplay* marks the first time a film fan magazine recruited a screen actress as its fashion editor, the concept may be traced to the early-1910s, when *Ladies’ Home Journal* enlisted actresses from the screen and stage including Annie Russell, Geraldine Farrar, and others to sit as guest editors with an eye towards promoting American designs.40

The establishment of a formalized fashion department at *Photoplay*, however, allowed the magazine to address women readers in ways differing from publications like *Ladies’ Home Journal* by combining their interests in fashion and film, thereby opening up a new arena for the discussion and spread of fashion. By the early 1920s, the notion of promotional tie-ins was common practice, with many companies paying actors to claim certain products were responsible for their appeal and consumers modeled their purchases accordingly. While Talmadge’s column focused more on advice than it did on pushing specific products, it set the stage for what was to come in *Photoplay*’s fashion department over the subsequent years and made it natural for a film star to be considered a fashion authority. With its focus on star style and costumes, the fashion department in *Photoplay* allowed women to get ideas about their own style from actresses they admired.

Richard Dyer argues stars were characterized by ordinary as well as unique qualities. They are significant because they represented social types who defined behavioral norms for worshipful fans identifying with them.41 Stars were of significant importance consistently throughout the fashion columns, beginning from its earliest days. Talmadge’s placement as fashion editor was sufficient in that her columns discussed a subject like fashion but her star status provided a unique quality to her column, one which was attractive to fans desiring the well-dressed star’s insight. In the years following Talmadge’s departure as fashion editor, Carolyn Van Wyck, as well as Grace Corson provided insight into the life of screen stars, in different ways, as this chapter demonstrates.

40 In 1913, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* began a monthly series called “Famous Actresses as Fashion Editors.”

In general, Talmadge’s columns reflect the social commentary inspired by the reform movements of the Progressive Era. Talmadge’s columns also represent the changing status of the American woman at the end of the Progressive Era, with content that would appeal to the values of the New Woman—those who were young, educated, active, and career-driven; those who, in other words, comprised the majority of Talmadge’s readership. Norma Talmadge has been credited for portraying the modern woman in her films throughout the 1920s. In *Within the Law* (Frank Lloyd, 1923), Talmadge is cast as a shop girl, serving prison time for a crime she did not commit. She emerges from prison after three years and forms an all-girl gang that swindles older men, eventually finding love with the wealthy Joe Garson, played by Lew Cody. Several of Talmadge’s films find the actress advancing in society through marriage, including *The Social Secretary* (John Emerson, 1916). While such actions may not seem particularly “modern” today, in the 1920s they were considered as examples of the New Woman; one who was able to pursue her own ambitions in the world of business and could find success by relying on a smart mind and strong work ethic. The New Woman, in short, recognized and validated the increasing number of women who decided to work outside the home in the 1920s to satisfy the economic need for a growing workforce.

Notably, Talmadge was considered a fine example of the New Woman in her off-screen life as well. The lucrative Norma Talmadge Film Corporation the actress formed in 1916 with Joseph Schenck, her motion picture exhibitor husband, established Talmadge as an assertive businesswoman, earning her commendation in a 1930 *Ladies’ Home Journal* article about women in business. At the same time, the media presented Talmadge as a model wife to Schenck and a smart dresser both on and off-screen. Furthermore, Norma Talmadge was one of the most popular stars on the screen in the 1920s, with her career peaking in the early part of the decade. Tracing her rising fame in the fan magazines strengthens this assessment. In a review of her performance in *The Moth* (Edward José, 1917), a critic in *Photoplay* predicted, “Norma Talmadge is approaching her perihelion. She has still to find a great story.” Just a few years later, the actress won a popularity contest conducted by a Minnesota newspaper, placed second behind Mary Pickford in *Motion Picture*

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42 Pearl White, one of the most renowned “serial queens,” set a precedent for the American New Woman in her popular adventure films. See Marina Dahlquist, “‘Why Pearl?’: Introduction,” in *Exporting Perilous Pauline: Pearl White and the Serial Film Craze* (Bloomington: University of Illinois Press, 2013): 46–70.


Magazine’s reader-determined Popularity Contest, and was ranked among the stars who gave “the most convincing, the most interesting, interpretations...upon the shadow stage” in 1919.47 By the time Talmadge made her debut as Photoplay’s first fashion editor in June 1920, she was a recognized, stylish, and well-liked star in the media, with an increasingly visible profile in the fan magazine circuit. To name the actress as its first fashion editor was not only a wise decision for Photoplay, but for Talmadge herself. In addition to the standard coverage the magazine provided regarding her professional career, a regular column published in the most popular fan magazine at the time afforded her the opportunity to increase her star profile in a new way. Furthermore, the column provided Talmadge with an outlet through which she could address her fans while simultaneously allowing readers a glimpse into the well-dressed star’s perspectives on fashion.

After reading Talmadge’s columns published in Photoplay, it becomes clear the intended audience for these articles was young, modern women; the same as the target demographic for her films. While the columns do not specifically mention Talmadge’s films, they acted as extensions of her star personality, allowing her to reach out to the same fan base who would most likely support her career. That Talmadge was simultaneously appearing in films while her Photoplay column was published provided a nice cross-promotional opportunity, and anecdotes about her life off-screen allowed her fans to sympathize with her in new ways. It is notable that while Talmadge was the only actress whose name was attached to Photoplay’s fashion department in such an official manner, her columns rarely provided readers with details about the star’s experience working in the film industry.

Save for this brief mention of her involvement with the film industry, Talmadge’s columns otherwise situated the actress as an observer of trends, offering that she pondered what it meant to be a well-dressed woman when she “was studying style from the standpoint of the screen.”48 With this perspective, Talmadge immediately positioned herself on the same level as her readers, turning to the screen to better understand dress. The columns do not find Talmadge on the sound stage, but rather walking down the street, trying on a hat in a millinery shop, or giving household suggestions target towards “servantless women, bridges and flat-dwellers.”49 These columns, then, were unique in that Photoplay found a way to promote the relationship between fashion and film without ever needing to directly mention the film industry itself. That Talmadge—a star upon whom the magazine bestowed the title of “stylish personality”—was advertised as penning the columns was reasonable

47 “Green Room Jottings,” Motion Picture Magazine 20, no. 7 (August 1920): 88; Julian Johnson, “The Shadow Stage,” Photoplay 17, no. 6 (November 1919): 76.
enough, strengthening *Photoplay*’s claim that the screen and its stars provided the greatest examples of styles to the average American woman.

Talmadge’s columns often see her directly addressing the American working woman, discussing the relationship between the working girl and her clothes. In one of her earliest columns, published during the summer of 1920, Talmadge writes: “The sensible girl can dress quite as coolly and prettily for her office as the girl who spends the summer in play.”50 Indeed, Talmadge’s column often make no distinction between women who work—the “sensible girls”—and those who do not. In a later column, Talmadge maintains that:

> Clothes are no more important to the professional woman than they are to women in any other walk of life—but our work has made us think of them and study them and learn how to get the best results with the faces and figures we are endowed with.51

As previously discussed, Talmadge briefly mentioned her profession in her first column, confessing that in her early years as an actress she sewed many the dresses she wore on-screen. Rather than putting Talmadge on a pedestal, this example served to make her appear relatable to her readers. In a careful effort not to differentiate the actress from her audience, Talmadge wrote that “even today, when I am in the position to spend quite a bit of money on my own wardrobe, I frequently design my own gowns and find someone who can grasp my ideas and translate them into clothes.”52 Talmadge’s anecdotes about sewing consider the wider New Woman sentiments regarding hardiness and resourcefulness, but also reflect the sharp recession that hit the United States following World War I. In the post-war years, American women turned to sewing their own clothes not only as a method of saving money, but also as an outlet to express her own originality, with *The New York Times* noting that ready-made garments could detract from a woman’s individuality which was “just the thing which the modern woman, if she is wise, is anxious to avoid.”53

A close reading of Talmadge’s early columns reveal she mainly urged readers to avoid succumbing to what she termed “the H.C. of L”—the High Cost of Laziness—by sewing the majority of their wardrobe themselves.

In her first column, published in June 1920, Talmadge explores the origin of trends and her musings on “fashion,” mentioning she could not afford the services of stylists during her “first years...in motion picture work,” leaving her to sew many of the dresses she wore on-screen herself.54 Research from Jane Gaines and Michelle Tolini Finamore demonstrates such practices were common prior to the establishment of in-house costume departments, when

51 Norma Talmadge, “Good and Bad Taste in Clothes,” *Photoplay* 19, no. 3 (February 1921): 47.
increased budgets allowed for more extravagant wardrobes in the 1920s. Despite her position as an established actress, Talmadge did not present herself as such while holding the title of *Photoplay*’s fashion editor. Throughout her columns, Talmadge presented herself as a woman who had plenty of experience choosing the clothes that suited her best. Drawing on the fact that actresses outfitted themselves at the time, Talmadge’s role as fashion editor was natural since her readership was doing the same. Despite significant differences in income, actresses and fans could find common ground in terms of shopping for clothes which best suited their “type.” Timelessness presented another commonality between the actress and the working-class American woman. Mabel Normand, a popular star with Mack Sennett’s Keystone Studios, explained that while she received many of her fashion tips from New York, she chose not to “rely too much on today, for pictures taken today must represent tomorrow’s fashions, else they will be out of date when the film is shown.” This practical advice translated well to Talmadge’s columns in which she regularly cautioned readers that resourcefulness take precedence over trends.

Norma Talmadge’s eleven month-long post at *Photoplay* provided the magazine with a strong foundation upon which they could build their fashion department in the coming years. By using a well-known, well-dressed star as its first fashion editor, the magazine effectively catered to a readership seeking information about film personalities, as well as advice concerning their wardrobes. Records concerning *Photoplay* in general and its fashion department in particular have been surprisingly difficult to track down, but the magazine’s Questions and Answers column provides us with some valuable clues. This column allowed readers to pose anonymous questions to the Answer Man, and *Photoplay* would print the responses, leaving readers to venture what the original question was. The Questions and Answers column, one of the longest-running features in *Photoplay*, referred readers to the newly-formed fashion department from the beginning. In the issue coinciding with Norma Talmadge’s first column as fashion editor, a reader named Rowena—who, presumably, asked for fashion advice—received the following response from the Answer Man: “We have a series of articles by Norma Talmadge, beginning in this issue…Norma is, I believe, generally considered the best-dressed star on the screen. I don’t know about such things, but Norma always looks good.

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55 Jane Gaines explains that actresses were required to provide their own wardrobe, with the ability to create garments as one of the skills included as part of her job description. Similarly, Michelle Tolini Finamore’s research shows us that actresses turned garments to “modistes” in order to perform alterations that could better suit a certain role. See Jane Gaines, “Costume and Narrative. How Dress Tells the Woman’s Story,” in *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, eds. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (London/New York: Routledge, 1990), 198; and Michelle Tolini Finamore, *Hollywood Before Glamour. Fashion in American Silent Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 116.

56 Grace Kingsley, “Clothes,” *Photoplay* 7, no. 6 (May 1915): 100.
Evidently, while readers could rely on the Answer Man to provide them with information about the film industry and its personalities, they could now look elsewhere within the magazine when it came to matters of fashion. The Answer Man, then, not only amplified Talmadge’s abilities to head *Photoplay*’s fashion department, but also promoted the newly-established department within the magazine by guiding readers to the columns.

A “New York Society Woman”: Carolyn Van Wyck (1921–1924)

When Norma Talmadge began her appointment as *Photoplay*’s first fashion editor in June 1920, the magazine informed readers she would hold the position for one year. After eleven columns, Talmadge’s name made an uneventful departure from the fashion department, and Carolyn Van Wyck, the “nom de plume of a well-known New York society woman,” took over as the head of the magazine’s fashion department in June 1921. 58 Despite never revealing her actual name, *Photoplay* informed readers that Van Wyck was “still young enough to fully appreciate the problems of the girl,” but was worldly enough to advise all types of women, “be they flappers, business women, or wives and mothers.” 59 With this description, *Photoplay* established the new fashion editor as one who could potentially relate and appeal to the magazine’s entire demographic.

Unlike Talmadge, Van Wyck appeared in the pages of *Photoplay* without an announcement prior to her formalized start. As with Talmadge, though, *Photoplay*’s editors assured readers Van Wyck was “a recognized authority in matters of dress, and famous for her good taste.” 60 While Van Wyck did not project the same persona as a fashionable actress like Norma Talmadge, her placement as fashion editor reflects not only New York City’s position as the center for American clothing production throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also the recognition of the city as a viable fashion capital that could rival Paris. When Carolyn Van Wyck initially took over as fashion editor, *Photoplay* informed readers they could contact her via their main office in Chicago. Within a few months of her placement, however, the magazine listed the newly-formed *Photoplay* Magazine Department of Fashions as the best way to contact her, with an address listed in New York City rather than Chicago. This change strengthened the illusion that Van Wyck was the “New York society woman” they purported her to be, but also evidences that *Photoplay* recognized the importance of having a fashion department with a New York City address; by establishing their Department of Fashions in New York

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57 “Questions and Answers,” *Photoplay* 18, no. 1 (June 1920): 127.
City, *Photoplay* would be part of the goings-on within an international fashion capital.

As a fashion editor, Van Wyck differed from Talmadge in several ways, one of which was that she made her services available to readers by encouraging them to send in questions regarding “clothes or coiffures, cold creams or chapeaux!” which Van Wyck would respond to in a supplement to her column. With this, the fashion department at *Photoplay* not only became more inclusive, giving the readers an opportunity to interact more intimately with the fashion editor, but also expanded the department’s purpose by offering beauty advice in addition to wardrobe tips in a more personal setting. While the fashion department was historically and consistently placed in the middle of *Photoplay*, Van Wyck’s responses to readers’ queries were located towards the rear of the magazine. The format of the supplement, called “Miss Van Wyck Says” (later known as “Friendly Advice From Carolyn Van Wyck” and even later “Girls’ Problems”) was similar to *Photoplay*’s popular Questions and Answers column; as readers, we are privy only to Van Wyck’s responses, though it is possible to surmise the original questions based on her response. Replying to reader “A.D.Y.” from Iowa, for example, Van Wyck wrote: “Taffeta in all shades is fashionable. If you wish for a more striking material use printed crêpe de chine.” As was the case during Norma Talmadge’s time as fashion editor, the Answer Man also encouraged *Photoplay* readers to contact Van Wyck with questions pertaining to fashion and beauty, pointing out that each column in the magazine served a specific purpose, highlighting the variety of services *Photoplay* offered its readers.

Early on in her time at *Photoplay*, Van Wyck informed readers that, unlike other fashion magazines, she would “not attempt to dictate the mode.” She went on to give her readers an idea of what she envisioned for the fashion department instead:

> I wish simply to take every woman reader of *Photoplay* for a stroll up Fifth Avenue, New York’s great street of smart shops, and talk to her, as we stroll, about the many wonderful things we should see. When I go to Paris I shall go chiefly for her benefit, bringing back to her the observations of my visits to the Parisian ateliers of fashion. In short, she will see...every whim of the moment’s mode as though she had journeyed to Manhattan or Paris in person!  

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61 Ibid.


63 In response to reader “Maid Marian,” for example, the Answer Man replied: “In the future, would you mind addressing your fashion queries to Miss Van Wyck? And your age-and-height questions to me? Of course it makes it interesting for me to get letters like yours; but I would probably tell you to wear a purple hat with a pink dress; and she would say that Theda Bara was married to Ben Turpin, and that Wallace Reid was not married. And that would never, never do.” In *Photoplay* 21, no. 2 (January 1922): 76.

64 Carolyn Van Wyck, “Expressing the Mode That Follows All the Myriad Moods of Summer,” *Photoplay* 20, no. 3 (August 1921): 32.
Van Wyck often presented her readers with illustrated examples of well-dressed women she encountered on “the Avenue,” encouraging them to take inspirations from her examples on their next shopping trip. Upon introducing readers to Van Wyck, Photoplay noted that her wide knowledge of fashion allowed her to discuss the topic with all types of women ranging from “those fortunate beings who can indulge her every sartorial whim” to “the many more who can count her frocks on the fingers of one hand.”65 Van Wyck’s promise to walk readers through the fashions seen on Fifth Avenue, however, set her apart from her readers, who could most likely not afford to shop in the “smart shops.” With Van Wyck as their guide, the “imagined community of dress” that Photoplay’s fashion department inspired extended to include matters of class, allowing readers to imagine they, too, could partake in a more privileged lifestyle through her columns.

“Something Entirely New”: Grace Corson and the Photoplay Shopping Service (1924–1925)

The August 1924 issue of Photoplay introduced readers to “one of America’s few real fashion authorities”—Grace Corson (1897–1976).66 Nestled between the table of contents and an advertisement for Listerine sat an announcement for the newest addition to the magazine’s editorial staff, and Photoplay’s third fashion editor. Over the next year, Corson critiqued costumes seen on-screen, shopped with the stars, forecasted trends based on what the stars were wearing, and introduced one of the magazine’s longest-lasting and most lucrative features—Photoplay’s shopping service. While the details behind Corson’s placement as Photoplay’s fashion editor are not readily available, the magazine made an intelligent choice. After studying art in Boston, Corson earned a position as the head of Filene’s art department, producing illustrations for the popular department store’s newspaper advertisements for three years. She then moved on to working full-time at the women’s fashion magazine Harper’s Bazaar where she worked as an illustrator, providing meticulous halftone illustrations for fashion spreads featuring trends for the coming seasons. After six years at Harper’s, Corson transitioned to the film fan magazine circuit with her stint at Photoplay, where she continued to provide detailed illustrations of select costumes from the screen, as well as examples of fashionable modern-day fashions.67 Corson differed from Norma Talmadge and Carolyn Van Wyck in several key ways, one of which being her background; out of the three women, Corson was the only one with prior experience working for American fashion publications. While Talmadge and Van Wyck both served

65 Ibid.
a particular purpose in their roles as editors, Corson’s experience working in the fashion industry prior to her joining *Photoplay* lent an increased legitimacy to the fan magazine’s fashion department. Furthermore, Corson’s decision to join the fan magazine evidences a recognition of the film industry as an arena in which one could effectively discuss and promote the latest fashions.

One key way in which Corson differed from her predecessors was that she actively discussed costumes from current films in her columns, occasionally documenting visits to film sets and describing the ensembles worn by the stars in upcoming releases. While Frank Tuttle’s *Miss Bluebeard* (1925) was filming at the Famous Players-Lasky studio based in Astoria, Queens, Corson purportedly visited the set, sketching ensembles worn in the film by actresses Diana Kane, Frances Billings, and Bebe Daniels, the results of which were printed in the January 1925 issue of *Photoplay*. A publicity still from the film displays Daniels wearing the same dress—described by Corson as being “a delightful evening gown of rose colored marquisette…beautifully embroidered with crystal beads, posed over a foundation of silver cloth”\(^68\)—while posing with fellow *Bluebeard* actor Robert Frazier (Figure 2.2). Notably, the publicity still evidences Daniels wearing the same gown while making the same pose as the one depicted in Corson’s illustration. While it is possible that Corson relied upon the publicity still to enhance her memory of her visit to the set, it is likelier that Famous Players-Lasky submitted the photograph to Corson’s publication to increase exposure of the film via appealing fashions via *Photoplay*’s fashion department. This not only questions the authenticity of Corson’s visit to the set, but also demonstrates that practices concerning cross-promotion popularized throughout the 1930s (which will be discussed elsewhere in this chapter) were actually occurring in the previous decade.

In her first *Photoplay* column, Corson illustrated costumes worn by Aileen Pringle and Alma Rubens in their films *True as Steel* (Rupert Hughes, 1924) and *Cytherea* (George Fitzmaurice, 1924), noting that “Miss Pringle’s clothes are too individual to be copied faithfully by the majority—but her ideas are very good, and with few changes, furnish interesting and smart fashion.”\(^69\) Notably, Corson addresses Pringle’s clothes in relation to her ideas, strengthening the responsibility stars had in choosing their own costumes. In the beginning, Corson’s column focused on particular costumes from the screen she picked as “examples of correctness, style, and distinction,” encouraging readers to keep these costumes in mind the next time they went shopping. She also featured costumes she designated as bad examples, picking on certain productions for featuring actresses dressed in costumes which were “wrong in every

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\(^69\) Grace Corson, “Miss Corson Selects Best Screen Clothes of the Month,” *Photoplay* 26, no. 4 (September 1924): 56.
Corson recognized, however, that not every costume translated into the realm of everyday wear. She categorized these more extravagant pieces as “picture gowns,” which she classified as those containing “an excellent suggestions for a simpler gown,” often providing suggestions for making the dresses more suitable for everyday wear. On one “very lovely” gown seen in Garden of Weeds (James Cruze, 1924), Corson commented: “Minus the train and with a higher back, still V-shaped, this gown would still be unusual and much more wearable.” Corson’s comments about “picture gowns” address the larger issue of the improbability of costumes being copied directly from the screen. Since the inception of Photoplay’s fashion department—and for years after—its editors maintained costumes served as the best examples of style that women should keep in mind when shopping. Corson, however, was the first to criticize certain costumes for being too outrageous, too inappropriate, for everyday wear while identifying the ones that would best translate off-screen.

Figure 2.2 (Left) Grace Corson’s illustration of actresses Diana Kane, Frances Billings, and Bebe Daniels on the set of Miss Bluebeard (Frank Tuttle, 1925). Published in Photoplay 27, no. 2 (January 1925): 74. (Right) Publicity still featuring Miss Bluebeard actors Robert Frazer and Bebe Daniels. From the author’s personal collection.

In addition to pointing out films featuring more outrageous fashions, Corson also specified certain directors whose films tended to feature such “picture gowns”—particularly Cecil B. DeMille, whom Corson sharply criticized for his representation of “the smart ladies of New York or Paris,” noting

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72 Ibid.

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he “[clothed] his actresses in designs that the most bizarre designers of Europe would not dare to present as their own.” In the same column, Corson credited DeMille for bringing Gloria Swanson to “the front” but also critiqued him for dressing her in clothes that overwhelmed her personality. Notably, while Corson’s columns provided a space for the discussion of costumes, she never directly acknowledged the contribution of the costume designer. While DeMille was known for his curatorial eye when it came to costumes, he worked closely with a handful of different costume designers and was one of the few directors in the silent era to publicly acknowledge and praise the costume designers with whom he worked, such as Clare West and Peggy Hamilton. As Finamore points out, while the first in-house designers to receive on-screen credit were not hired until the late 1920s, there were many wardrobe heads and designers working in a “behind the scenes” capacity in the 1910s, including Jane Lewis (Biograph Company), Irene Duncan (Universal Pictures), Alpharetta Hoffmann (Lasky Studios), and Peggy Hamilton (Triangle Films), on whose career Finamore sheds some much-needed light. With a column deeply concerned with Hollywood fashions, the absence of Corson’s mentioning of costume designers is striking. An in-depth exploration of several popular film fan magazines, however, shows that these publications did provide a space in which designers and wardrobe heads received some public acknowledgement from the film industry, either in quick mentions or more in-depth features chronicling their work on-set. Such examples can be found from the mid-1910s onwards. A July 1915 issue of Motion Picture Magazine, for example, chronicled the work of the costume designer in the following passage:

Many picture stars have their gowns designed by their own mo-
distes, especially such costumes as they desire for personal use out-
side of the studio. The greater part of costume origination falls, 
however, upon the studio designers, whose role compels them to be
designer, fitter and modiste of the first water.

Notably, the article mentions Jane Lewis, “the head designer of the Vitagraph Company,” who provides some further insight into her role at the studio. The relationship between Photoplay and the Hollywood costume designer blossomed over the years when designers like Adrian and Howard Greer became

73 Grace Corson, “The Extravagance of Screen Fashions,” Photoplay 26, no. 5 (October 1924): 42.
household names, even contributing fashion-related content for the magazine in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s.

In January 1925 Corson’s column made a notable change in format. Rather than critiquing the on-screen style of the stars from the point of view of a savvy spectator, she began visiting film sets, mingling with the stars and illustrating their costumes, allowing these coveted details to be made available exclusively to Photoplay readers prior to the film’s release. Serving as the fashion expert for the leading film fan magazine of the 1920s, it was necessary for Corson to appear as an authoritative figure, but one to whom readers could relate. The confidential tone with which she wrote allowed Corson to easily address her readers, constructing a friendly atmosphere for her column. After sharing an account of a car ride with Swedish actress Anna Q. Nilsson, for example, Corson ends her column with a level of enthusiasm worthy of a fan: “And then, my dears, she asked if she might call me up some time! What would you do if Anna Quirentia asked you that? Well, so did I.”

At the end of the summer of 1925, Corson’s name disappeared from Photoplay, but she remained within the fan magazine genre for a little while longer. Between October 1926 and May 1927, Corson took on a position at Motion Picture Magazine, a direct competitor of Photoplay. Like Photoplay, Motion Picture Magazine introduced a shopping service soon after Corson’s arrival at the magazine, one month after she made her debut. Upon her introduction to Motion Picture Magazine, the editors provided the following introduction to readers: “Grace Corson is a fashion artist of great prestige. She was previously associated with Harper’s Bazaar and her entrée to the Fifth Avenue shops and ateliers, together with her motion picture contacts, makes her the ideal fashion editor of the Motion Picture Magazine.” Notably, there was no mention of Corson’s former experience at Photoplay, her employer’s leading competitor. A close survey of the film fan magazines published in the genre’s “golden age” reveals that different publications often mimicked each other’s content. Photoplay, however, was an undeniable leader in the field, originating content quickly copied by other fan magazines, at least according to its editor, James Quirk, who relayed the following in one of his monthly letters directed to readers:

Almost every department and new idea introduced by Photoplay has been speedily copied by others...It has come to a point where, until you get into the text, you can hardly tell one magazine from another. In the trade it is called “the Photoplay formula.” A writer or artist appears as a Photoplay contributor, and immediately he is

77 Grace Corson, “Paris is in Short Skirts Again,” Photoplay 27, no. 4 (March 1925): 94.
78 Motion Picture Magazine officially announced Corson’s arrival in the September 1926 issue with the following message: “Miss Corson is one of the most distinguished artists in the world of fashion. For years she was associated with Harper’s Bazaar. She will conduct fashion pages monthly in Motion Picture Magazine.” In Motion Picture Magazine 32, no. 2 (September 1926): 120.
79 Motion Picture Magazine 32, no. 3 (October 1926): 41.
solicited to work for other publications in this field. There will be no more of that because Photoplay has now engaged the exclusive services of its writers and illustrators.80

While such a claim may have been Quirk’s attempt to appear ahead of his rivals, there is no exaggeration in his statement that the content seen in competing fan magazines strongly resembled what was seen on the pages of Photoplay. Grace Corson’s move to Motion Picture Magazine and its adoption of a shopping service is but one example of a competitor using “the Photoplay formula.”

Instead of providing commentary about screen fashions and forthcoming trends, Corson’s column in Motion Picture took the form of open letters to a “country cousin” named Patsy. Through these letters, Corson easily established herself as the savvy, metropolitan woman updating the provincial cousin with all the latest studio gossip and fashion trends, reflecting the power of urban tastes, dress, and way of living which was so prevalent in the United States in the 1920s and beyond. With this new approach to the column, Motion Picture Magazine recognized the necessity to mediate the economic and geographic gap that existed between images of film-inspired modernity and their readers’ lives.81 The open letters written by Corson filled this gap, providing a tie to keep provincial readers connected to the goings-on in Hollywood. During her time at Motion Picture, Corson began incorporating bits of studio gossip into her letters, thereby giving readers something else to salivate over. It became common practice for Corson to neatly divide her column in two: one half reserved for studio gossip and costume talk, the other for announcing the forthcoming spring and fall fashion trends.

After seven months, Corson’s name disappeared from Motion Picture Magazine in May 1927 as swiftly and quietly as her exit from Photoplay. With the case of Motion Picture, however, there may be one explanation for her absence. Towards the rear of the July 1927 issue, the magazine published an announcement introducing its new editor. That month, Gerald K. Rudolph replaced Adele Whitley Fletcher as Editor-in-Chief and with Rudolph’s hiring would come “an entirely new editorial policy…carefully formulated and adopted” by the staff and editors—a policy which may very well explain Corson’s departure from the publication one month prior.82 The lack of company records for fan magazines like Photoplay and Motion Picture Magazine make it difficult to explain these shifts in personnel. While Corson was married to (and later divorced from) fashion photographer Frederick Stevens Rockwell in 1925, she continued to work, taking on her assignment at Motion Picture Magazine one year later. In the years following Corson’s exit from the film fan magazine circuit, she wrote for the Ladies’ Home Journal, joined the

82 “Second Wind,” Motion Picture Magazine 33, no. 6 (July 1927): 106.
Hearst syndicate King Features as its Paris fashion editor, and began a semi-weekly NBC radio broadcast on fashions titled “It’s a Woman’s World.” Grace Corson’s time within the film fan magazine circuit was impactful, setting the stage for the increase of consumer goods available for purchase in Photoplay in the 1930s.

“Your Clothes Come From Hollywood”: America vs. Paris in Photoplay

After the outbreak of World War I in 1914, representations of “American-ness” in both film and fashion escalated, with the United States seeking to establish itself as the center for each industry. Post-1914, there were propagandistic and practical reasons for United States consumers to support their national fashion industry, with American columnists and members of the American apparel industry expressing desires to become less dependent on the French fashion industry. An increasing focus on American design was presented as a result, stressing the practicality and durability of American fashion all the while arguing for America as a valid competitor to French design. As access to the latest French designs became more limited due to France’s involvement with the war, American manufacturers and designers had even more of an incentive to shy away from the Paris runways, leading to an increased pressure to look to American design traditions for inspiration. Photoplay’s fashion department took a stance in the French vs. American fashion discourse that mirrored the wider conversation taking place in American newspapers and fashion magazines at the time. Beginning with the hiring of Norma Talmadge in 1920 and continuing with Carolyn Van Wyck and Grace Corson, we see Photoplay’s involvement in the conversation evolve as the American fashion industry shifted following World War I.

With her placement as Photoplay’s first fashion editor in June 1920 so closely following the end of World War I, Norma Talmadge’s columns reflect the impact of the war on fashion, commenting on the option for travel to France, as well as the American buyers who traveled abroad in order to scout the latest styles. While the subheading of her first column maintained that the movies were “creating the styles—not merely following them,” Talmadge’s...

columns did not focus on the screen as an arbiter of style. As mentioned earlier, Talmadge herself was the connection to the screen, with her columns reflecting a star’s opinions on fashion and style. Instead, her columns carried a different sentiment, one that stressed America’s strength in tailoring over style. In her third column, titled “Wear America First,” Talmadge recognized that while one could take inspiration from the Parisian designers, noting “clothes are to Paris what steel is to Pittsburgh,” she maintained that she preferred to have her gowns made in New York, arguing “Little old Paris may beat the world at creating dresses—and she does—but when it comes to tailored things and sports clothes you have to come back to your Uncle Samuel’s land.”

By expressing these sentiments in a fan magazine, Talmadge falls under the umbrella of American journalists who encouraged women to “buy American,” a trend which, as Marlis Schweitzer explains, had been a long-standing effort in American media since the late 1890s. The content of the columns focusing on Talmadge’s observations of the differences between American and French fashion appealed to nationalist sentiments, stressing the difference between French and American creations and even between French and American women. Talmadge noted differences between French and American women in terms of both figure and class distinction, noting “the French woman is petite,” which “is why some of our own people, especially those built on the ample lines of their native land, look so funny when they essay French clothes.” She went on to point out that while there were “only one or two” classes of European women who dress well, the “elastic” class distinctions in the United States allow “all the women of America” to dress beautifully.

Despite a push for American style, Talmadge was allegedly sending reports from Paris during the winter and spring which were published in Photoplay, supplying readers with “hints for the new season” from France. Given Talmadge’s busy shooting schedule and the lack of documentation for these trips, it is highly unlikely the actress was traveling to Paris to report on fashion shows. Regardless, by sharing news from Paris under Talmadge’s name, Photoplay satisfied any interest in French fashion her readers may have had.

89 Ibid.
while simultaneously maintaining a more patriotic viewpoint in her support of American fashion. The inclusion of articles about French fashion and the French influence allowed *Photoplay* to join a wider discussion which was taking place in more traditional women’s fashion magazines, including American *Vogue* and *Ladies’ Home Journal*.91 Valerie Steele and William Leach are among the scholars who note that proponents of American fashion did have trouble convincing female consumers to give up the “Paris idea” in the interwar period, even though domestic production and consumption of readymade clothing increased during this time.92 In her December 1920 column, Talmadge shared a story about an American woman she allegedly met in a Paris shop who expressed shock at the high price of French garments, leading Talmadge to turn her thoughts towards American tailoring.93 Notably, the look of the columns discussing winter and spring fashion shows in Paris differs from Talmadge’s other columns, which almost always featured illustrations. The columns highlighting Paris fashion tips feature black and white photographs of popular actresses like June Elvidge, Pearl White, and Nita Naldi modeling outfits for the upcoming season, with captions like “Paris decrees and America accepts the fact that embroidery holds the center of the stage this season. June Elvidge is pleasantly resigned to this sensible Crown frock of Mallinson’s brown chinchilla satin embroidered in white chain-stitching.”94 The captions accompanying the photographs bring attention to the fact that the outfits worn by the actresses in these spreads were made with fabrics from Mallinson’s, an American textile company recognized for its well-established promotional relationship with personalities from the screen and stage.95 The outfits presented to readers, then, were examples of creations that could be inspired by French ideas but sewn with American fabrics by American hands.


95 “Mallinson’s Society and Stage Celebrities,” *The American Silk Journal* 40, no. 5 (May 1921): 56.
Furthermore, featuring photographs of American screen stars wearing the outfits emboldened the dictum that viewers could reliably look to what the stars were wearing in order to keep abreast of the most current styles.

Unlike her predecessor, Carolyn Van Wyck did not directly report back to her readers about visits to Paris. As previously mentioned, Van Wyck’s position as a “New York society woman” relegated her to report most frequently on fashion in New York City, especially popular trends seen amongst women “on the Avenue.” While Van Wyck never reported directly from Paris, she often employed stars as envoys, requesting they send updates regarding the season’s styles. On a few occasions, her column featured black and white photographs of popular actresses like Pearl White and Mary Miles Mintner wearing items they purchased during their own trips abroad, including an apple green taffeta dress custom-made for Mintner by French haute couture designer Jeanne Lanvin.96

Occasionally, Van Wyck’s columns did address the practice of importing goods from France, as was the case in December 1921 when her column featured an illustration of “an importation from Paris,” a long black velvet evening gown with red flowers adorning the waist and the skirt. Van Wyck noted the dress was available for purchase at J.M. Gidding & Co., a New York City company which opened a new store location just one month prior in “one of the most artistic and choicest spots in the metropolis,” on Fifth Avenue, between Fifty-sixth and Fifty-seventh streets.97 It was not unusual for Van Wyck’s column to feature imports from France, including perfumes and makeup from French importers like Bourjois of Paris and Maison de Blanc Grande. Notably, the imported items displayed in Van Wyck’s were available for purchase only through New York City stores.

In addition to the importations, Van Wyck’s column did often feature photographs of actresses modeling fashionable items for the season provided by New York City stores and designers for promotions, including the Davega Stores, jewelers Udall and Ballou, J.M. Gidding & Co., and C.G. Gunther & Sons, a New York-based furrier. While Photoplay praised Van Wyck’s ability to converse with women from every class section, the clothing and accessories featured in the magazine’s fashion column during this time appealed to the financial level of a higher-class readership, not to mention one based in New York City. As Norma Talmadge pointed out in her columns, most women could not afford to commission custom-made designs for their wardrobes—particularly those from Parisian designers like Lanvin—although Van Wyck did express her hope that what was published on the pages of Photoplay would

96 Carolyn Van Wyck, “In the Fall the Well-Dressed Woman Turns to Thoughts of Clothes,” Photoplay 21, no. 1 (December 1921): 32–33; Carolyn Van Wyck, “Here Are the Heralds of Fashion Announcing the Mode For Fall,” Photoplay 20, no. 4 (October 1921): 62–63.
merely serve as inspiration for her readers’ own wardrobes.98 While Van Wyck’s columns worked to establish New York City as a rival to Paris in terms of fashion, they also made clear that New York City was as unattainable to her average reader as Paris.

Similar to Van Wyck, *Photoplay* introduced Grace Corson as “one of the best dressed women in New York City.”99 Despite her New York status, Corson’s column represented a shift in *Photoplay*’s fashion department in several ways, including a more pointed discussion of screen fashions. In turn, Corson’s columns reported the latest sartorial news from Hollywood sets, with less focus on Paris fashions than her predecessors. Like Van Wyck and Talmadge, however, when Corson’s column did turn its attention to French fashion, it featured popular stars sporting the trends, encouraging the discourse that paying attention to what the stars were wearing allowed readers to keep apace with the latest trends. For example, at the end of 1924, French couturiers responded to the marketplace desire for shorter hemlines and within a year they were to the knees.100 After convening with an American buyer just returned from Paris describing the latest dresses as “very, very short and straight—very plain,” Corson’s March 1925 column announced, “Paris is in Short Skirts Again.”101 The article continued with Corson reprinting a reported conversation between Corson and the anonymous buyer, with Corson posing the first question:

Beside the very short skirt, what else is different?

Nothing much; the process of elimination is still going on. (The twinkle in his eye at this point made me wonder if he meant that with little tight dresses, little tight hats, bobbed hair and nude stockings we were reaching something of a limit!)

And hats are still small and plain?

Yes, but there is a lovely little fad of wearing flower boutonnieres to match a flower on the hat, and these are in all colors and sizes, from tiny violets to enormous red chrysanthemums. Flowers are being worn in enormous corsages again, and worn high on the right side, in front, as before, instead of on the shoulder.

Lovely, I like that.102

98 Carolyn Van Wyck, “There is no set style, no ‘accepted mode’ this season, says Carolyn Van Wyck,” *Photoplay* 21, no. 1 (January 1922): 49.
102 Ibid.
In this exchange, Corson takes the role of the American fashion enthusiast, eager to hear the latest news from Paris, with the anonymous buyer acting as the insider. This example illuminates the accessible relationship Corson consistently had with her readers in her columns while also demonstrating the sustained interest in French modes in America. The article “Paris is in Short Skirts Again” ran alongside five images of actress Anna Q. Nilsson modeling gowns and suits designed for her by designer Frances Clyne, who operated an exclusive dress shop in New York City. Notably, the items worn by Nilsson in the illustrations mirror the trends discussed in the article. Rather than featuring photographs of Nilsson donning the fashions, however, Corson depicted the star in illustrations she provided to the column, a common theme throughout her tenure as fashion editor—and a defining one for Photoplay’s fashion department in general. The following section discusses the aesthetics of the Photoplay fashion department focusing on the years spanning 1920 through 1936. These years are significant for a few key reasons: 1) They witnessed an increasing use of color published inside the fan magazine, and 2) They utilized design elements popular within more established fashion magazines, like Vogue and Harper’s Bazaar.

Consumption of Fashion in Photoplay
The Early Years (1920–1925)
What historians refer to as the “transportation revolution” witnessed localized businesses scattered across the country to form a national economy of unprecedented scale. Companies like Montgomery Ward & Co., and Sears Roebuck and Company led the way in terms of mail-order clothing for American women towards the second half of the nineteenth century. The success of these catalogs spurred other companies to follow suit, and by the end of the century nearly 1,200 mail-order companies competed for more than six million customers. Mail-order items were especially popular in women’s publications like Harper’s Bazaar and Ladies’ Home Journal. The mail-order concept quickly spread to popular fan magazines like Photoplay, Modern Screen, Hollywood, and Motion Picture Magazine in various degrees, with Photoplay being the first to introduce such a service to its readers.

The practice of selling items directly through its fashion department began during Carolyn Van Wyck’s tenure and expanded considerably in the following decade. In the February 1922 issue of Photoplay, the magazine placed a large announcement adjacent to its table of contents that informed readers the fashion department would begin publishing dress patterns from the company Le Bon Ton in the following issue. These patterns, the magazine noted, were

“specially designed for and worn by your favorite screen star—one of the famous shadow celebrities noted for her good taste in dress.” These stylish personalities included Elsie Ferguson, Ruby de Remer, sisters Norma and Constance Talmadge, Irene Castle, Mae Murray, and Lillian Gish—all described by Van Wyck as some of the best-dressed women in America. Each month, Photoplay featured an essay (as told to Van Wyck) in which an actress discussed various matters relating to dress, including her ideas, ideals, and individuality, with each accompanying pattern reflecting their personal thoughts.

Interspersed between the essays were illustrations or photographs of three to five ensembles available as patterns to the readers. The appearance of patterns in women’s fashion magazines began in the mid-nineteenth century, with McCall’s being the first pattern company to issue printed patterns in McCall’s Magazine in 1919. While pattern books for women’s fashion could be found in Photoplay’s advertising pages for years, the promotion with Le Bon Ton was the first instance in which such items were made available for purchase directly through the magazine. These patterns were unique in that they were associated with specific actresses, creating a strategic promotional opportunity for Photoplay, the pattern company, and the actress, who received a two-page feature in the center of the magazine. The essays featuring particular actresses were, more often than not, printed in an issue coinciding with the release of a film starring that actress. Marion Davies’s feature, for example, was published one month prior to the release of When Knighthood Was in Flower (Robert G. Vignola, 1922), which Van Wyck mentioned in the article’s lead. By teaming up with Le Bon Ton and popular screen stars, Photoplay found another novel way to promote the connection between fashion and film. This promotional strategy allowed readers to make and wear an outfit supposedly designed for and worn by a famous star, once again broadening the notion of an “imagined community of dress.” Readers, then, had the option to either buy the pattern and make the dress themselves or use it as inspiration for future shopping trips, self-made designs, or simply daydream fodder.

Van Wyck instructed readers to mail in the coupon accompanying each essay, filling in information such as the reader’s name and address, as well as the design number of the desired dress and her dress size (available in sizes 32-40 only). While the patterns were available free of charge, readers were required to send in twelve cents in stamps or coins to cover postage. Furthermore, the cost of materials for making the garment was the reader’s responsibility, although Photoplay included estimations for the final price of each en-

104 Photoplay 21, no. 3 (February 1922): 6.
106 Carolyn Van Wyck, “Marion Davies’ New Clothes, Designed by Le Bon Ton, with Patterns for You,” Photoplay 22, no. 4 (September 1922): 52.
semblé, breaking down the cost of necessary materials such as fabric and extras like buttons, clasps, and embroidery silk. While a handful of the featured patterns called for less expensive fabrics like gingham or chiffon, the majority of the ensembles recommended more expensive material such as Mirrorkrepe, silk, and heavy crepe. The least expensive item—a pattern for Lillian Gish’s summer frock made of gingham and organdie—could be made for an estimated cost of $6.75, while the most expensive—a dinner dress designed for Alice Terry requiring six yards of pricey Mirrorkrepe—was estimated to cost $42.50 in total. While it cost nothing to receive a pattern, the total cost for making one dress was considerably high, with the average cost of materials suggested by Photoplay being $20.50. These prices seem particularly high when considering Norma Talmadge’s sentiments on the subject of sewing from just one year prior:

Do you know, you girls who can’t—or won’t—sew, that this helplessness leaves you at the mercy of the shopkeeper or the dressmaker? You have to take what they give you, not what you want. A pretty little party frock costs you from $30 to $40 and up—mostly up. You could make the same thing yourself for $10 or $15. 107

According to Talmadge’s figures, then, the designs featured in the promotion between Le Bon Ton and Photoplay would cost somewhere in between purchasing the dress from a shop and sewing it at home. Readers could, of course, select different, less pricey fabrics in an effort to lower the total cost of the garment. Unlike Talmadge, however, Van Wyck’s articles did not stress the idea of “stretching the dollar.” Her articles—particularly those in association with Le Bon Ton—rather encouraged women to think about their wardrobes without necessarily thinking about their wallets. Indeed, as fashion editor, Van Wyck urged readers to think more about properly dressing themselves no matter the cost rather than avoiding “the H.C. of L” as Talmadge did.

Following her uneventful exit from her post as Photoplay’s fashion editor in 1924, Van Wyck’s name continued to appear in the fan magazine for years in various capabilities, most notably in the long-standing column “Friendly Advice.” During her tenure as fashion editor, Van Wyck introduced a new concept for the film fan magazine: allowing readers to purchase items directly from the magazine. With this, a door was opened, allowing the magazine to sell other screen-inspired products to its readers—even a cookbook “containing 100 favorite recipes of the stars” edited by Van Wyck herself and available to readers for 25 cents. 108 It was not until 1924 that Photoplay took this idea one step further by introducing a new fashion editor and its very own Shopping Service with the following message:

Photoplay, for years, has been trying to show the American public, through the medium of photography, the new clothes designed for

108 Photoplay 32, no. 3 (August 1927): 63.
actresses in New York and Paris. There is no doubt that today the screen is the greatest single style influence in America. But it has been a difficult, well nigh impossible problem to translate it to magazine pages. We believe *Photoplay* has now solved it.  

While Corson’s column was originally introduced as an accompaniment to a shopping service, clothing and accessories were only advertised as available for purchase a full eight months after her *Photoplay* debut. It is unclear why such a gap exists, but the information box offering guidance on how to purchase clothing and accessories pointed out “because so many readers have demanded it, we are developing our Fashion Department into a Shopping Service.” The fan magazine rightfully introduced this service as “something entirely new” in that it was the first instance a film fan magazine offered such a feature to its readers. Similar services, however, may be traced to fashion magazines from the late 1800s and onwards. In 1885, *Harper’s Bazaar* offered readers a Parisian shopping service, led by Emmeline Raymond, founder of the French magazine *La Mode Illustrée.* By the late 1910s, however, *Harper’s* began offering readers the expertise of Jane Jarvis, whose shopping service recognized that “for the average woman shopping is a difficult business—especially so if she does not live in one of the larger cities. But it is no longer necessary for her to do her own shopping.” Readers could choose from dresses hand-picked by Jarvis from “the better New York shops” and order frocks straight to their homes. Notably, while Jarvis wrote the text for *Bazaar*’s monthly feature, Grace Corson regularly provided the illustrations that ran alongside Jarvis’s articles leading up to her placement as *Photoplay*’s fashion editor.

The garments available for purchase in the first installment of *Photoplay*’s shopping service included items Corson deemed the result of “intelligent selection” such as a suit priced at $29.75, black patent leather heels—a good choice for spring—available for $10, a navy silk umbrella in “the style most popular now” for $5.75, and a felt straw hat Corson predicted would be “much worn” that spring, available for $12.75. After officially introducing the shopping service to *Photoplay* Corson continued the practice of letting readers imagine what it might be like to dress like a star—or at least spend time with one—with the feature “Dorothy Gish Goes Shopping For You.” This feature harkened back to Carolyn Van Wyck’s wish to take her readers on a stroll along Fifth Avenue in New York City to let them know what the finest dressed women in the big city were wearing. In this case, however, readers could shop

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with a star via the article, thereby satiating the reader’s desire for insight into the lives of these famous personalities, however imaginary that relationship may have been. Whether or not Corson and Gish actually spent the afternoon together is debatable, but *Photoplay* nevertheless used the star’s name and portrait, allowing the reader to believe Gish purchased items like a silk-lined purse which was “just what [Gish] had been looking for,” and which was, Corson noted, the purchase of “a very sensible young woman” thanks to its low price of $3.65. Furthermore, the same purse was available for the same price in the shopping department, affording Corson’s readers the opportunity to purchase the same purse Gish purportedly added to her own closet.

This short but effective feature allowed readers to both relate to the star and encouraged fans to use the magazine’s shopping service to purchase items a popular and stylish actress like Gish had in her closet. Company records regarding how much the shopping service was actually used are not available, but after making its official debut in April 1925, *Photoplay* offered this indication of its popularity the following month: “The response to our shopping service in the April issue was a big surprise…Its continued success depends on you.”

Kathryn Fuller argues fan magazines urged readers to consider themselves linked in concrete ways to the film industry and to a community of likeminded fans, largely by creating personal desires that worked to sustain an ongoing material relationship between fans and the film industry. The success of *Photoplay*’s shopping service may be credited to logic like Fuller’s in that the service provided an outlet for readers to transform from spectators of celebrity culture into active participants in celebrity culture, cementing the relationship between the fan and the industry.

In features such as “Dress Like a Star on an Extra’s Income,” Corson took this idea even further by giving readers the option to buy entire looks worn on-screen through *Photoplay*’s shopping service rather than just accessories. Corson illustrated eight costumes on the four-page spread worn by stars like Norma Shearer, Lillian Rich, and Constance Bennett, all “to be had at moderate prices—if not in your town at least through this Fashion Department.”

The detailed illustrations are valuable in that they not only provide insight in terms of what women were interested in purchasing but Corson’s work also sheds light on designs from films considered lost today. While useful archival material—including production records and stills—for the film *The Dressmaker from Paris* (Paul Bern, 1925) exists today, the film itself is not available for viewing. Corson’s illustrations, however, provide us with another set of

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114 Ibid.
valuable information about the costumes featured in the film, which the magazine dubbed “the greatest screen fashion show ever conceived.”

In its April 1925 issue, Photoplay published a two-page photographic spread featuring nine of the women who appeared in The Dressmaker from Paris modeling some of the film’s costumes, which the magazine credited to designer Travis Banton. While The Dressmaker from Paris is considered to be Banton’s breakthrough film, it is striking that Photoplay listed Banton as the film’s costume designer despite his collaboration with fellow designer Howard Greer on the film. Of the nine women featured in the April 1925 spread, one of the smaller photographs shows actress Adalyn Mayer in her costume, a gown with rose appliques and a crinoline skirt. The following month, Grace Corson illustrated the same dress in her column, though it appeared modified in the magazine, with the removal of the costume’s subtle crinoline. This modification perhaps made the dress less of a “picture gown” and therefore more appropriate for off-screen wear. These design changes earned this particular dress a feature in Photoplay’s fashion department, where the dress was made available for purchase for $29.75 (Figure 2.3). The photographic spread and Corson’s feature of Adalyn Mayer’s dress in the fashion department both led up to the June 1925 release of The Dressmaker from Paris.

![Figure 2.3](image)

This promotional opportunity enabled readers to potentially see the photograph of Mayer in April, purchase the dress in May, and wear the dress from the film to a screening in June. Photoplay, then, worked to promote the film

117 “Fine Feathers, etc.” Photoplay 27, no. 5 (April 1925): 34.
through fashion in the months leading up to the film’s release date, thereby benefitting the studios looking to gain the would-be patron’s attention and interest. The film, which was widely publicized for its fashions, found a natural fit on the pages of Photoplay’s fashion department. This example showcases the promotional opportunities a space like the Photoplay fashion department offered to the industry.

From the Content to the Cover: Fashion in Photoplay in the 1930s

Despite Photoplay’s claim in May 1928 that “Thousands of readers are delighted with this service,” the shopping service disappeared from the magazine entirely the following month. The only mention of a shopping service in the June 1928 issue may be found in a small, plain information box in the advertisement section, from the Hollywood Shopping Service, which used the slogan: “We buy you what the stars buy.” After the shopping service faded from the pages of Photoplay, the magazine did, however, continue featuring fashion in each issue with a variety of editorial efforts. In March 1929, for example, Photoplay published a twelve-page-long “Spring Style Forecast” presenting photographs of actresses dressed in ensembles opposite full-page advertisements for similar items worn by the women. Opposite an ad for Skinner’s Crepe Satin, for example, were a full-page color advertisement for Daniel Green slippers opposite photographs of stars Sharon Lynn, Raquel Torres, and Dixie Lee dressed in robes and negligees and, perhaps most notably, pairs of near-identical house slippers and high-heeled mules to the ones featured in the ad. While Photoplay never explicitly stated the actresses wore the products featured in the advertisements with which the photographs were cleverly juxtaposed, this served as an effective promotional strategy regardless. These seasonal style forecasts, while ambitious in length and concept, were short-lived, appearing four times throughout 1929, in March, June, October, and December.

James Quirk consistently preached the benefits of consumer-product advertising within the magazine, coaxing readers to trust the advertisements. In February 1929, Quirk relayed the following message to his readers in a full-page memorandum:

Looking around by reading the advertisements saves time and trouble and money. For advertisements are the shop windows of a world of manufacturers…The advertisements picture, describe, explain

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119 “Photoplay’s Fall Style Section: What Film Favorites are Wearing,” Photoplay 36, no. 5 (October 1929): 75.
the merchandise and the new ideas that are displayed and talked
about from Maine to California.\textsuperscript{120}

The advertisements, as well as the articles featured in \textit{Photoplay} reflect an
awareness of the powerful tie between the star and the product—particularly
in items relating to fashion and cosmetics. As a film fan magazine with an
increasing focus on beauty and fashion, \textit{Photoplay} became a logical space for
advertisers to promote those types of products. Furthermore, as advertise-
ments for shopping services continued to circulate in the magazine, it is
possible that \textit{Photoplay} temporarily halted their own service in order to amass
interest from potential advertisers. The spreads \textit{Photoplay} printed throughout
1929 may reflect Quirk’s desire to combine revenue from advertisers with
content from the magazine.

With the removal of the shopping service and the seasonal advertising
photo spreads, there was a palpable lack of consistent fashion coverage until
March 1931 when Quirk introduced “Seymour,” \textit{Photoplay}’s first and only
male fashion authority, and the first expert Quirk formally introduced to read-
ers since Grace Corson’s debut in 1924.\textsuperscript{121} Like Corson, Seymour focused
more closely on directing readers to what the stars were wearing with the
explicit intention of using star style as an example of what readers should wear.
Most importantly, Seymour’s arrival at the magazine ushered in a collabora-
tion between \textit{Photoplay} and one of the most recognized companies in the pro-
motional efforts between the fashion and film industries: Bernard Waldman’s
Modern Merchandising Bureau, Inc., although the connection between the
two was not immediately obvious.

Born in Russia in 1900, Bernard Waldman emigrated to New York and
obtained a position at I. Frank & Songs, the then-largest manufacturer of wed-
ding dresses and evening gowns in New York City. In 1930, the organization
was commissioned to duplicate the wedding dresses from the “My Bridal
Veil” number in \textit{King of Jazz} (John Murray Anderson, 1930), filmed in two-
color Technicolor. It was Waldman who purportedly suggested reproducing
wedding gowns and bridesmaids’ dresses from the film and convince retailers
to advertise the film alongside the dresses. While this particular tie-in was not
overwhelmingly successful, Waldman found merit in this idea, leading to the
establishment of the Modern Merchandising Bureau.\textsuperscript{122} Founded in 1930, rec-
ords from the New York City directory of businesses show that Modern Mer-
chandising was officially incorporated as a business in New York at the end

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Photoplay} 35, no. 3 (February 1929): 101.
\textsuperscript{121} In his monthly letter to readers, Quirk wrote: “I have a surprise for you. We’ve got Seymour
to write for \textit{Photoplay} each month! Seymour knows more about fashions than anybody else in
America – and my friends abroad say that goes for Europe, too. And, since Seymour knows
more about fashions than anybody else, we’ll get him to interpret what stars wear – to be of as
much help as he can be to \textit{Photoplay} readers in their choice of that all-important subject, what
to wear.” In \textit{Photoplay} 39, no. 4 (March 1931): 30.
of June 1932. In October 1932, seven months after Seymour’s *Photoplay* debut, the magazine announced a collaboration with department and ready-to-wear stores across the United States to sell “faithful copies of…smartly styled and moderately-priced garments” from the magazine’s newest service, Hollywood Fashions. The magazine assured readers that each item was hand-picked by Seymour. *Photoplay* originally announced that items in its Hollywood Fashions collection were made available to its readers through the Chicago-based company Wakefield & O’Connor, Inc. It was several years before it became explicitly clear that Modern Merchandising Bureau took part in this promotion.

Under the guise of allowing “the screen tell you what’s new,” *Photoplay*’s Hollywood Fashions label utilized fashion as a multilayered promotional opportunity—not dissimilar from the way it did throughout the 1920s. This technique effectively allowed the magazine to promote films through their fashions and, by providing readers with exclusive peeks into Hollywood fashions, the magazine itself. Each month, the fashion department featured photographs of actresses dressed in costumes from their new films, of which replicas were made available for purchase in stores listed in a directory published towards the rear of the magazine. This practice harkens back to Grace Corson’s time at the magazine when her illustrations of stars in their costumes reflected items available exclusively through the *Photoplay* shopping service. As seen in Corson’s columns in the previous decade, the photos and illustrations throughout the 1930s depicted actresses dressed in costumes from upcoming or new releases. The replicas available for purchase leaned towards items better suited for everyday wear, with the magazine favoring more practical pieces over “picture gowns” or more extravagant costumes in its selections. In Margaret Thorp’s 1939 profile of Waldman, she acknowledges the logic behind his choices for which costumes would best transition into everyday fashions for women:

> Offer the American woman, he will tell you, something too uncomfortable, impractical, or difficult to wear and, though it may be displayed and exploited by the loveliest of stars, she will turn away to purchase the, for her purposes, better garment worn by a comparatively unimportant bit player.

The items featured in *Photoplay* during this period reflect Waldman’s logic. Rather than featuring the lavish evening gown with exaggerated sleeves Jo-sette De Lima designed for Katharine Hepburn to wear in her debut film *A Bill of Divorcement* (George Cukor, 1932), for example, *Photoplay* instead offered the understated, elegant woolen dress with a demure neckline, epaulet capes and fitted bodice that Hepburn wore in the film.

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125 Seymour, “New Fall Woolens,” *Photoplay* 42, no. 6 (November 1932): 64.
Two months after Hollywood Fashions made its debut, *Photoplay* instructed readers to look for a specific label sewn into the garment reading “This is a genuine Hollywood Fashion selected by Seymour” to ensure shoppers it was the same item featured in *Photoplay*. Like all of *Photoplay*’s previous fashion editors, Seymour’s name simply stopped appearing in the magazine after its 1935 issue. Following Seymour’s departure, there was a pause in the publishing of *Photoplay*’s retail store directory until August 1936. When the directory reappeared that month, the design of the labels attached to all Hollywood Fashions changed to read “Original *Photoplay* Magazine Fashion.” One month later, *Photoplay* provided an address for readers to contact Modern Merchandising Bureau rather than the magazine itself to request that their preferred store carry Hollywood Fashions if it did not already.126 This practice of encouraging readers to write in to request a nearby store carry the apparel featured in the magazine was fixed since *Photoplay* first introduced Hollywood Fashions. If items were not sold in a reader’s city, *Photoplay* encouraged them to clip and send in a provided coupon to Dale Norton, the then-director of *Photoplay*’s “Hollywood Fashions.” In addition to providing their name and address, the magazine requested readers fill in their preferred department store in their town, presumably so the magazine could then contact the store about joining the collaboration.127

The practice of encouraging readers to reach out to send in forms listing their favorite store was most likely one of the ways in which businesses like Modern Merchandising Bureau grew throughout the 1930s. Indeed, the increase in stores carrying replicas of costumes seen on the screen impacted wholesale apparel markets, the results of which were significant enough for the business pages of American newspapers to take notice. In an article covering the increase of dress manufacturers reproducing Hollywood fashions, the *New York Times* noted that, “An interesting feature in dresses this season is the motion-picture influence, which some outstanding style sources are promoting. Hollywood, it appears, is becoming a fashion centre, and the costumes worn by celebrated stars are being reproduced.”128 The lack of company records from *Photoplay* make it difficult to ascertain the economic success of Hollywood Fashions. However, an examination of the directories listing the shops selling the garments provides us with some idea of just how wide these fashions spread across the nation. When the magazine first introduced this collaboration with stores around the country in October 1932, the directory listed 26 stores carrying the styles featured in *Photoplay*. By June 1938 it listed more than 500 different clothing and hat shops in almost as many cities.129

126 “*Photoplay* Hollywood Fashions,” *Photoplay* 50, no. 3 (September 1936): 118.
127 *Photoplay* 42, no. 5 (October 1932): 90.
129 “*Photoplay*’s Retail Store Directory,” *Photoplay* 52, no. 6 (June 1938): 94.
Fashion Shops in 400 different cities across the United States by 1937. If, however, *Photoplay*’s “Hollywood Fashions” is indeed a subset of Waldman’s tie-in empire as this chapter suggests, Eckert may very well have been correct in his claim.

After forming the Modern Merchandising Bureau, Waldman quickly established a chain of shops to sell a line of costume replicas called Cinema Fashions, contracted by Macy’s department stores. According to Charles Eckert, Waldman was also responsible for the labels Screen Star Styles, Hollywood Cinema Fashions, and Cinema Modes in addition to Cinema Fashions. It is likely, then, that *Photoplay*’s Hollywood Fashions was simply an extension of Waldman’s empire. *Photoplay* never directly acknowledged Cinema Fashions, however, presenting the collaboration as a unique one between *Photoplay* and the stores carrying Hollywood Fashions, thereby highlighting the exclusivity factor to their readers. That *Photoplay* would attempt to distinguish its service as unique was a logical choice, as competing fan magazines also opted to collaborate with the Modern Merchandising Bureau. When introducing its collaboration with Waldman, *Modern Screen*—one of *Photoplay*’s top competitors—featured a more transparent article in which they praised the practical ingenuities of Cinema Shops:

> Over this broad American country are scattered three hundred and fifty cinema shops…shining like jewels in varied settings. There you can find selected fashions from popular screen plays…And you can be certain of their fashion rightness. No need to ponder over that. They have the sanction of fashion wise people behind them…What a relief to have fashion responsibility removed from your shoulders.

Waldman’s Cinema Shops and the film fan magazines were not the only options available to fans eager to own copies of styles from the screen. In the summer of 1930, Mary Pickford, along with other stars like Marion Davies and Florence Turner, perhaps best known as the “Vitagraph Girl,” opened the Screen Stars’ Shop in the heart of Hollywood. This venture allowed fans as well as burgeoning players to purchase previously-worn costumes discarded by the studios and stars at heavily discounted prices. The proceeds from the sales went to the Motion Picture Relief Fund, a charitable organization of which Pickford was a founder and president for several years and whose main

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132 Ibid.
function was to provide medical care for actors and actresses. Pickford herself contributed 40 dresses to the shop, with other items for sale including: Gloria Swanson’s pink chiffon and Alençon lace negligee ($20); 20 pairs of evening slippers from Corinne Griffith ($1.50 each); and a tuxedo suit worn by Bessie Love ($10). The store also featured items for men, including shirts and suits, as well as an autographed straw hat from Maurice Chevalier. In addition to clothing, the shop showcased costume jewelry, trinkets, and autographed books donated by celebrities, providing an exciting opportunity for fans eager to incorporate items previously owned by the stars into their own home. While well-publicized and well-received by the media and shoppers alike, this endeavor was ultimately brief, with Motion Picture Magazine reporting that “before the venture had barely started, it had to close for lack of stock!” Other, less altruistic, second-hand shops opened in Hollywood to resell costumes from the screen, including the popular “Movie Stars’ Wardrobe Sale,” whose sale of used garments continued perennially.

Despite a sharp increase in the amount of ready-made garments available for purchase through the fan magazines throughout the 1930s, several of Photoplay’s competitors continued to cater to women with a knack for home sewing during the decade. While Photoplay phased out the practice of selling dress patterns once it introduced the Shopping Service in 1924, other popular film fan magazines like Motion Picture Magazine, The New Movie Magazine, Hollywood, and Modern Screen continued to sell knitting and sewing patterns to readers throughout the 1930s. Most of these magazines printed coupons which readers could mail to a provided address in exchange for a pattern, similar to the partnership between Photoplay and Le Bon Ton in 1922. In the late spring of 1930, however, Motion Picture Magazine presented a new take on this pattern service when it published one pattern per month directly in the magazine. The first pattern in this series was a dress worn by Lois Wilson in Lovin’ the Ladies (Melville W. Brown, 1930) designed by Walter Plunkett. Among the suggested materials was ermine to be used as trimming, but Plunkett offered the alternative of net or tulle as a less expensive fabric.

Motion Picture Magazine recognized the popularity of homemade items, too, in sponsoring a knitting contest in conjunction with Fleisher, Bear Brand and Bucilla yarns which offered all-expense paid trips to Hollywood to the first and second prize winners. Contestants could choose from 23 different designs from the Motion Picture-Movie Classic Knitting Book, available for 25 cents at department stores selling the aforementioned yarn brands. The book, “the first of its kind,” featured actresses like Bette Davis, Alma Lloyd, and Joan Blondell modeling the final products. Notably, all contestants were

137 “Patterning After the Stars,” Motion Picture Magazine 39, no. 4 (May 1930): 68.
required to use either Fleisher, Bear Brand, or Bucilla yarns in their submitted designs.\textsuperscript{138} The contest—whose judges included fashion writers Gaynor Maddox and Tobé Coller Davis (more commonly known as Tobé) and “New York society leader” W.W. Hoppins—was spread out over eight months, attracted “hundreds” of applicants, and awarded prizes to fourteen different individuals.\textsuperscript{139} The magazine also encouraged entrants to submit a current photograph with their submissions, later publishing a photo of Sally Martin, \textit{Motion Picture Magazine}’s Fashion Editor, greeting Sylvia Able, the young and well-dressed second prize winner, fresh off her TWA flight’s landing in Hollywood.\textsuperscript{140} While the majority of the winners were female, 16 year-old David Sanderson from Winona, Mississippi was awarded the thirteenth prize—a Gruen wrist watch. By the 1930s, promotional tie-ins were increasingly popular within the film industry. Challenges targeting readers like the knitting contest held in \textit{Motion Picture Magazine} highlight the multilayered cross-promotional opportunities film fan magazines offered to businesses and stars.

The 1930s also ushered in a decade in which Hollywood’s cultural influence was recognized outside the realm of the fan magazine. After years of \textit{Photoplay} and other fan magazines claiming fashions come from the screen, more dedicated women’s fashion magazines in the United States like \textit{Vogue} and \textit{Harper’s Bazaar} began paying attention to the issue. Indeed, the 1930s saw a rise in the publishing of articles in the elite fashion magazines acknowledging the public’s interest in Hollywood as a center for information concerning celebrities and fashion. In 1930 \textit{Vogue} enlisted fashion and celebrity photographer and costume designer Cecil Beaton to pen an article about some of the more “colourful characters of Hollywood” in which Beaton discussed some of Hollywood’s biggest stars at that time, including the mysterious Greta Garbo, the “immaculate” Norma Shearer, and the “punctilious and meticulous” Maurice Chevalier.\textsuperscript{141} In the second half of the decade, \textit{Vogue} also published the semi-regular column “The New Hollywood Hush,” in which Innis Bromfield shared stories from the sets of current Hollywood pictures. The 30s also saw an increase in articles concerning the relationship between Hollywood and fashion in women’s fashion magazines as well. The feature “Made in Hollywood” which \textit{Vogue} published throughout the 1930s featured sketches and photographs of actresses modeling dresses film costume designers like Howard Greer, Adrian, and Lettie Lee made for the screen and “for private life.”\textsuperscript{142}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{138} “Win a Hollywood Trip in Knitting Contest,” \textit{Motion Picture Magazine} 51, no. 2 (March 1936): 40.
  \item \textsuperscript{139} “Attention Knitters!” \textit{Motion Picture Magazine} 52, 1 (August 1936), 54; \textit{Motion Picture Magazine} 52, no. 4 (November 1936): 87.
  \item \textsuperscript{140} “Judges in Knitting Contest Are Swamped!” \textit{Motion Picture Magazine} 51, no. 5 (June 1936): 17.
  \item \textsuperscript{142} “Made in Hollywood,” \textit{Vogue} 81, no. 11 (June 1, 1936): 34–35, 102.
\end{itemize}
Perhaps the best example of the mainstream fashion magazine’s acknowledgment of Hollywood as a fashion center may be found in a 1933 article in which *Vogue* acknowledged Hollywood’s influence on everyday fashions but challenged the validity of the notion, posing the question: “Does Hollywood Create?” The magazine printed the article as a response to the widely circulated claims “that Hollywood is originating fashion.” Noting the more subdued nature of costumes in recent pictures, as well as the refusal of actresses “to be dressed like Christmas-trees,” the article recognized that, in the 1930s, “movies became reasonable. They became smart…they became worthy of study and even of imitation. All this from a fashion point of view.”

This statement echoes Bernard Waldman’s philosophy for choosing costumes which would best translate to off-screen wear, reflecting the prosperous ready-made industry in which Hollywood had a hand in the 30s. Furthermore, the 1930s ushered in a golden age for motion picture costume designers, with each studio hiring a head designer to create the on-screen wardrobes for leading ladies. This, coupled with regular features in both fashion and fan magazines, allowed costume designers to enjoy a celebrity moment, with readers recognizing designers by face as well as name.

*Vogue*, for example, cited Adrian as an exceptional designer whose costumes inspired major trends in more mainstream fashion, referencing the now-well-known example of the dress Joan Crawford wore in *Letty Lynton* (Clarence Brown, 1932). With its enormous puffed sleeves, small ruffled collar, tight waistline, and ruffled peplum, the dress was striking on-screen and inspired hundreds, if not thousands, of more subdued gowns, day dresses, and even a set of “Letty Lynton” rayon pajamas available in the 1933 Spiegel Christmas Catalogue. *Vogue* recognized the dress as the one which caused “Every little girl, all over the country, within two weeks of the release of Joan Crawford’s picture, [to feel] she would die if she couldn’t have a dress like that.”

A much-cited *Fortune* magazine article from January 1937 set in motion the legend that Macy’s sold 500,000 copies of Bernard Waldman’s adaptation of the *Letty Lynton* dress, although the actual number of copies sold has been contested, most notably by Sarah Berry, Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog. Nevertheless, the *Letty Lynton* dress serves as an example of the powerful promotional tool the merging of fashion and film offered their respective industries. After much reflection, the author fails to conclusively answer the question the article’s title poses. “Does Hollywood create?” the article asks; in the end, the author concludes “it does, and it doesn’t.”

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143 “Does Hollywood Create?” *Vogue* 81, no. 3 (February 1, 1933): 59–77.
144 Ibid.
146 “Does Hollywood Create?” *Vogue* 81, no. 3 (February 1, 1933): 59–77.
The debate concerning Hollywood’s influence on fashion spread beyond the realm of magazines publishing film and fashion-related content. One month after *Vogue* published the article in which it posed the question, “does Hollywood create?” the Fashion Group held a meeting in a New York hotel to hold a vote on this very matter. Members of the group heard from Adelia Bird, *Photoplay*’s then-fashion editor, and Ruth Katsh representing Macy’s Cinema Shops speak in favor of Hollywood as a style influence. American designer Elizabeth Hawes, another speaker at the luncheon, opposed Bird and Katsh on the matter, voicing the opinion “that she did not feel that any real fundamental style had yet been promoted by the movie colony.” Hawes did, however, recognize that certain stars helped popularize individual styles, albeit reluctantly and not without some saltiness. At the end of the meeting, the Group’s President, Kathleen Howard, conducted a vote in which members were asked to determine if Hollywood influenced fashions. While the *New York Times* reported differently, a transcript from the luncheon demonstrates that members voted in the affirmative, although the closing comment came from Dorothy Shaver, one of the founding members of the Fashion Group, who declared that Hollywood influenced fashion from a promotional standpoint, not a creative one. That a discussion of Hollywood’s influence on fashions took place amidst The Fashion Group is noteworthy, and so is the misreported conclusion printed in the *Times*—one which has been perpetuated in previous scholarly research.

**Aesthetics of the *Photoplay* Fashion Department**

**Fashion Illustrations**

Prior to the more widespread use of photography in fashion magazines in the 1930s, illustrators created a visual mood that influenced other magazines and remained popular for years. By the beginning of the 1920s, top fashion magazines in the United States like *Vogue* and *Harper’s* commissioned artists to illustrate articles and covers with artwork reflecting the flapper style of the time. Illustrators remained the preferred vehicle to depict fashions up until the

148 When discussing Greta Garbo’s influence on style, for instance, Hawes commented: “She did the Green Hat [A Woman of Affairs] and came out in slouch hats and English kind of tweeds. There is nothing new about that. For years and years and years, and always a certain kind of tweed for sport clothes will be worn. Polo coats, belted in, also will be worn. What she did was perhaps to give a more widespread acceptance to those things than they may have had for some time previously, but that was not a fundamental style change in any sense of the word.” From “Fashion Group Luncheons,” March 1933; from the Fashion Group International Records, ca. 1930–1997, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
149 Ibid.
1930s when photography took over as the less expensive alternative.\textsuperscript{150} The illustrations of the 1920s and 1930s were a departure from those in the late 1800s and early 1900s featuring stiff, corseted figures draped in layers of the clothes commonly worn by the upper class.\textsuperscript{151} While decidedly different in terms of presentation, the illustrations from both eras perpetuated an ideal stereotype of the fashionable woman. By the beginning of the 1920s magazines like \textit{Vogue} and \textit{Harper's Bazaar} commissioned artists to illustrate content and covers, with the covers not only seen as stand-alone artworks, but also one of the only examples of color in the publications prior to the 1930s. As prominent as works by fashion illustrators were throughout the 1920s and beyond, little is known about their lives, with some of the earliest illustrations being published uncredited and unsigned. Some of the most renowned and prolific illustrators from these years include Malaga Grenet, Christian Bérard, Carl Erickson, and Pierre Brissaud—all men, notably.

Despite some of the most prominent names in the field of fashion illustration being male, the position was advertised as an appropriate one for women, with advertisements for illustration schools regularly appearing in national magazines and newspapers, including \textit{Photoplay}. In the early years of the Great Depression many women were pressured to give up their jobs to “make way for married men,” but the position of fashion illustrator was one for which men seldom competed. Women dominated the field, often continuing their careers while simultaneously acting as mother and wife.\textsuperscript{152} Throughout the editorships held by Norma Talmadge and Carolyn Van Wyck, illustrations appeared consistently, providing a visual aspect to their columns. As an established fashion illustrator herself, Grace Corson was the natural choice to provide the illustrations for her column as well as the content. By consistently featuring illustrations in the early years of its fashion columns, \textit{Photoplay} followed the leading fashion magazines of the day in representing clothes not only with photographs, but with illustrations. This choice, whether intentional or not, legitimized \textit{Photoplay}’s fashion department at least in terms of its appearance. If \textit{Photoplay} readers also read top fashion magazines like \textit{Vogue} or \textit{Harper's Bazaar}, the aesthetics of its fashion department would be recognizable.

Beginning with her first column, Norma Talmadge’s articles featured illustrations from illustrators such as John M. Barbour and F. Coldon Weld. The illustrations published alongside Talmadge’s columns served more as accompaniment to the general themes of that month’s topic rather than being custom-drawn to depict actual designs or styles advocated by the actress. In turn, the captions published with the illustrations were more ambiguous and did not

\textsuperscript{150} Gail Reekie, \textit{Temptations: Sex, Selling and the Department Store} (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993).
\textsuperscript{151} Alice Mackrell, \textit{An Illustrated History of Fashion: 500 Years of Fashion Illustration} (Los Angeles: Costume & Fashion Press/Quite Specific Media, 1997).
directly address the styles shown. The August 1920 issue, however, is an exception, featuring a full-page illustration of a woman wearing an embellished gown with two exaggerated trains and an equally elaborate headpiece. The following caption accompanied the illustration, drawn by John M. Barbour:

A costume such as this, which on any woman, no matter how smart, how beautiful, must always be only a caricature, reminds me irresistibly of a fat and forty female talking baby-talk to a pet Pomeranian. Not even Gloria Swanson could make you believe it, even though French artists like Erte may use the model for their exaggerated drawings. This, to me, is the supreme example of what a well-dressed woman should avoid. — Norma Talmadge 153

In providing such specific commentary to the illustration, the caption implies some sort of creative collaboration between Photoplay and Barbour. Additionally, this particular illustration accompanied the article “Wear America First,” and the caption connotes a particular anti-French sentiment. In the mid-1910s American writers agreed that while Paris would continue to lead in fashion innovation, French designs could be inappropriate for the average American woman, with some critics lambasting the “absurdities and occasional immodesties of French fashion.” Talmadge’s critique of the gown featured in Barbour’s illustration continues this discourse in the years following World War I.

From the beginning, illustrations consistently accompanied Carolyn Van Wyck’s column, although the drawings were initially uncredited and unsigned. Beginning in October 1921, however, illustrations signed by Raoul Bonart began appearing in the Photoplay fashion columns, although the magazine announced his debut in the following issue. Van Wyck introduced Bonart as “a young French artist” who, in addition to providing visuals for the column, would design “unique and original” outfits exclusively for Photoplay readers. Van Wyck assured her audience that they could “safely copy any one of his gowns, with the knowledge that they would be correctly and smartly attired.” Interestingly, Bonart’s drawings were placed adjacent to photographs of actresses like Gloria Swanson and Wanda Hawley modeling ensembles very similar to the ones in the illustrations. For example, the caption below Swanson’s photographs notes the “square-cut sleeves of white chiffon” and the “pipings on neck, hem, sash and cuffs,” with Van Wyck describing the gown as “one of the most charming she has ever starred in.” Alternatively, Bonart’s design features a similar gown “with panels and pipings of gray georgette.” The sleeves and hemline, mirroring those featured in Swanson’s gown, were described as being “decidedly right.”

155 Carolyn Van Wyck, “Fashions in Fur and Frills That Watch For Winter’s Coming,” Photoplay 20, no. 6 (November 1921): 44.
156 Ibid., 44–45.
reinforced Photoplay’s message that readers could look to what the stars were wearing in order to keep up with trends and dress in a stylish manner. Furthermore, Van Wyck’s encouragement for readers to copy the gowns allegedly designed for them by Bonart gave them the opportunity to dress like popular, glamorous stars like Swanson.

Prior to Bonart joining the photoplay fashion department, Carolyn Van Wyck’s columns featured unsigned illustrations of the smart women she encountered “on the Avenue,” allowing readers living in more rural parts of the country to gain insight into what women living in America’s fashion capital were wearing that season. Similarly, illustrations of items selected from New York department stores were present throughout Van Wyck’s column to provide readers with insight into the kinds of goods that were popular amongst and available to city dwellers that season. Such features not only allowed Photoplay to collaborate with New York City department stores and designers, but depicting the goods in illustrations harkens back to the practice of fashion illustrators depicting the latest fashions from couture shows in Paris, where photography was not allowed in order to uphold secrecy regarding designs.157

The visual reports from “the Avenue” provided similar insight, which carried over into Grace Corson’s time as fashion editor with her visits to Hollywood studios.

Unlike Talmadge and Van Wyck, whose columns were littered with a mixture of photographs and illustrations, Grace Corson’s columns featured only illustrations, provided by Corson herself. With her rich background in fashion illustration for department stores and fashion magazines, it was logical she would lend her experience to Photoplay. Furthermore, Corson’s employment at Photoplay was wise from an economic viewpoint in that she could perform double duty by ostensibly providing content and visuals for her column. Corson’s illustrations were marked by clean lines, delicate textures and patterns, and always included the well-defined particulars of the styles shown. With an emphasis on costumes featured in forthcoming films, Grace Corson’s position of fashion expert at Photoplay differed from Talmadge and Van Wyck, who focused more on styles popular in Paris and New York. The illustrations of the costumes featured in Corson’s column were presented as a tantalizing sneak peek into what the stars would be wearing in the latest releases, presumably setting the latest trends. Rather than photographing the costumes on-set (which was not allowed), Corson presented them in the same way the latest styles from the world’s fashion capitals were being exhibited—in illustrations.

While the illustrations featured in Photoplay were never printed in color, the magazine did feature a “Movy-Dols” series throughout 1919 featuring popular, stylish stars like Mary Pickford, Elsie Ferguson, and Norma Talmadge, whose “Movy-Dol” was published less than a year before she took

on the role of *Photoplay’s* first fashion editor (Figure 2.4). The “Movy-Dols” were printed as paper dolls and featured the likeness of “the best known screen favorites” and cutouts of costumes from some of their most popular films, printed in color.

![Image of Movy-Dols featuring Norma Talmadge](image)

*Figure 2.4 “Movy-Dols” featuring Norma Talmadge, the third in a series published in color in *Photoplay* 16, no. 3 (August 1919): 123.*

While the “Movy-Dols” were targeted towards younger readers they could be enjoyed by fans of any age. For example, readers could choose to attire Talmadge in memorable ensembles from the screen, including a pink, tiered gown seen in *The Social Secretary*, a yellow, richly-draped dress designed by Lucile for Talmadge in *The Ghosts of Yesterday* (Charles Miller; 1918), as well as an elaborate tartan “creation which made a hit on the beach.”

*Notably, The Social Secretary and The Ghosts of Yesterday were released in black*

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and white or, more likely, there were also tinted versions of the films, as was common practice in the silent era.\footnote{See, for example, Enno Patalas, “On ‘Wild’ Film Restoration, Or Running a Minor Cinematheque,” \textit{Journal of Film Preservation} 56 (1998): 36.} For fans to see the costumes in color, albeit in the form of paper dolls, provided fresh insight into the film’s aesthetics. Other stars appearing in the “Movy-Dols” series included Mary Pickford and Elsie Ferguson, two actresses who, like Talmadge, were promoted in the fan magazines as some of the best-dressed women in the film industry. The “Movy-Dols” were one of the earliest instances of full color featured in the interior of \textit{Photoplay}, predating the first “natural color” photograph published in the magazine by 17 years.

**Color Photography in \textit{Photoplay}**

Where illustrations previously dominated, improvements to the halftone printing process in the 1920s made it cheaper and easier to publish photographs in magazines and newspapers, with photographs taking on a greater role in defining new aesthetics in fashion.\footnote{The halftone process facilitated the printing of images alongside text on a single page; long available for illustrations, it was exceedingly expensive for photographs until the 1890s. See Beaumont Newhall, \textit{The History of Photography: From 1829 to the Present} (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982, 2002), 64–6.} Since its inception, \textit{Photoplay} consistently turned to photography to provide readers with updates regarding popular stars, publishing their latest portraits alongside stories about their lives. The photographs featured in fan magazines were prized possessions amongst fans, and the publishers recognized the appeal these images presented to eager fans. In 1916 \textit{Motion Picture} introduced Mary Curtin, an 18-year-old Ohioan movie fan with somewhere “in the vicinity of 450 or 500” images of stars lining her bedroom walls.\footnote{“Letters to the Editor,” \textit{Motion Picture Magazine} 12, no. 10 (November 1916): 168.} In addition to providing an exciting, collectible aesthetic to the fan magazine, photographs were often used in more overt efforts to engage the fan. In its June 1926 issue for example, \textit{Photoplay} began publishing distorted photographs or mash-ups combining different features of different famous faces over the course of four issues. Fans were invited to cut up the pictures and correctly recombine them, with \textit{Photoplay} organizing a “Cut Picture Puzzle” contest in which readers could submit their solutions to the magazine. \textit{Photoplay} announced it would award $5,000 in prizes “to the persons sending in the nearest correctly named and most neatly arranged set of thirty-two portraits.”\footnote{“Cut Picture Puzzle,” \textit{Photoplay} 30, no. 1 (June 1926): 59.}

Photography played an especially important role in \textit{Photoplay}’s fashion department, intermingling with illustrations throughout its first four years but always utilized to show the latest in star style. The illustrations in the fashion department provided a sense of legitimacy to \textit{Photoplay}’s endeavor to focus
on fashion, and as photography became more commonplace in popular fashion magazines like *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar* in the 1920s, so too did *Photoplay* use it more regularly throughout the content of the magazine. Generally speaking, the fashion columns written by Norma Talmadge and Carolyn Van Wyck incorporated both illustrations and photography while Grace Corson’s column featured only illustrations, perhaps to emphasize her talents as an illustrator. When used in the columns written by Talmadge and Van Wyck, photography was used to depict actresses wearing the styles discussed in that issue. Photography, as a source of conveying information, was used regularly in newspapers and magazines to present readers with the latest images of their favorite stars, so it was fitting *Photoplay* also featured stars in photographs as opposed to illustrations. While performing her duties as fashion editor, Norma Talmadge’s image was often used in her column, photographed in the types of clothes she advised readers to pick out for themselves, particularly the sportier pieces which included riding habits and batik smocks, which she praised for their bright colors, comfort, and low production cost. Talmadge was not the only famous name photographed modeling outfits in the pages of the fashion department. Indeed, other popular faces from the screen such as Pearl White, Mary MacLaren, Nita Naldi, Gloria Swanson, Hope Hampton, Colleen Moore, June Elvidge, and Rubye de Remer also made cameos modeling clothes throughout Talmadge’s post as fashion editor, and again during Van Wyck’s tenure. When Carolyn Van Wyck’s column began offering Le Bon Ton patterns to readers, the magazine published illustrations of the designs from which readers could choose, as well as one or two photographs of that month’s featured star modeling fashionable ensembles not available for purchase.

The content of *Photoplay* was predominantly without color throughout the 1910s and 1920s, including the illustrations and photographs published in the fashion columns. While captions regularly described the colors of the clothing featured in the images, readers were generally left with no visual representation of color in articles covering fashion or costume design until the mid-1930s. Instances of toned photography, however, did appear in *Photoplay*’s monthly star gallery featuring full-page headshots of popular actors and actresses as early as 1915 with information about upcoming films and to which studio the star was signed. These rotogravures provided readers with an opportunity to view their favorite stars close-up, although they were not printed.

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163 Talmadge noted that the blouses “can be easily made at home...The blouse that costs from 20 to 35 in the shops can be made for 5 or 10. And if you cover a ten-cent hat frame with some of the same kind of material from which you made your blouse you will have a pretty sports rig that you can wear at any of the summer places.” Norma Talmadge, “Playtime Clothes,” *Photoplay* 18, no. 2 (July 1920): 48.

in color until the 1940s.\textsuperscript{165} Towards the end of the 1920s and all throughout the following decade, color spread throughout the content of \textit{Photoplay} in other ways, particularly in advertisements. \textit{Photoplay} often published full-page advertisements in color, particularly the coveted second, third, and fourth cover spots. Thanks to the high visibility these locations provided, companies paid extra to place their ads in these positions, located in the inside front, inside back, and outside back pages of the magazine, respectively.

With advancements in color photography taking place in the mid-1930s, \textit{Photoplay} began incorporating color into its content more regularly, particularly within the fashion department. In April 1931, for example, \textit{Photoplay} began publishing colorized photographs of actors and actresses in its star gallery rather than the toned ones featured in previous years. This coincided with the magazine printing more advertisements in color and featuring articles with color accents in illustrations or photographs. From the mid-1930s and beyond, it was not uncommon for \textit{Photoplay} to publish photographs of actresses in which their clothing was the only element in color. One example includes a photograph of actress Loretta Young in which her dress was colorized in a light yellow shade.\textsuperscript{166} This practice continued over the years, as seen in Cal York’s popular column “Gossip of Hollywood,” in which certain clothing items were shaded in light blues or reds.\textsuperscript{167} These examples harken back to some of the earliest attempts of portraying color on the screen, when costume were often the only element of the moving picture in color.

The following decade saw \textit{Photoplay} and other popular fan magazines making significant changes to their design in terms of color, reflecting the wider adoption of color in American publishing, as well as advancements in color photography. Since the establishment of the genre in the early 1910s, the covers of fan magazines were consistently printed in color. The 1920s witnessed established American artists like Rolf Armstrong, Charles Sheldon, J. Knowles Hare, and Tempest Inman producing lifelike color illustrations of film stars to grace the covers of \textit{Photoplay}. The artwork produced for the covers captured the likenesses of all the most popular stars and were most likely executed while working from studio portraits. Oftentimes, however, the magazines would print information regarding the cover artwork in the table of contents, careful to point out the instances in which the actor or actress was

\textsuperscript{165} When \textit{Photoplay} merged with \textit{Movie Mirror} in January 1941, an editorial in its first issue announced the addition of a new color portrait section, utilizing Kodachrome photographs from the studios, along with specially photographed portraits, both candid and formal, by Hyman Fink, who was under exclusive contract with the publication. In Anthony Slide, \textit{A History of Star Makers, Fabricators, and Gossip Mongers} (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 69.


drawn from life. As Anthony Slide contends, to print the covers of fan magazines in black and white would be unthinkable since they would not be visually appealing to casual readers at newsstands.\textsuperscript{168}

In addition to being wise from an economic perspective, printing the covers of magazines like \textit{Photoplay} and its competitors in color functioned in an educational manner to readers. Available to fans since 1911, the covers of fan magazines allowed fans to learn about a star’s coloring—information not otherwise available to those viewing tinted, toned, or black and white films. The popular Questions and Answers column evidences a particular curiosity amongst readers about the physical attributes of stars, including height and weight, but also their coloring, their hair and eye color. It was not uncommon to find the Answer Man regularly responding to queries regarding, for example, Jacqueline Logan’s hair color (auburn), or Adolphe Menjou’s eyes (dark blue). Colorized postcards were another popular way for movie fans to obtain information regarding a star’s coloring. In the mid-1910s, for example, the Chicago’s Photoplayers’ Association published full-page advertisements in fan magazines for a set of 50 postcards for $1.00. The cards depicted stars like Jack Kerrigan, Mary Fuller, Francis Ford, and Florence LaBadie “colored by the latest methods known to science,” promising the “color of the hair, the eyes, the complexion, are all shown as vividly as in real life…They nearly talk.”\textsuperscript{169} The covers of the fan magazines proved equally informational, as well as collectible.

In January 1936, \textit{Photoplay} published its first “natural color” cover, featuring Norma Shearer photographed by George Hurrell, who served as the head of MGM’s publicity photography department throughout the 1930s. While \textit{Photoplay} was a leader in many ways in the film fan magazine genre, particularly in its use of color, \textit{Hollywood} magazine preceded \textit{Photoplay} by six months in printing a “natural cover” featuring actress Ann Sothern, in July 1935—just one month after the release of \textit{Becky Sharp} (Rouben Mamoulian, 1935), the first full-length title filmed in the three-strip Technicolor process. Of its cover, the magazine offered: “\textit{Hollywood} sees natural color films as the coming thing; \textit{Hollywood} magazine keeps pace with natural color covers.”\textsuperscript{170}

The portrait, shot by Edwin Bower Hesser in the Hessercolor process, features Sothern, rosy-cheeked and bright lipped, wearing a white blouse and a red and white striped scarf in front of a green backdrop. Notably, the other covers shot by Hesser in the subsequent months—featuring stars like Katharine Hepburn, Charles Boyer, Shirley Temple, and Carole Lombard—presented similar color palettes, most likely due to Hessercolor’s limited range.\textsuperscript{171} In order to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[171] Hesser’s three-color system involved three separate negatives that captured three color values: yellow, cyan, and magenta. Color prints were then made from the negatives and layered together to form one color print.
\end{footnotes}
present the most accurate colors, then, it is likely that such wardrobe and backdrop choices were intentional.

In February 1936—one month after *Photoplay* debuted its first “natural color” cover—the magazine printed its first color photography insert, a full-page image of Claudette Colbert on her way to the racetracks in Santa Anita, California (Fig. 2.5). According to the caption, the photograph, taken by industry photographer James N. Doolittle, was meant to be candid, although the lighting, as well as Colbert’s heavy makeup, contribute to a more staged aesthetic.

![Figure 2.5](image)

Despite the fact that Colbert was photographed in “natural color,” the caption accompanying the image described the colors of her outfit’s pieces regardless, noting the coat’s “vibrant green” and the “dull raspberry” of her “jacket
blouse.” The practice of identifying colors by name in captions accompanying color photographs was not uncommon, especially in fashion magazines. Identifying unusual shades or more decorative names for colors (such as “dull raspberry”) lent an educational aspect to this convention, contributing to the cultivation of a more refined “color consciousness,” which one was recommended to possess in modern culture.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the Colbert image, however, is that it was the leading photograph to the February 1936 “Photoplay Fashions” section. Photoplay editor Ruth Waterbury directly mentioned the color insert in her monthly letter to readers, informing them that “It cost a lot of money, but we are going to have a new color fashion every month hereafter, the most alluring and chic fashion pictures we can bring you from Hollywood.” That Photoplay chose to spend “a lot of money” on printing the fashion department’s lead photograph in color highlights the significance of fashion within Photoplay, signaling the magazine’s desire to bring extra attention to this section. Despite Waterbury’s assessment that the magazine spent extra money to print these color photographs, the cover price was not affected; it was only in April 1925 that the price of Photoplay increased from 20 to 25 cents, where it remained well into the 1940s. This practice of publishing natural color photographs in the fashion section continued for years after Colbert’s debut despite any high costs Photoplay incurred. The magazine soon began publishing announcements about which stars which appear in color in the fashion section the following month, similar to the magazine’s practice of informing readers of specific articles or new staff members in the next issue. Furthermore, the magazine encouraged readers to save these color portraits for their scrapbooks or walls, assuring the fans these pages were worthy of a frame.

Color Discourses in Photoplay

Beginning in the mid-1930s, color became a more pointed topic of discussion in Photoplay, with the magazine publishing the following types of articles on the subject more regularly: 1) more thorough discussions about Technicolor titles and the Technicolor process itself, and 2) features guiding readers in selecting colors to use in their personal lives, whether that be in wardrobe or makeup. Before exploring color discourses in Photoplay in the 1930s, it is worth considering how color was discussed in the magazine in the previous decade.

As mentioned in the previous section, fan magazines were a source to which readers could turn in the 1920s to collect details about their favorite star’s physical appearance through columns like the Questions and Answers,

174 Photoplay 49, no. 2 (March 1936): 100.
as well as the monthly Star Gallery. Fan magazines also proved to be a venue through which readers could gather information about the colors of a star’s costume at a time when films were most often released in black and white, or tinted or toned versions. Grace Corson’s column was one such area to which readers could consistently refer in order to learn about the color and type of fabrics in costumes worn in current pictures prior to the film’s release date. As previously mentioned, during her alleged visit to the set of Miss Bluebeard, Corson sketched Diana Kane, Frances Billings, and Bebe Daniels in costumes worn in the film. The caption under the meticulous illustration notes the actresses were “wearing blue twill and organdie, blue satin and lace, and rose beaded gauze over silver,” respectively. Miss Bluebeard premiered in January 1925, the same month the fan magazine published Corson’s write-up about her visit to the set. By reading Corson’s column, Photoplay readers could gather design details about the costumes, such as the material from which it was originally made, as well as its color—color being a particularly interesting element for fans viewing the film in black and white. Photoplay readers, then, were privy to specific design details such as the color of the costumes; details which, if acquired beforehand, could illuminate the viewing experience of the black and white film.

In the instance a replica of a costume became available in Photoplay’s shopping service, readers had the opportunity to order the outfit in a color of their choice. For example, readers could order Adalyn Mayer’s ensemble from the popular, fashion-focused film The Dressmaker from Paris in white, flesh, peach, orchid, red, or turquoise and could also buy satin slippers for $10, or dyed to match the gown for an extra $2. Notably, the color options offered for this particular dress in the shopping service differed from the description of the costume worn by Mayer in the photographic spread printed in the magazine one month prior. The gown’s colors, which were described in a caption printed below Mayer, in costume, as “green and lemon” were perhaps considered too outrageous for everyday wear. Similar to the removal of the costume’s crinoline in the version of the dress available in the shopping service, the color options offered by Photoplay may have been considered more suitable for off-screen wear. In a promotional photographic feature for The Dressmaker from Paris printed in Photoplay prior to the film’s premiere, a caption described Adalyn Mayer’s costume as a gown “of green and lemon color sousse de soie with tight bodice and circular skirt” featuring a cascade of pale green and lemon roses running diagonally across the bodice of the dress. While The Dressmaker from Paris is considered a lost film, a script from the film exists in archival holdings which contains valuable information regarding

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177 “Fine Feathers, etc.” Photoplay 27, no. 5 (April 1925): 35.
the manner in which each scene was feasibly tinted in release prints, with light amber, amber, and lavender providing the majority of the color cues. With this information, we may also begin to ascertain how audiences may have been viewing the film in theatres, making a rich description of a costume’s colors such as the one featured in Photoplay particularly useful to readers pre- or post-viewing.

In addition to describing costumes in terms of color, the Photoplay fashion department was a fitting area in which discussions surrounding color trends for the upcoming season could occur. As Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Anja Kirberg have pointed out, color forecasting has a long and rich history within the American fashion industry. As both historians contend, predictions in seasonal colors within the fashion industry were largely due to the Textile Color Card Association (TCCA) and its head, Margaret Hayden Rorke. Rather than adopting Paris aesthetics as reference for new fashions, the TCCA created a distinct American color atmosphere by developing colors related to current events and partnering with the U.S. military and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Founded in 1915, the TCCA was devised as a system of color coordination and to encourage “a subtle harmony of colors in dress and domestic background.” The association attempted to standardize colors by first defining the color composition based on three factors: the principal color, the blended colors, and the strength of the color. To have standardized colors was essential when matching the elements of, for example, women’s outfits, from garment to accessories, in identical colors, and to forecast seasonal colors. These forecasts were distributed to manufacturers, designers, and fashion publications in an effort to create cohesive trends amongst industries—and were even included in the fashion departments in fan magazines. In one “Forecast of Spring Fashions,” for example, Corson wrote:

Blue, all shades of it, from light to dark, will be most popular. While still on the subject of color, you will wish to know that two-and-three-tones effects will be much in evidence; that is, a costume designed of three shades of blue, red, or green, with hat, gloves, purse, shoes and hosiery in contrasting colors, perhaps, but carefully chosen to harmonize.

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178 The Dressmaker from Paris, script undated, Paramount Pictures scripts collection (260.f.D-682), Special Collections, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.


Corson’s predictions for fashionable spring colors reflected the forecasts printed in more mainstream fashion magazines, including *Vogue* and *Women’s Wear Daily*, with both publications asserting that various shades of blues would be “prominent” and “smart” in sports, afternoon, and evening clothes, and that “two-tone effects” were predicted to be “well-liked” amongst shoppers.\(^{183}\) By publishing color forecasts aligned with popular fashion publications, the fan magazine positioned itself as a legitimate source from which readers could gain insight regarding color trends for the upcoming season. Notably, the color trends as predicted by *Photoplay*, *Vogue*, and *WWD* aligned with the shades presented at the Paris openings in February, as reported by Margaret Hayden Rorke of the TCCA.\(^{184}\) That all three publications recommended the color combinations seen in Paris demonstrates a reliability in terms of their fashion reporting, as well as the reliance America still had on France for fashion information in the 1920s, as Regina Lee Blaszcyk explores.

In addition to predicting color trends, a common theme throughout the columns published in *Photoplay’s* fashion department was advice focusing on color harmony. Advice concerning color was key to the broader ideal of harmony in female dress, with the proper use of color reflecting the good taste of the wearer. Historian Charlotte Nicklas shows how mid-nineteenth-century editors encouraged women to learn about color harmony in an effort to enhance their scientific expertise as homemakers. By focusing on the scientific aspects of color harmony, Nicklas demonstrates how emerging color theories resonated with editors and journalists, who in turn reframed those theories from a scientific perspective, subsequently disseminating them as fashion advice to a middle-class readership.\(^{185}\) Discussions on color harmony pervaded women’s fashion magazines in the United States and beyond, and may be seen in present-day publications. The fashion department in *Photoplay* is one example of a popular publication incorporating advice on color harmony into its content. The emphasis on harmony in one’s wardrobe echoed in other areas of the magazine, including columns about makeup and beauty, as well as home decorating. These articles presented themselves as a resource for readers to


\(^{184}\) Included in Rorke’s reported was the following information, as seen at the Paris openings: “Blues ranging from pale greyish shades to dark purple tones still continue to be featured by leading Paris houses. Black and white is stressed.” In “The Broadcast,” February 11, 1927. From the Inter-Society Color Council records (Acc. 2188), Series II, TCCA/CCUS files, Item 34, Hagley Museum and Library.

\(^{185}\) While Nicklas focuses on the mid-nineteenth-century, fashion has been a field for the application of ideas regarding color harmony since antiquity. See Charlotte Nicklas, “One Essential Thing to Learn is Colour: Harmony, Science and Colour Theory in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Fashion Advice,” *Journal of Design History* 27, no. 3 (September 2013): 218–236.
refer to in order to find the most appropriate colors for future purchases of home, beauty, and clothing goods. In Corson’s “Ten Commandments of Good Dress,” for example, she encouraged readers to “study thyself, thy type and thy coloring.”

When it came to matters of coloring, however, the type of advice the beauty and fashion columns offered was directed towards a decidedly white readership. For example, in a response to one of her readers’ queries about choosing suitable colors for her “type,” Carolyn Van Wyck wrote:

You have not told me whether your complexion is fair, dark or medium so I shall have to guess as to suitable colors for you. Black or brown with trimmings of blue would be charming if you were older. For the present I recommend the blue shades, the gamut of them. Pink is not a good color for the pallid sisters. It emphasizes their paleness.

While Van Wyck does not rule out the possibility of her reader having a darker complexion, the women portrayed in the fashion and beauty departments—both in illustrations and photographs—were, without fail, Caucasian. The content of the film fan magazines throughout the 1920s and 30s in general was directed towards a white audience, reflecting the status quo of the film industry at the time. Furthermore, as Lucy Fischer maintains, the economics of race culture in the 1920s and 1930s resulted in mainstream American consumer discourse focused on the Caucasian woman. Indeed, the focus was on white players and other figures in the film industry, and the content of the specialized beauty and fashion columns reinforced this.

The advertisements featured in Photoplay, too, increasingly focused on color and color harmony. An advertisement for Rit dyes noted that “to be in fashion one simply must be in color” and makeup companies like Princess Pat and Max Factor encouraged readers to match cosmetics not only to their complexion but also their outfits. An advertisement for Princess Pat instructed women to “forget all about ‘matching your skin’ and select shades to match your costume,” noting that every ensemble “has a certain color value.”

Photoplay continued to incorporate ideas concerning color harmony after both Corson and Van Wyck’s names were retired from its fashion department. Between February and May 1929, Photoplay featured actresses Estelle Taylor, Marion Davies, Clara Bow, and June Collyer on the covers of a four issue-long series instructing readers how to select their “correct colors” (Figure 2.6). According to the magazine, each actress was “drawn from life” by American

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illustrator Charles J. Sheldon and represented "the four different types of feminine beauty: brunette, blonde, red-haired and brown-haired."

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

Fig. 2.6 Actress Estelle Taylor on the cover of the first of the "What Are Your Correct Colors" series printed by Photoplay between February and May 1929.

Photoplay maintained that the articles and color charts were provided as a response to the "thousands of letters" received every month posing the question "What is my most becoming color?" Like the fashion department, features

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190 Laurence Hampstead, "What Are Your Correct Colors?" Photoplay 35, no. 3 (February 1929): 81.
such as “What Are Your Correct Colors” allowed Photoplay to instruct readers on their own “type” by looking to screen personalities with similar coloring. Photoplay enlisted Laurene Hempstead, a staff member of Women’s Wear Daily and “expert in color harmonics,” to design color charts and tips to help guide readers in analyzing which colors best suited her “type.” Hempstead’s articles guided readers in choosing correct colors in both makeup and clothes, instructing women readers to “eliminate…all colors which make her figure appear to disadvantage, choosing only those which enhance her face, and her figure as well.” 191 The color charts printed in the magazine’s interior were, like the majority of Photoplay’s content, black and white. These charts, however, were reprints of the covers, which were, like all of Photoplay’s covers, in color. Readers were instructed to save the cover to refer to it when choosing clothing, makeup, and even fabrics for their homes.

Similar features appeared in other fan magazines, as well, with Motion Picture Magazine enlisting costume designer Adrian to create a “Color Chart for the Stars,” which included a star’s name, her “type,” and which colors best suited the actress based on her personality. For example, the chart described actress Virginia Bruce as a “softly feminine blonde,” identifying turquoise blue, wine grape, and silver as her most correct colors. Greta Garbo, on the other hand, was described as a “mystic blonde” whose best colors were gray, deep purple, and “all the rust tones.” 192 Readers were asked to identify themselves in the chart and use the provided information as a guideline to assist them in choosing their spring wardrobe. Adrian’s examples of Bruce and Garbo prove interesting given that a blonde reader could pick between two different stars with similar coloring depending on how she saw herself; indeed, Bruce, appearing in romantic musicals, was quite a different “type” than the mysterious Garbo. In a 1935 interview with Robert Edmond Jones, the color director discussed color types, providing the following answer to the question “How should a blonde dress?”:

Show me the blonde! A blonde might fall into the little kitten category whose personality is best expressed in pale blue; but she might also be a blonde who hides a bottle of anisette under the sofa when you come in, along with a volume of Proust. There can be no general rules for blondes and brunettes, as such. It is type, plus color, which confirms the definition of personality as ‘being individual.’ 193

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191 Ibid., 42.
192 Virginia T. Lane, “Chart Your Wardrobe Colors For Spring,” Motion Picture Magazine 51, no. 2 (March 1936): 44.
These categorizations mimic the pantheon of social types applied to stars and their personalities as outlined by Richard Dyer, with color representing an extension of the star’s constructed, negotiated, and performed identity ready to be packaged and sold.194

In addition to the color chart, the article also featured tips from costume designers Adrian and Orry-Kelly to assist readers in charting “a correct course through this spring sea of color,” offering advice for selecting correct colors in dress. Adrian advised readers to stray from the “old rule” of matching to one’s eye color, maintaining that “colors must be selected more in connection with the actual complexion, the features and the personality than with the eyes.”195 Similarly, Orry-Kelly advised readers to consider their figure when selecting colors for fashion, guiding readers wishing to subtract tones towards “grayed tones and dark ones in plain material.” The designers also offered “certain tricks” regarding contrasting colors, with Orry-Kelly instructing readers to avoid shoes and stockings of a shade that would contrast with one’s hat “unless you want to transfer interest from your face to your feet.”196 Throughout the mid-to-late 1930s, Photoplay and other fan magazines increasingly turned to well-known costume designers for quotes regarding style, a logical practice given the designer’s area of expertise. By the mid-1930s, fan magazines were an established venue through which creative talents like costume designers could develop affective relations to their work and their contributions to the film industry and Photoplay was no exception. Such discourses reflect the changing status of the costume designer in Hollywood; where once the designer was virtually in the shadows of the shadow screen, the 1930s ushered in a more celebrated relationship between the studios and its creative employees. Mary Desjardin’s exploration on the classical era of Hollywood discusses the dependence studio publicity departments placed on the labors of the departments most closely associated with the stars to ensure audience members would become and remain fans.197 Such a relationship between the studios and the designers placed a prominent positioning of costume designers within publicity material, and the fan magazine was a logical arena in which to do so.

In addition to costume designers receiving more attention in fan magazines in the 1930s, this decade also witnessed a growing discussion surrounding

195 Virginia T. Lane, “Chart Your Wardrobe Colors For Spring,” Motion Picture Magazine 51, no. 2 (March 1936): 84.
196 Ibid., 85.
color motion film processes taking place within popular publications like *Photoplay*, *Motion Picture Magazine*, and *Screenland*. As the three-strip Technicolor process entered the market in the mid-1930s, so too did the content of *Photoplay* focus more extensively on the technology and its effects on the film industry. While trade and technical journals covering the business and technological sides of Technicolor regularly throughout the 1920s, the color process began receiving attention from fan magazines in the early 1930s, covering the technology in various ways. In 1932, *Photoplay* published a feature called “All Hollywood Has Now Gone Color Conscious,” borrowing a phrase that would appear in *Color Consciousness*, Natalie Kalmus’s artistic manifesto, three years later. This feature, which offered an analysis on stars and their reactions to certain colors, revealed that actress Norma Shearer, for example, preferred “a cool, apple green.” When questioned, Shearer reasoned her love of green could be traced to her childhood, recalling that her mother often incorporated the shade into her wardrobe. *Photoplay* enlisted Natalie Kalmus for the analysis of the stars’ reactions to colors, with Kalmus explaining, that Shearer’s pick “apple green is the shade for the ambitious. People who crave success and fame always radiate to it because it combines the sedative qualities of the blue and the moneymaking ones of green.”

This feature differed from other articles discussing color and stars in that it introduced and incorporated the work of Natalie Kalmus, described as “the color scientist for the Technicolor Company.” Kalmus created a simplified color chart for the article explaining the significance of different colors, and readers were encouraged to analyze themselves and their friends based on their reactions to the colors presented.

Another feature, from 1930, chronicled “the romantic story of a brilliant scientist, his Titian-haired wife, and the rise of Technicolored pictures.” While reminiscent of a movie plot, the subheading was misleading, with the article focusing mainly on the history of the company until that point. That Natalie Kalmus was featured so prominently in these examples is of note. Technical journals like *American Cinematographer* and the *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* often featured articles written by Technicolor scientists and engineers explaining precise developments in the process throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The content of the articles printed in the fan magazines concerning the company were decidedly lighter, focusing on aspects of design or, in this example, the significance of color from a cultural, psychological perspective. With the company introducing its only female employee to the fan magazine circuit, Technicolor could reach a wider, mostly female audience more effectively.

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Conclusion

By the time the Gary Cooper cover formally introduced *Photoplay* as “Hollywood’s Fashion Authority” in 1939, we can see that a significant evolution took place within *Photoplay* in order for the magazine to claim that title. Despite multiple changes in format, personnel, and design, the message of *Photoplay’s* Fashion Department remained true and consistent since its inception: that the spheres of fashion and film were fluid and intertwined. The film fan magazine provided a unique landscape for the borders between the multifaceted worlds of fashion and film to seamlessly overlap, presenting a wealth of mutually advantageous promotional opportunities to both industries. Despite the fact that more straightforward fashion publications questioned the influence of the screen on fashion, the film fan magazine presented itself as a logical, albeit unique, arena through which fashion could be promoted through film, and vice versa. Firmly in place by the mid-1920s, the fan culture in the United States allowed a Fashion Department within a film fan magazine enjoy the success it did. For female readers of film fan magazines, the fashion columns provided much-desired links to the movie metropolis. For the actresses, the columns opened up a new and lucrative form of exposure. For *Photoplay* and *Motion Picture Magazine*, the columns and their various shopping services introduced a new form of revenue and established the fan magazine as a legitimate venue for the display and purchasing of screen-inspired fashions. The fashion departments within the fan magazines, then, strengthened the bond between these different groups of women, however imaginary it may have been, and set the stage for *Photoplay* to become a leader in Hollywood fashion.
On September 20, 1938, the first film in the Vyvyan Donner’s *Fashion Forecast* series previewed to the press in New York City. The film featured models wearing the latest in fall fashions and was divided into four parts, with each segment highlighting the styles of the season in a specific material: lace, wool, velvet, and silk. After the screening, one reporter commented, “No one color stands out in the costuming. The effort has been to show the gamut that can be used in color fashion films.” ¹ Given that the *Fashion Forecasts* were the first fashion shorts filmed in the new three-strip Technicolor process, this comment is a particularly meaningful one. With the introduction of the three-strip process in 1932, Technicolor achieved a goal it had set from the company’s inception in 1914: to reproduce the full color spectrum—“the gamut”—on film. While all eight films in the series received a positive critical response, their production reveals a more complicated story that contributes to the history of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation and reflects its goal of incorporating the company’s approach to color into the film industry at large. A closer look at the production of the *Fashion Forecast* series sheds light on the significance of the short subject genre in Technicolor’s history, particularly short subjects focusing on fashion. The *Fashion Forecast* films also serve as an example of the concrete relationship Technicolor ultimately developed with the fashion industry—a relationship the company had been fostering since the 1920s.

This chapter focuses on the production and promotion of Vyvyan Donner’s *Fashion Forecast* films, eight short subjects filmed in the three-strip Technicolor process and released between 1938 and 1940 by 20th Century-Fox. As the first fashion short subjects filmed in the newest Technicolor process, the *Fashion Forecasts* provide a multilayered view into this particular moment in the history of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation. While the three-strip process was officially introduced in 1932, company correspondence and technical papers evidence efforts made towards improving the process throughout the remainder of the decade. With the production of the *Fashion Forecast* series coinciding with this period of experimentation and improvement in the three-strip process, an examination of the films offers valuable

insight into the inner workings of Technicolor’s laboratory and Color Control Department—an area of research that remains largely unexplored due to a general lack of material surrounding technical issues in the pre-production and production phases. The relationship between 20th Century-Fox and Technicolor’s Color Control Department is a particular area of interest in this chapter, encouraging a discussion about the overall look of the films, as well as what the work performed by the department entailed. The complicated relationship between Fox and Technicolor also evidences some of the technical difficulties the Technicolor process presented to production crews, particularly those in the set and wardrobe departments.

Previous research on fashion in Technicolor films focuses mainly on Technicolor inserts in feature-length films presenting fashion shows or pageants. Hilde D’haeyere’s research on Mack Sennett’s use of Technicolor and Multicolor in his slapstick comedy shorts sheds light on the largely unexplored area of natural color in that genre. The Technicolor fashion short subject, on the other hand, has received far less attention. This chapter demonstrates that the fashion short subject film also has a significant place in Technicolor’s history. As film technology progressed throughout the twentieth century, we see short subjects proving to be a genre in which experimentation commonly took place. Throughout its history, Technicolor in particular saw shorts as a logical arena through which the company could experiment with and demonstrate new renditions of its product. Lower in cost than features and shorter in length, Technicolor viewed short subjects as a potentially effective, persuasive genre through which the company could exhibit color motion picture processes to producers and directors. For Technicolor, shorts also proved to be a viable training ground through which the company’s Color Control Department could educate crews—including cameramen and art directors—on proper lighting and developing the general color consciousness required to meet the company’s standards. As this chapter demonstrates, however, such educational aspirations proved difficult to implement, with studios and crewmembers not only exhibiting differing opinions about color than Technicolor employees, but also strongly resisting training from the company.

This chapter also examines the involvement of Vyvyan Donner (1895–1965), the woman responsible for the conception and direction of the Fashion Forecast films. During her career, Donner earned several noteworthy titles, including “only woman newsreel director” and, later, “only woman director

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of Technicolor films.”

This chapter considers Donner’s expertise in fashion and color and her involvement with this series; films noteworthy not only for their innovative use of the color technology available at the time, but also for their high production value. An examination of the various ways in which the Fashion Forecast films were promoted in media like newspapers and fan magazines takes place, as well as the efforts made to promote the films through collaborations between theaters and department stores across the United States.

A note about the availability of the Fashion Forecast films is worth mentioning here. While the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences (AMPAS) Film Archive has all eight films in the series on nitrate, they are currently unpreserved. While I was conducting research on the Vyvyan Donner series, these were the only copies known to exist. Due to their precarious preservation status, flatbed viewing of the films was not possible during my visits to the AMPAS film archive. The reels were, however, available for viewing on a winding bench, which provided valuable information regarding the aesthetics of the films in the series, as well as the ability to view the production credits. Because of the manner in which the reels are currently preserved, significant elements like sound were not available for interpretation at the time this research was conducted, despite their importance to this particular series of fashion shorts. Fortuitously, supplementary material from fan magazines and newspapers helped fill in some gaps and company records regarding the production collected from the George Eastman Museum and the Margaret Herrick Library provided invaluable insights into the films—especially when considered in conjunction with winding through the reels. Despite the setback of not being able to witness the soundtrack, the reels themselves, coupled with inter-office correspondence and company records allow for the construction of a history of the Fashion Forecast films.

Color and Fashion in the Newsreel and Short Subject Genre

Prior to the development of photographic color processes such as Technicolor, the relationship between applied color, newsreels, and short subject films was firmly in place since the late 1800s. As Anne Hollander contends, “public procession[s] of specially dress-up ordinary people is one of the oldest kinds of shows in the world; it has probably continued to exist because it never fails to satisfy both those watch and those who walk.” Some of the earliest short films featured the dressed female body in motion in an attempt to capture move-

ment. Titles like *Annabelle Serpentine Dance* (Edison Manufacturing Company, 1895) or *Eccentric Waltz* (Pathé Frères, 1903), for example, feature dancers in Loïe Fuller-inspired costume and choreography (Figure 3.1). The spectacular nature of applied color processes like hand coloring and stencil coloring functioned in a different manner than photographic color, with Tom Gunning arguing that “the changing patterns of free-form color, as opposed to the attempt at color consistency and subordination to photographic form that characterizes most tinted films, make these first color films perhaps the most satisfying instances of the art of motion in early cinema.”

![Figure 3.1 Stills from (left) Eccentric Waltz (Pathé Frères, 1903) and (right) Amour d’esclave (Albert Capellani, 1907), two examples of Pathécolor involving stencil coloring. Notably, wardrobe and some scenery are the only elements in color. Credit: Library of Congress. Photograph of the nitrate film print Amour d’esclave by Barbara Flueckiger, Timeline of Historical Film Colors.](image)

Newsreels evolved out of the filming of everyday events. By 1911 these films were curated into short journals of world events which were shown weekly at local movie theaters. These films not only reported on current events around the globe, but also captured social happenings, sports, and other topics of interest, including the latest styles delivered from fashion capitals like Paris and New York. Michelle Tolini Finamore traces the origins of the fashion newsreel and demonstrates how film brought the pricey designs, previously available only to the social elite, to the masses frequenting movie theaters across the globe, and in doing so, established a democratization of fashion in the United States. The notion that color could aid or enhance the fashion film appeared early on in the genre, with some of the earliest-known examples featuring hand colored garments. As color motion picture technology advanced throughout the twentieth century, fashions became an increasingly popular subject in short films, leading to the continued development of the already-intertwined relationship between the fashion and film industries.

By 1910, newsreel companies like Pathé and Gaumont were producing films containing two or three subjects on each reel, including limited footage of the latest fashions from Paris. By the end of 1911, Pathé expanded their coverage of fashion, producing short films devoted entirely to the latest in

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style. In addition to presenting attractive fashions in color, the fashion in
terms offered opportunities not only for more extensive tie-ins with the fashion in-
dustry, but also for improving color motion picture processes. One of the ear-
liest examples of cross-promotional efforts between the fashion and film in-
dustries are the **Florence Rose Fashion Pictures**, a black and white series com-
prising over thirty films released bi-monthly by Pathé between 1916 and 1917.
In this series, Florence Rose, former Editor of *L’Art de la Mode* and the fash-
ion pages in the *New York Globe* and the *New York Evening Mail*, selected the
latest in medium to high-priced “Made in America Gowns and Fashions” worn
by popular actresses including Pearl White, Jane Grey, and Florence Reutti.⁸
The films were released in conjunction with what one Pathé official promised
to be a mutually beneficial cross-promotion between exhibitors and national
newspapers. Local newspapers across the country featured the fashions worn
in the films on their style pages every day for twelve days prior to screenings
at local theaters.⁹ Of the types of fashions featured in the series, a *Moving
Picture World* writer mentioned the clothes featured in the *Florence Rose*
films were “not the Fifth Avenue fashions and the Paris fashions which never
get further west than New York,” arguing they were “the fashions that the
women in every city of the country” would wear.¹⁰ A representative from
Pathé explained the appeal of the *Florence Rose* films as follows: “While
women are interested in the illustrated articles published in newspapers, they
are more interested in seeing the fashions in the films worn by living models.
Exhibitors, therefore, see the value of cooperating with the newspaper in any
way possible.”¹¹ While the *Florence Rose* series was one of the first instances
in which such care was put into a cross-industrial promotion, the logic behind
such efforts remained consistent thereafter.

While the films in the *Florence Rose* series were released in black and
white, Pathé made their fashion films utilizing the Pathécolor method, which
used up to six stencils to apply color to the film.¹² One film, *Parisian Modes*

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“Pathé to Show American Fashions,” *Motography* 16, no. 4 (July 22, 1916): 205
⁹ Some of the newspapers included: The *Chicago Daily News*, St. Paul *News*, Minneapolis
*News*, Omaha *News*, *The Louisville Times*, The *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, The *Buffalo Enquirer*, The
*Baltimore American*, The *Boston Traveller*, Syracuse *Post-Standard*, Utica *Observer*, and
Cleveland *News*. In “Pathé to Show American Fashions,” *Motography* 16, no. 4 (July 22, 1916):
205.
¹¹ “Florence Rose Fashions ‘Get Them Going and Coming,’” *Motion Picture News* 14, no. 11
(September 23, 1916): 1849.
¹² Listings in trade magazines evidence that the *Florence Rose* films were, on occasion, distrib-
uted on a split-reel with Pathécolor travelogues, including *Some Unusual Birds* (1917) and *Pic-
ture Postal Cards* (1917). See “Pathé Program Week of May 13,” *The Moving Picture World*
(May 12, 1917): 984 and
(Pathé Frères, 1911) featured hats, dinner gowns, tailor-made costumes, walking dresses, negligees, and tea gowns, in color.13 Eirik Frisvold Hanssen establishes Pathé as the leader in using color in connection with the display of clothing and appealing lifestyles, identifying the 1910s as a crucial period in which the integration of fashion and moving images in newsreels and actualities intensified.14 A pioneer in mass production and distribution, Pathé established a sales office in New York City in 1903, exerting a strong influence in the United States, with newsreels by Pathé Frères widely and regularly distributed in the United States to an extensive, captive audience.15 The acknowledgment of the potential marketing power of the fashion newsreel occurred in the 1910s, with rival couturiers Paul Poiret and Lucile filming collections and sales visits in 1913 and 1914, respectively. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, color continued to be a regular feature in short films and newsreels dedicated to presenting the latest in fashions. As the next section “The reproduction of the color combinations in the various gowns goes toward making the fashion review one of material worth to the feminine portion of the attendance, and adds greatly to the beauty of the pose series.”16

Kodachrome’s Hope: *McCall Colour Fashion News*17

In 1923, Jules Brulatour, Kodak’s then head of distribution, contacted George Eastman with the following proposal: “I have been trying since I saw you last to interest the McCall Publishing Co., to put out at regular intervals a fashion film, in colors. This publication, as you know, are devoted exclusively to women readers. They have a very large circulation and a tie up with them would prove I think most desirable.”18 Brulatour’s letter set in motion the production of a series of eight short films released between 1925 and 1928 starring actress Hope Hampton modeling the latest in Parisian fashions, in the

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17 A more complete exploration of the production and promotion of the *McCall Colour Fashion News* series was presented by Natalie Snoyman at The Color Fantastic: Chromatic Worlds of Silent Cinema Conference, Amsterdam, Netherlands, March 2015.
18 Correspondence from Jules Brulatour to George Eastman, November 19, 1922; from the George Eastman Legacy Collection, George Eastman House.
Kodachrome color motion picture process. As Brulatour relayed it to a reporter in Rochester, where most of the films in the series were filmed, he believed fashion was “especially conducive to popularizing the colored films,” arguing that “nothing can give the gorgeous variegation of color effects like beautiful and harmonious ensembles of color in garb.” Brulatour, then, believed the McCall’s short subjects offered an opportunity to improve the Kodachrome process, which Eastman Kodak was actively promoting as a viable color motion picture film process at the time.

Experiments with the Kodachrome motion picture process began in 1912, when George Eastman established the Kodak Research Laboratories in Rochester, New York. As detailed in Glenn Matthews’s article printed in the *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, the Kodachrome process recorded two color separations through red and green filters onto a film strip advanced via a two frame pull-down. The print would combine these into one color image by printing onto opposite sides of a double-coated film, effectively eliminating the need for specialized projection equipment. As the first motion picture subtractive process, Kodachrome pre-dated Prizma and Technicolor, but did not find the same degree of success. While a few short films were made with the process, experimentation halted entirely when the United States entered the war in 1917. In 1922, the lab set its sights on producing a Kodachrome industry demonstration reel, with George Eastman outlining the purpose as follows: “It is not our intention to attempt anything but close-up portrait work and what we want to do is photograph some very attractive actress who is in a prominent film which is to be released very soon. It will not require the working up of any special scene or anything of that kind.” The reel featured actresses like Hope Hampton, Mae Murray, and Mary Pickford posing in front of dark backgrounds, wearing clothing in shades of red, green, and blue. In order to avoid the problem of parallax caused by the twin-lens camera, the subjects were filmed almost entirely in close-up. The limited palette of reds, greens, and blues allowed the two-color Kodachrome process to shine, with one *New York Times* writer reporting, “the articles of clothing and jewelry worn by the subjects seemed to possess their full chromatic value.”

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20 “Hope Hampton Dazzles Eye as She Poses at ‘Style Show’; Husband Directs Her,” *Rochester Democrat*, January 10: 1925.
22 Correspondence from Jules Brulatour to George Eastman, January 5, 1922; from the George Eastman Legacy Collection, George Eastman Museum.
Following the 1922 demo reel, Brulatour proposed further projects to promote the Kodachrome process. His assessment that a fashion film might be a “most desirable” genre to exploit Kodachrome was adept, given the rising popularity of color fashion newsreels released throughout the 1910s and 1920s. By the time Brulatour cemented the collaboration between Eastman Kodak and the McCall Co. in the early 1920s, specific clothing companies and designers partnered with film stars to promote clothing not only through print campaigns, but also short films and serials. The Corticelli Silk Company, for example, produced a black and white short in conjunction with Pathé Frères Review starring Irene Castle, the popular dancer and actress known for her work on-screen and on the stage. While the McCall and Corticelli promotions starred different actresses and focused on selling different products, both were praised for their aim of “instructing women of the United States how to dress.” The original title for the McCall Colour Fashion News series was, in fact, “Notes for Women,” implying the educational intention of the shorts.

The simple, dark backdrops of the earliest films in the series suited the Kodachrome process well, especially during a stage in which Eastman Kodak was still perfecting the process. While the simplicity of the backgrounds benefitted the films in a technical sense, with less colors allowing for a smaller margin of error in terms of the stage setup, the McCall Co. reasoned that plain backgrounds would be the best way to showcase the fashions. The items chosen to appear in the eight Kodachrome shorts complemented the red and green color process, drawing from a specific color palette of predominantly green, red, pink, and blue shades to emphasize the process at its best, while avoiding hues that would not reproduce well. The first films in the series are nearly identical in terms of aesthetics: the name of a designer would flash on-screen, followed by the appearance of Hope Hampton modeling one of their creations, taking care to highlight eye-catching elements, such as pockets hidden in the jacket of a green Poiret silk pajama set or displaying the clever compartments in a snakeskin purse by Jenny (Figure 3.2). The films in the series included close-ups of Hampton which were most likely chosen to avoid the documented technical issue of parallax. While it’s safe to assume that these close ups were primarily chosen for technical advantages, they also proved ideal for showing off the remarkable details of the ensembles worn by Hampton in these films, and indeed Hampton’s own coloring.

Brulatour described Hampton’s coloring as being “exceptional,” claiming her red hair and blue eyes would make her an ideal subject to be filmed in the Kodachrome process—a meaningful factor when reviews of color demonstration reels published in trade magazines and newspapers focused on accurate

25 “Plan Fashion Film,” The Film Daily (July 17, 1925): 2; “Flashes From the Eastern Stars,” Motion Picture Classic (October 1924): 54.
26 Correspondence from Jules Brulatour to George Eastman, February 19, 1925; from the George Eastman Legacy Collection; George Eastman Museum.
color representation of skin tone and hair color. By the time Hampton appeared in the fashion shorts, her coloring was well-documented in the press, with writers waxing poetically about the beauty of her hair and complexion. In 1921, for example, Photoplay’s Delight Evans, lamented:

It’s too bad the color process hasn’t really been perfected. Hope has the most gorgeous coloring you ever saw: deep pink cheeks, reddish-gold, curly hair, eyes as blue as her own uncut sapphires, and a white skin with an underlying tint, as the cold cream advertisements put it, of perfect health.

As Richard Dyer notes, film stocks, “cameras and lighting were developed taking the white face as the touchstone,” remarking that “film apparatuses have seemed to work better with light-skinned peoples, but that is because they were made that way, not because they could be no other way.” Bruaultour’s comments illustrate a certain limitation identified by Dyer in terms of being an ideal “type” to appear in front of the color camera in the 1920s. As Dyer maintains, the issue of an “assumption of whiteness as norm” continued in different moments of technical innovation and was indeed not limited to the Kodachrome process, as demonstrated in the following chapters.

Figure 3.2 Hope Hampton displaying the innards of a purse designed by Jenny in Colorful Fashions from Paris. Image courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.

27 Ibid.
29 Richard Dyer, White (London: Routledge, 1997), 90
Costly gowns from French designers (including Paul Poiret, Jeanne Lanvin, and Jacques Doucet) were featured throughout the series, with reports of Hope Hampton traveling to Europe for wardrobe selection and fittings printed in American newspapers and fan and trade magazines. Highlighting the “Frenchness” of the fashions was most likely meant to appeal to the average American woman viewer, eager to see the latest in Parisian styles on the screen, but these reports also lent a particular authority and authenticity to the films and the tie-in with McCall’s. With France still being the epicenter of all things fashionable, the fact that the clothes displayed in the film came from France was a selling point for the McCall Co. McCall’s was one of many American arbiters of French fashion, sending their designers to Paris to attend seasonal openings to return with the fashions best suited for adaptation in McCall’s highly popular pattern pages. The McCall Co. took pride in being the only American pattern distributor to import garments made by the foremost Parisian designers and translate those designs into patterns, resulting in what the company called the “democratization of supreme style,” promising readers they would “get the effect of a Paris Gown if [they used] McCall Patterns.”

Like the patterns made from French designs featured in McCall’s, the Kodachrome films represented a form of democratization, bringing high-end items—previously only available to those invited to private showings in the designer’s Parisian showroom—to middle-class American women via the screen. The McCall shorts relied on the element of reality captured by the Kodachrome process, not only to represent the French designs in their most accurate state, but also to encourage audiences to feel closer to the fashion capital. After a screening of Parisian Modes in Color, a New York reviewer remarked, “the colors in the picture are so perfect that it is as good as seeing an all fashion parade in Paris.”

In order to capitalize on the potential of the series to close the economic and geographic gap between American women and the fashion capital of Paris, the McCall Co. developed a line of color patterns consisting of adaptations of select creations worn by Hope Hampton in the films, made available to women exclusively through McCall’s Magazine and retailers across the nation carrying their products (Figure 3.3). The McCall’s ad-sheets stressed the ability of the Hope Hampton films to whet the “clothes appetite” of the nation, underlining the fact that moving pictures were, what they called, “a most important factor in speeding the sale of fashion.”

30 “Hope Hampton Dazzles Eye as She Poses at ‘Style Show’; Husband Directs Her,” Rochester Democrat (January 10, 1925); “Flashes From the Eastern Stars,” Motion Picture Classic (October 1924): 54.
31 McCall’s Ad-Sheet, 1928, 1.
32 “Newspaper Opinions on New Pictures,” Motion Picture News (February 6, 1926): 727.
33 “McCall Fashion Color Film Whets ‘Clothes Appetite’ with Parisian Style,” McCall’s Ad-Sheet (January 1926): 1.
Compared to the creations featured in the film, the patterns were more simple in material, line, and color, making them more manageable for the average home dressmaker’s skill set. Despite the discrepancies between what was presented on the screen versus in the patterns, the company insisted the films were the best method for showing “line for line, color for color, the newest fashion news,” thereby adding a promotional boost to the series.34

The McCall’s ad-sheets took care to emphasize the practical importance of printing the patterns in color, stressing they would better “guide the dressmaker in the finishing details accurately.”35 There was also an emphasis on

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34 “Make the Movies Work For You,” McCall’s Ad-Sheet (December 1928): 4.
the selling potential of color materials, with the company reminding their retailers, “You know from previous experience...that color illustrations sell faster and appeal more strongly to the home dressmaker. You can see at once how the sales of the pattern department will benefit from the more constant use of color illustrations.”

Similarly, local newspapers advertising programs featuring shorts in the *McCall Colour Fashion News* series stressed the fact that the series was filmed “in natural colors,” with viewers being able to see the creations “in their natural shades.”

Like Brulatour, employees of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation recognized the short subject as a training ground of sorts, with the genre providing opportunities for experimentation with, and promotion of, its products. While the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation was established in 1914, around the time of the release of the *Kinemacolor Fashion Gazette*, the company did not make great strides toward improving its color motion picture process until the late 1920s. The following section considers the significance of the short subject genre during that period in Technicolor’s history, with particular emphasis on the fashion short.

**Technicolor and the Short Subject Genre in the Late 1920s**

As the leading form of entertainment among Americans at the time, feature-length films were important to the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation from an economic and cultural standpoint. Former research conducted about the history of the Technicolor Motion Picture Company demonstrates that producers and studios did not immediately embrace color technology for a variety of reasons, including high costs and unreliable results. In his address at the 1938 fall meeting of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers in Detroit, Herbert Kalmus outlined some highlights in the history of the development of Technicolor as a business, primarily from the point of view of its contact with motion picture producers, distributors, and exhibitors. Kalmus also directed his comments toward “some of the fixed ideas and prejudices concerning color” exhibited by Hollywood producers and the company’s efforts to address them:

> I wanted to make short subjects, not primarily to make money as a producer, but to prove to the industry that there was nothing mysterious about the operation of Technicolor cameras, that the transition from what the eye saw to what the emulsion recorded

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36 Ibid.
37 *The Bridgeport Telegram*, April 13, 1925, 8.
was susceptible of reasonable control through understanding, that black and white cameramen could easily be trained to light for Technicolor cameras, that talented art directors could readily begin to think in terms of color, that rush prints could be delivered promptly, and generally that the job could be done efficiently and economically, utilizing but not minutely imitating black and white experience. 39

While Kalmus’s comments were made in regards to films made in the two-color process, they highlight the important role short subject films played in Technicolor’s path toward success in Hollywood at that time, and the significance they would continue to have in the following few years with the release of the Fashion Forecast series. Steve Neale has argued that the exhibition area of the film industry has historically been reluctant to invest in change, and Kalmus’s remarks bring attention to the short subject film as a genre primed for experimentation and training—two elements critical to Technicolor’s ultimate success in the late 1930s. 40 While the Fashion Forecast films were significant to the development of the three-strip process, they were preceded by other short subjects made in the two-color system that were similarly useful from an economic and business perspective. Before exploring the Fashion Forecast series in detail, it is fruitful to include a discussion about previous films produced for comparable reasons in the Technicolor process.

Between 1927 and 1929 Technicolor produced a series of films titled Great Events in collaboration with Colorcraft Pictures, Inc. and released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The films were made in the two-color process and were costume dramas focusing on historical subjects, with titles like The Flag (Arthur Maude, 1927), Buffalo Bill’s Last Fight (John W. Noble, 1927), Cleopatra (Roy William Neill, 1928), and Frontier Romance (Elmer Clifton, 1929). The production of these films coincided with the introduction of the third Technicolor process, a two-color subtractive process. This method used the same camera as process number two to simultaneously photograph two consecutive frames of black and white film behind red and green filters. This third process differed from its predecessor in that the two images were printed on one side of the positive by the dye transfer, or imbibition process. 41 Inter-company correspondence reveals Herbert Kalmus was hopeful regarding the potentiality of

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41 Introduced in 1926, the Technicolor dye transfer process—or imbibition process—was seen as a replacement for the problematic cemented printing technique. Largely invented by Daniel F. Comstock, the dye transfer process became one of Technicolor’s greatest legacies and remained in continuous use until 1975 in the United States. The dye transfer process meant transferring a dye image onto another carrier. In Technicolor’s case, this meant transferring multiple color records, one by one, onto a blank piece of film. The process itself was technically complicated, taking millions of dollars of experimentation to perfect, but allowed the reproduction of
success for the *Great Events* films, informing Leonard Troland—Technicolor’s Director of Research—that the heads of the Production Department and Distributing Department of the Film Booking Offices of America “passed very favorably” upon viewing *The Flag*, the first two-reeler in the series.42 *The Flag* featured actors including Francis X. Bushman, Enid Bennett, Johnny Walker, and Alice Calhoun, all playing historical figures. On the casting, Kal- 

mun commented, “These four have all played in important roles and are very good names from the advertising point of view…We have been very fortunate in getting them all at low figures; partly, I think because of their enthusiasm for the subject and for the advertising they will get by being in these Technicolor features.”43

Despite feeling encouraged, the majority of the *Great Events* films were met with a generally tepid response from critics, as Anthony Slide reveals in his exploration of the series.44 Negative reviews stemmed from the critique that the shorts were crammed with information, overwhelming viewers with too much material. Furthermore, in letters written between Herbert Kalmus and Leonard Troland in the spring of 1927, Troland voiced skepticism regarding the *Great Events* series, stating, “People want a laugh or a kick, and not tears or historical instruction.”45 In his paper delivered to the Society of Motion Picture Engineers that same year, Troland provided an overview of the types of scenes that, according to him, were enhanced by the use of natural color film; these included: “flesh tints in their normal hues and saturations,” “feminine beauty,” and “the latest fashions.”46 In his paper, Troland contended that films depicting fashions sacrificed “about three-quarters of the effect” when represented in black and white. The idea that fashion was an appropriate topic in color shorts lasted well into the 1930s, with a 1939 poll of exhibitors including fashion as a subject filmed in black and white they would like to see made in color.47

By the time Troland presented his remarks in 1927, Technicolor had already received some critical success in filming fashion scenes in its two-color the full color spectrum by combining cyan, yellow, and magenta dyes—the Technicolor lab’s ultimate goal since the early 1920s.

42 Letter from Herbert Kalmus to Leonard Troland, March 3, 1927. From the Technicolor Corporate Archive, Motion Picture Department, George Eastman Museum.

43 Inter-office memo from Herbert Kalmus to Oates, Troland, Andres, Corekin, February 4, 1927. From the Technicolor Corporate Archive, Motion Picture Department, George Eastman Museum.


45 Letter from Leonard Troland to Herbert Kalmus. From the Technicolor Corporate Archive, Correspondence Files September 1925 to December 1927, Motion Picture Department, George Eastman Museum.


process, with the display of fashion and beauty often being the driving motivation behind these color sequences. *The American Venus* (Frank Tuttle, 1926), *Fig Leaves* (Howard Hawks, 1926), and *Irene* (Alfred E. Green, 1926) are three examples of feature-length films that inserted Technicolor fashion or pageant shots into otherwise black and white pictures. These scenes generally received positive attention from critics, exhibitors, and audiences alike. In some cases, however, the Technicolor inserts were the only aspect of the film that pleased the crowd at all. After viewing *The American Venus*, for instance, one theater manager commented that while “the style show scenes in technicolor [sic] are superb,” the film itself lacked “plot and continuity.”

Notably, the scenes filmed in Technicolor were oftentimes the ones emphasized in advertising and tie-ins related to the feature. Color advertisements for *Irene* ran in fan magazines that displayed some ensembles from the Technicolor fashion show featured in the film, highlighting the fashions, as well as the fact that the fashions would be presented in color (Figure 3.4).

![Figure 3.4 Color advertisement for Irene highlighting the Technicolor insert featuring “The World’s Greatest Fashion Show—in color!”—printed in Motion Picture News 33, no. 10 (March 6, 1926): 1067–1068.](image)

The plot of *The American Venus*, on the other hand, was virtually built around three separate color sequences featuring women modeling swimsuits and the

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89 Advertisement for Irene, Motion Picture News 33, no. 10 (March 6, 1926): 1066–1067.
latest fashions on the Atlantic City boardwalk. In advertising the film, a theater manager in Lockport, New York presented a prologue of Beach Pajama Girls and Boardwalk Boys to audiences before screening the film, while holding a contest to find Lockport’s own “American Venus.” George T. Cruzen, the manager of the Palace Theatre in Lockport, reported that the show “attracted much attention,” receiving “a lot of word of mouth advertising.”

While generally met with a favorable response, a survey of reviews concerning films featuring Technicolor inserts evidences that some critics found the transitions between black and white scenes and color to be jarring. Such sentiments resulted in Technicolor inserts being used most often in dream sequences or, as with the cases mentioned above, in fashion shows—scenes providing a break between the “real world” of the film’s characters and that which was distinctly separate. The element of fantasy associated with many of the fashion shows featured in Technicolor inserts throughout the 1920s allowed a certain degree of liberty taken regarding the colors of costumes. On the other hand, short subjects or newsreels in which fashion was the focus did not invite the same sense of dreamlike spectacle. As trusted sources of information providing the latest news regarding styles from fashion capitals like Paris and New York City, the fashion short required a stronger attempt at presenting reality, with an accurate representation of colors being crucial to their success. While fashion and color remained attractive elements of these films, they demanded a more discriminating representation of color than the feature-length films they often preceded in theater listings. With its ability to attract audiences through spectacular and realistic presentations, fashion was a somewhat flexible medium to display the Technicolor process. Through their factual reporting, fashion shorts were a logical genre to display the accuracy of Technicolor at a time when the company expressed interest in establishing its product more firmly within the film industry. This, coupled with Leonard Troland’s ideas regarding “the latest fashions” being one logical venue for displaying color in film, were two factors contributing to the production of Technicolor fashion shorts in the late 1920s.

In 1928, Fashion Feature Studios, Inc. began production on the Fashion News series, filmed in Technicolor’s two-color system and released bi-weekly. These one-reel shorts presented the latest styles in women’s fashions modeled by famous or up-and-coming screen actresses, typically featuring at least four stars in each issue. By June 1930 one reporter noted that “Virtually every star in the film capital has at various times posed for Fashion News,”

50 “Through the Box-Office Window,” The Moving Picture World 78, 6 (February 6, 1926), 575.
51 “Local Boys and Girls in Lockport Presentation,” Motion Picture News 33, no. 9 (February 27, 1926): 1028.
52 The Variety review of Into Her Kingdom (1926), for example, commented that the Technicolor inserts were “quite out of tune with the splendid black and white of [the rest of] the film.”
reflecting not only the strong tie between stars and fashion, but also the impressive output of the series. That well-known actresses were featured in the shorts rather than fashion models also reflects Kalmus’s statements regarding the stars cast in the Great Events series; that featuring recognizable faces would be favorable from an advertising perspective. Some notable cast members featured in the series included: Joan Crawford, Billie Dove, Colleen Moore, Ann Pennington, and Alice White.

The films displayed seasonal gowns, hats and furs worn by the stars as they posed outdoors beside homes, gardens, and cars. The series, referred to as “the style authority of the screen,” released its first sound issue in July 1929, with one writer noting the films could “present through sound even more attractively films from Hollywood, the fashion center of the world.”

By incorporating sound, the series no longer required intertitles to introduce the actresses and describe the fashions, as was common practice in fashion films in the silent era (Figure 3.5).

![In 90% Of All First Run Theatres](image)

“Fashion News”
The Style Authority of the Screen
in
TECHNICOLOR
and
R.C.A. SOUND

All Models Were By
CELEBRITIES OF STAGE AND SCREEN

![Raquel Torres decides that a two-piece felt set, hat and bag to match with appliqued flowers of felt, is just the right dash for early spring wear.](image)

**Figure 3.5 (Left): Advertisement for Fashion News, printed in The Film Daily 52, no. 5 (April 6, 1930): 33. Notably, the advertisement emphasized the film’s technological elements, including color (by Technicolor) and sound (by R.C.A. Sound). (Right): Example of an intertitle from a silent release of Fashion News, distributed ca. 1928 introducing actress Raquel Torres and her ensemble.**

The lack of production records and general information about this series makes it difficult to ascertain information concerning the sound, but at least one known film in the series was reportedly narrated by “fashion expert” Marguerite Swope. In one of the existing films in the series featuring sound, the

54 “Moves,” *Hollywood Filmograph* 10, no. 23 (June 21, 1930): 18. In April 1930, it was reported that 39 releases, “13 dealing with dresses, 13 on furs and 13 on hats” were on the 1930 release schedule of Fashion Feature Studios. See: “Stylish,” *The Film Daily* 42, no. 5 (April 6, 1930): 27.


narrator (uncredited in the titles, but possibly Swope) introduces actresses like “that clever little comedienne” Phyllis Crane and “charming” Polly Walker, but allows the stars to describe their outfits and direct the viewer’s attention to particular features of the styles.\textsuperscript{57}

As a red and green system, the limited color palette of two-strip Technicolor meant that certain colors were difficult—or even impossible—to depict in the final product, with blue and yellow being the most problematic for Technicolor’s cameras to capture. With the \textit{Fashion News} series being “the style authority of the screen,” it was necessary that in addition to reporting on the latest styles, they were presented in the most accurate colors. The few films in the series that are available for viewing today display clothes that were most suitable for the narrow range of Technicolor’s two-color process, with shades of red and green being most prominent not only in the ensembles presented, but in the film’s backgrounds, as well. By remaining within the confines of color film technology’s capabilities at that time, \textit{Fashion News} was capable of representing the selected fashions accurately while avoiding the limitations of two-color Technicolor.\textsuperscript{58} This strategy addresses an awareness of the contradiction of color on Technicolor’s part; that color on-screen possesses the ability to simultaneously contain elements of actuality and spectacle. In recognizing the limitations of the two-color process and avoiding the colors that did not produce well, Technicolor acquiesced to what Steve Neale refers to as the discourse of artifice—an ideological gap between nature and culture while acknowledging the “pleasures involved in and engaged by the use of color in film.”\textsuperscript{59}

The \textit{Fashion News} films enjoyed a strong showing, releasing 300 first run prints in “key” cities across the States like Los Angeles, New York City, Boston, and Chicago by April 1930.\textsuperscript{60} The promotion of the \textit{Fashion News} series followed a path not dissimilar from the one seen in the advertising of other films with a strong focus in fashion. Beginning in September 1929, an actress featured in a recent \textit{Fashion News} film was chosen as “Miss Fashion News” and traveled to large cities to make special appearances in conjunction with the latest release in the series.\textsuperscript{61} In addition to a visiting actress featured in the film, tie-ins with local merchants were established in each city where the films ran, with these contacts running ads in local papers and arranging window displays at pertinent stores.\textsuperscript{62} To further promote the film, weekly trade paper

\textsuperscript{57} Three films from the \textit{Fashion News} series are available on the DVD \textit{Saved From the Flames: 54 Rare and Restored Films 1896–1944} (Flicker Alley, 2008).

\textsuperscript{58} As a red and green process, two-color Technicolor was limited in terms of which colors it could convey.


\textsuperscript{62} “Short Pictures Play Large Role In Deluxe Theatres of Texas,” \textit{Exhibitors Herald} 93, no. 12 (December 22, 1928): 36.
*Hollywood Filmograph* printed small black and white photographs of the actresses featured in the summer 1929 *Fashion News* releases wearing the same ensembles they wore in the films. The photos were printed in the style-centric “About Town With Connie” column, with captions informing readers they could see the pictured outfits in the current *Fashion News* release. According to internal correspondence in the Technicolor Corporate Archive at the George Eastman Museum, the last known issue of *Fashion News* shot in Technicolor was completed on January 8, 1931, when its contract with Technicolor expired.

**Three-Strip Technicolor and Vyvyan Donner’s *Fashion Forecast***

Previous research on the history of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation demonstrates that the early 1930s marked a particularly trying period for the company. While Technicolor witnessed a boom in features made in the two-color process in the late 20s, the comparatively enormous and sudden demand put on Technicolor’s process and facilities for filming and for the production of release prints led to an overall decline in quality. Furthermore, the Great Depression put a damper on box-office figures. These factors led to a reluctance in producers willing to pay for the use of the process once it became clear that color could not maintain or attract bigger audiences and profits. During this troubled time, however, Technicolor continued to improve its color system, pressing toward the goal of developing a system to capture the entire color spectrum. The second half of the 1930s was a significant era in Technicolor’s history in terms of output, aesthetics, and experimentation, with the catalyst behind this decade of change being the release of the three-strip Technicolor process in 1932. Scott Higgins argues that throughout the 1930s, one of Technicolor’s greatest concerns was to demonstrate the commercial potential of the process, as well as to establish a place for the color process in regular, studio feature productions. Higgins demarcates the years spanning 1936 and 1939 as ones in which Technicolor focused on improving the quality of the three-strip process and encouraging the studios to increasingly adopt Technicolor.

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1938 was a year of significant change within the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation itself. In order to meet the growing demand for Technicolor film, $1.5 million was appropriated for plant expansion; additional cameras were built, the plant capacity was doubled and a new office and research building was constructed. Vyvyan Donner's *Fashion Forecast No. 1* was the first assignment filmed at the newest Technicolor unit in Long Island City.\(^{66}\) The efforts to expand the plant impacted the company's output, reflecting a demand in the industry for Technicolor products. Between 1934 and 1938, the record of volume of release print footage shipped rose from 11,564,771 feet to 66,720,237 feet—a 477% increase.\(^{67}\) Fiscally, 1938 was the strongest year for Technicolor until that point, with the company's consolidated net profit jumping to $1,200,000 from 1937’s number of $571,395.\(^{68}\) In addition to expanding the plant itself, the late 1930s and early 1940s saw the Technicolor lab continuing to improve upon its imbibition process and printing methods in order to produce a higher quality product.\(^{69}\)

In a 1940 letter to Herbert T. Kalmus, Gerald F. Rackett, Technicolor's laboratory chief at the time, reported that the lab managed to produce a promising new cyan dye, which contributed an overall improvement to Technicolor pictures. Furthermore, Rackett reported they had secured a new magenta dye from Calco Chemical Company, a domestic producer—a relief to the lab which had previously imported magenta dyes from an increasingly war-torn Europe.\(^{69}\) Rackett's letter evidences the amount of experimentation that took place in the Technicolor labs during the late 1930s—the years coinciding with the production and release of all eight *Fashion Forecast* films.

While the second half of the 30s saw Technicolor turn its focus to securing a place for the wider use of the color process, the *Fashion Forecast* series did play an important role for the company during this period of experimentation. In addition to perfecting the dyes used in the imbibition process, improving the overall quality of Technicolor products included a new stock produced by Kodak on which the films were printed. In his correspondence to Kalmus, Rackett outlined how the *Fashion Forecast* series factored into these tests:

> We have now printed a section of the Fox Forecast No. 7 reel on the new matrix stock and the result is one of the most exciting things we have yet experienced in our work...The tests of Fox Fashion Forecast which I referred to as having been made from the new matrix stock were transferred on the new no-silver blank, using the new dyes, so that we have accomplished one test incorporating all of the improvements which we have visualized to date, with the result that

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\(^{66}\) "Technicolor Unit Ready," *Motion Picture Daily* 44, no. 27 (August 9, 1938): 7.

\(^{67}\) "The Technicolor Story," November 1939, Mr. G.F. Rackett. From the Technicolor Corporate Archive, Motion Picture Department, George Eastman Museum.

\(^{68}\) "Technicolor’s Profit For 1938 $1,200,000," *Motion Picture Daily* 44, no. 116 (December 14, 1938): 2.

\(^{69}\) Correspondence from Gerald F. Racket to Herbert Kalmus, May 14, 1940. From the Technicolor Corporate Archive, Motion Picture Department, George Eastman Museum.
is more than we had expected. We are now starting tests on improved sound results, using the new matrices and the special blank, all of which indicates that we are forging ahead with good progress toward our ultimate goal of a completely transferred composite release print.\(^{70}\)

Rackett’s letter to Kalmus not only evidences the amount of experimentation which took place in the lab during the late 1930s but also supports the notion that this period saw Technicolor seeking to establish a place for the process in feature productions. Scott Higgins outlines a certain color restraint Technicolor practiced during the late 1930s, consciously limiting and controlling the palettes presented to the cameras in order to adjust the studios, cameramen, and audiences to the process.\(^{71}\) While ostensibly pleased with the results of the Fashion Forecast prints, Rackett did note that the lab would continue tests “to determine if there are any slight modifications of the emulsion that we would like to have before authorizing [Kodak’s John Capstaff] to have some full-length reels made.”\(^{72}\) Rackett went on to report that should the stock be ready for use in time for the release of Northwest Mounted Police (Cecil B. DeMille, 1940), “it would give our entire business a stimulation that it has not experienced at any time heretofore from a technical development.”\(^{73}\) The Fashion Forecasts, then, offered the Technicolor lab a training ground through which they could perfect the three-strip process to be used in feature-length pictures. The following section discusses Vyvyan Donner, the woman whose name was attached to the Fashion Forecasts and who served as their director, as well as Fox Movietone, the newsreel organization that produced and advertised the series.

The Production Company and the Director

Prior to joining Fox Movietone in 1929, Vyvyan Donner was already an established figure in New York City with a long list of projects in the arts and entertainment industries—particularly in endeavors pertaining to fashion and film (Figure 3.6). Beginning in 1919, Donner took on the role of fashion journalist, writing a weekly fashion column for The Evening Telegram, leading to

\(^{70}\) United States v. Technicolor, Inc., Technicolor Motion Picture Corp., and Eastman Kodak Co., Civil Action No. 7507-WM (S.D. CA 1947), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

\(^{71}\) Scott Higgins, Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow: Color Design in the 1930s (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007).

\(^{72}\) United States v. Technicolor, Inc., Technicolor Motion Picture Corp., and Eastman Kodak Co., Civil Action No. 7507-WM (S.D. CA 1947), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

\(^{73}\) United States v. Technicolor, Inc., Technicolor Motion Picture Corp., and Eastman Kodak Co., Civil Action No. 7507-WM (S.D. CA 1947), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.
a syndicated column. In her columns, Donner predicted upcoming trends for the season and provided the accompanying illustrations. These articles, which more often than not appeared in sections of newspapers targeting female readers—with names like “The Housewife’s Column,” or “Features of Interest to Women”—consistently emphasized the influence of the screen, featuring studio players in the latest of styles sure to become popular amongst the masses. Donner also regularly illustrated stars in costumes they wore on the screen, including styles seen in That Royle Girl (D.W. Griffith, 1925) and The Street of Forgotten Men (Herbert Brenon, 1925). Broadway, however, proved to be Donner’s sartorial training grounds in the late 1910s and early 1920s, where she ultimately became known as “The Girl Who Owns Broadway.”

Donner frequently contributed costume ideas for Florenz Ziegfeld’s shows and gained recognition in New York City after designing colorful posters for

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Theatrical revues and the fashionable cafes in the Theater District. These posters, referred to as “vitalized silhouettes,” were described by one reporter as having colors “like Joseph’s coat” while another remarked they “[flamed] with color and action.” One reporter acknowledged Donner’s “vivid conception of colors and their ability to express action and form” as being “the most interesting part of her work.”

These colorful posters ultimately led Donner to the film industry, when Pathé Newsreels inquired about shooting her work for a segment in 1922. Taken with the filmmaking process, Donner immediately began composing lists of subjects she wanted to film, many involving the “queer, funny clothes—like bustles, chatelaine watches, pompadours” she wrote about in her days working as a fashion columnist for The Evening Telegram. Despite her enthusiasm, Donner had trouble finding a producer, leading her to self-fund her earliest films, the results of which ultimately earned her a spot as a regular contributor to the Pathé Review. After attending a fashion show at a local department store, she approached a local dress manufacturer who ultimately agreed to put his designs in one of her films while footing the bill should Donner find a newsreel to distribute it. Donner solicited the idea for the film to Edmund Reek, a producer at Fox Movietone, who agreed to loan her the studio and all of its facilities, including makeup and hair. The film earned Donner a spot as a regular Fox Movietone contributor in 1926—and the title of the “only woman newsreel director” at the time. While the newsreels Donner directed for Fox Movietone were made in black and white, the keen color sense she displayed in her silhouette designs was an attractive trait she would bring to the Fashion Forecast series made nine years after joining the studio.

Furthermore, with her fashion background and experience working on a demanding schedule and shoestring budget, Donner was a wise hire for Fox. Fox Movietone was the largest and best-financed newsreel organization throughout the 1930s. While other newsreel companies depended upon an exchange of footage with foreign firms in order to have a more complete weekly program, Fox Movietone filmed and distributed almost all of its own material. Unlike other newsreel organizations, Fox Movietone employed a stable staff of supervisors and narrators for each category of interest, providing detailed

76 Betty Shannon, “Important Women of Motion Pictures: Vvyan Donner,” Screenland 38, no. 5 (March 1939): 64
78 Betty Shannon, “Important Women of Motion Pictures: Vvyan Donner,” Screenland 38, no. 5 (March 1939): 64
information about the crew both in the credits and media. Popular commentators who were regularly featured in the Movietone rotation included radio personality Lowell Thomas and comedian Lew Lehr. The company’s advantageous financial status allowed Fox to produce some of the more technologically advanced newsreels seen on-screen, particularly in terms of sound, employing a hefty fleet of cameramen with access to complete sound equipment.

In addition to sound, Fox Movietone was a leader in the newsreel genre in terms of its use of color. In the 1920s Fox established tinting and toning departments in its New York laboratory to provide color effects for certain newsreels—a rare and modern addition to plants. When photographic color became available, Fox Movietone used the processes available—specifically Technicolor—in its releases, eager to stay ahead of competitors both in terms of footage and technology. Movietone, for example, was the only newsreel company to release the highly sought-after footage of the 1937 Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in color.

The Fashion Forecast series, then, was not the first Movietone film to be released in Technicolor, but these eight films comprised a significant portion of the company’s program. Of the 52 one-reel shorts advertised in the 1939-'40 Fox Movietone program, for example, the four Fashion Forecast films directed by Vyvyan Donner produced that year were the only live-action shorts the company released in color, with 10 of the popular animated Terrytoons also released in color.

In 1929, Fox Movietone began regularly releasing newsreels featuring a fashion segment, filmed in black and white. Narrated by Louise Vance, Movietone’s “Voice of Fashion,” the segments were short—typically lasting less than a minute—and focused on one fashionable item per reel, such as shoes, seasonal gowns, or hats. Vyvyan Donner was credited for the supervision and staging of these black and white fashion newsreels. One newspaper printed the following description of Donner’s responsibilities on these newsreels:

It is Miss Donner’s work to take an idea for what in a newspaper office would be called a “story,” and to transform it into several hundred feet of film. She must find the people for it, suggest, persuade, pacify and soothe them into coming before the camera, arrange to have camera and sound and light men there when the subject arrives, if it is to be in the studio, or, if the shooting has to be

84 “20th-Fox Sets $2,000,000 for 1939-’40 Ads,” Motion Picture Daily 45, no. 62 (March 31 1939): 4.
done outside, she must be sure the place is suitable, that it provides the proper distance for the camera, can be lighted, and is not too full of outside noises for the sound apparatus.\textsuperscript{85}

This report served to highlight Donner’s multiple duties on-set, but also illustrated the amount of consideration new technologies demanded during the planning and shooting stages of production. While Fox Movietone employed the largest staff of camera and sound men of all the newsreel organizations, the challenges the new technology presented required a significant amount of advanced planning regardless. As one editor mused, “…there are now two distinct periods, equally important: one of preparation, one of production.”\textsuperscript{86}

Despite any challenges the technology presented to the studio, the Fox newsreels and shorts were consistently praised for presenting a high quality, technologically advanced product throughout the 1930s—particularly the fashion segments of the program.

A great amount of care was put into the making of each Movietone fashion newsreel, despite their short running time. In a meeting of the Atlantic Coast Section of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, Donner outlined the production process of the fashion newsreels in her presentation:

In proportion, as much time and effort go into their make-up as goes into the preparation of a feature picture. We often spend weeks in preparation for a one-minute subject, and we spend a complete eight-hour day of shooting to get a one-minute subject on the screen. The whole world is tapped for ideas; and sets are especially built on which to present them…Every effort is used to make the newsreel fashion clip a small bit of perfection, from news and subject matter, suitability of set and location, and on up to the height of feminine American Beauty.\textsuperscript{87}

The attention to detail and the high production value of these newsreels did not go unnoticed by reviewers. In the trade press, the Donner newsreels were considered a standout in the Movietone News program, with one reviewer opining: “Vyvyan Donner’s fashion stuff is outstanding…the methods of presenting good looking models in informal poses around a piano and the fine lighting effects put these shots in a class by themselves.”\textsuperscript{88}

The critical success of Vyvyan Donner’s fashion newsreels made throughout the 20s and 30s, as well as the generally accepted discourse that fashion films were a guaranteed draw for women audiences, led to the inclusion of Vyvyan Donner’s \textit{Fashion Forecast} in the Fox Movietone program for 1938–

\textsuperscript{86} William A. Johnston, “Producer Confessions,” \textit{Motion Picture News} 40, no. 17 (October 26, 1929): 15.
\textsuperscript{87} Vyvyan Donner, “Production and Significance of Newsreels,” \textit{Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers} 47, no. 5 : 364–365.
'39. With color being an attraction to audiences, and with fashion a subject designated as appropriate for color, the decision to film the Fashion Forecast shorts in Technicolor was a logical one for the studio. The decision to include the Donner films in its program was significant, as Fox Movietone was gearing up for what the company promised would be “the most ambitious program in the history of this company.” In April 1938, Sidney R. Kent, President of 20th Century-Fox, announced a new policy of making “fewer and better short subjects” in the upcoming season. That same month, Fox Movietone officially announced its program for the 1938-'39 season in a sprawling 18-page color spread printed in popular American trade magazines that included Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecasts in its short product lineup. The advertisement emphasized that the films would be released in Technicolor, an element sure to “wow the women, fascinate the men!” 1938 was a particularly notable year for Fox Movietone in terms of expansion. In late October, Fox opened a new stage at 453 West 53rd Street. With dimensions of 100 feet by 75 feet, it was called “Manhattan’s Movietone City.” The stage, which cost approximately $400,000 to build, was constructed primarily to handle increasing demands of producer Truman Talley, the head of Fox’s short feature program, as well as the producer with whom Donner worked on the Fashion Forecast series. The new stage consisted of a variety of amenities, including: new Technicolor equipment, a special lighting system, carpenter shops, production offices, makeup rooms, a swimming pool with under-water camera compartment, and both Western Electric and RCA recording systems. When the stage officially opened, the press was invited to attend a reception while Vyvyan Donner shot scenes for a new Fashion Forecast short.

In addition to her fashion newsreels receiving a considerable amount of attention in the press, Vyvyan Donner took on a stronger presence in the public eye in the year leading up to the release of the first Fashion Forecast. Despite her own reportedly “tall and statuesque” appearance, Donner never appeared on-screen, remaining instead behind the scenes in her role as director and producer on over 300 fashion show short features over the course of 16 years. During her time at Fox Movietone, however, Donner took on a decidedly public role in promoting the significance of the fashion newsreel and short subject. Newspapers and trade magazines regularly reported on Donner’s appearances at social events including luncheons, beauty pageants, and “fashion clinics”

89 Fox Movietone advertising insert, Motion Picture Daily, 1938 April 26, vol. 43, no. 96, p. 5-22.
91 Fox Movietone advertising insert, Motion Picture Daily, 1938 April 26, vol. 43, no. 96, p. 5-22.
93 Margaret Mara, “Producer of Fashion Newsreels Finds Men Excellent Audience,” Brooklyn Eagle December 27, 1946: 13
for soon-to-graduate college students, giving a speech on the topic of “Dressing to Your Personality and the Job You Want.” Donner also took on a more educational role during her time at Fox Movietone, lecturing younger audiences on how fashion newsreels were made while addressing adults on the influence of the fashion newsreel on fashions across the globe. In the month prior to the release of Fashion Forecast number one, the Millinery Stabilization Commission invited Vyvyan to speak at luncheon held at the Waldorf Astoria on “The Influence of Newsreels on Fashion.” Donner was also an invited guest lecturer to Robert Gessner’s course at New York University titled “History and Appreciation of Cinema,” designed “as an educational experiment, presenting the history of the motion picture through a representative collection of the best works of cinema creators throughout the world.” Over the course of fifteen sessions, students attended classes—involving a lecture, screening, and discussion—with titles including “The Rise of the American Film,” “Legend and Fantasy in Germany,” “The Realistic Film,” and “The Talkies.” Donner screened rare newsreel and style clips during her talk, as well as a presentation of the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, in Technicolor. Vyvyan Donner’s various appearances functioned two-fold: they promoted the Fox Movietone products while stabilizing her role as a fashion authority in the public sphere.

The Look of Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecast

In terms of an aesthetic, each film in the Fashion Forecast series offered a variety of backgrounds and ensembles to audiences. The average length of the eight Fashion Forecast films was 918’, with each short averaging a running time of about eleven minutes. Each film in the series was typically divided into at least two segments, each one presenting a different setting and type of garment appropriate to that setting. The first film, for example, was divided into four sections, each one featuring ensembles comprised of the following materials: lace, wool, velvet, and silk. With the exception of the lace segment, which introduced the ensembles in fashion revue style with models coming down stairs, the other three scenes in the first film were more casual in their presentation. The wool sequence, for example, featured models gathered in a living room, enjoying afternoon tea, wearing “town and country clothes.” The velvet sequence moved on to an evening at the theater, while silks were shown

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96 “Vyvyan Donner to Speak,” Motion Picture Daily 44, no. 23 (August 1, 1938): 8.
in a nightclub background. These various settings featured in the films allowed for diversity in the types of fashions and accessories shown.

While advertisements for the films made it seem as though they were released on a seasonal basis, the shorts often featured ensembles for multiple seasons. The second film in the series, for example, was advertised as a Winter Fashion Forecast, although it featured the segments “For the Snow” and “For the Sun” which had one group of models enjoying an après-ski drink in one scene and a second group modeling swimsuits and summer ensembles on a makeshift beach in the other. In general, the settings and vague presentation of a storyline allowed the Fashion Forecasts to move beyond the simple display of gowns seen in many fashion films in the first two decades of the twentieth century.\(^9\) In the rare instances fashions were shown in a more straightforward manner, there were touches of innovation in the presentation. In a segment titled “Chapeaux Nouveaux” in the fifth film, for example, models walk in and out of picture frames one at a time, as the background in the “portrait” changes with each switch. Each model pauses in the center to display the hats as the camera changes from a wide shot to a medium close-up, allowing the audience to view the finer details of the chapeaux.

The amount of care placed on the production of the black and white fashion segments in Vyvyan Donner’s Movietone newsreels carried over to the making of the Fashion Forecast series. On average, each Forecast followed an intense, three-day shooting schedule but their high production value was widely admired in reviews and in the press.\(^10\) The eight films in the series were shot on a variety of well-designed sets, typically at the Movietone Newsreel studio on Tenth Avenue. Despite featuring clothing suitable for the beach and the mountains, only two films in the Fashion Forecast series included scenes filmed outdoors—in films number 6 and 7. With segments like “Patio Party in Florida,” “Swim Party,” and “Village Fair,” these two films featured models engaging in a variety of outdoor activities, including playing croquet, swimming, and dancing at a picnic. The films often utilized these activities in order to better display the fashions. The seventh film featured a scene called “Garden Party” in which models were playing croquet. While the model prepared to hit the croquet ball with her mallet, setting the ball in place with her foot, the camera would linger on her shoes, allowing the audience to catch a better glimpse of their details.


\(^10\) As an example of the high budget available for the series, one trade magazine reported that Fox Movietone brought in $400 wallpaper from Buffalo, New York to be used in Fashion Forecast number two. With a theme of “Country Life and the Hunt” the pricey paper featured handblocked images of foxes, dogs, and hunters on horseback. In the end, the wallpaper did not appear in the film. See James P. Cunningham, “Aisles and Interludes,” Motion Picture Herald 134, no. 12 (March 23, 1939): 46.
Outside of the sixth and seventh films, the rest of the series was shot indoors, at the studio in New York City. The set for the fourth Fashion Forecast—constructed to represent the concept of “A Bride’s First House”—took over the entire area of Movietone City’s newest, largest stage. One reporter visiting the set during filming disclosed the following details to readers:

…but each room of the Bride’s Home will express its own mood….the living room with its wisteria and a hand-wrought iron balcony will recapture the Old South…the kitchen will be the housewife’s dream come true, glass walled, and with every latest gadget to transform kitchen mechanics into a delight….the bedroom is French Provincial, and typifies every woman’s dream….then a conservatory for daylight dining….and the breath-taking climax of this gorgeous fashion show will be a Moorish Garden embodying all the allure and opulence of the East.101

The description of this set illustrates not only the high amount of detail placed on designing the sets for these shorts, but also the sense of desire these films instilled within female audiences, not only for the garments paraded on-screen, but for a particular lifestyle as well. Jane Gaines has likened cinema-going to “the browsing-without-obligation-to-buy” experience offered by department stores at the turn-of-the-century and for many audiences at the time, the Fashion Forecast films presented a similar opportunity.102 Filmed and released during the Great Depression, many of the products featured in the Fashion Forecasts, such as new kitchen appliances, vacations, accessories, jewelry, and the fashions themselves, were largely unattainable for the average American at the time.

Unlike other fashion shorts, the Fashion Forecast series did not announce the names of designers providing the garments featured in the films. The opening credits in the first film announced that audiences would see “the forthcoming styles for women as conceived and created by the leading New York and Paris designers in Technicolor.” The second film included a similar announcement, but subsequent films in the series did not. Most newspapers, trade journals, and fan magazines reporting on the Fashion Forecast films included no information about specific designers featured in the series, with the exception of fashion trade journal Women’s Wear Daily. While information regarding designers was not regularly included in write-ups regarding her films, trade journals did occasionally report on Donner’s comings and goings between fashion capitals in Europe. On one trip to Italy she received the keys to the cities of Rome and Milan and visited significant Milanese couturiers, whose creations she hoped to use in future fashion films exclusively featuring Italian designs.103 Despite this trip to Italy and her enthusiasm for Italian gowns and

101 “Along the Rialto With Phil M. Daly,” The Film Daily 75, no. 114, p. 4.
fabrics, Donner’s films did feature a mixture of contributions from European and American designers, including Elsa Schiaparelli, Maggy Rouff, Jeanne Lanvin, Clare Potter, and Joseph Whitehead.  

Rather than including names of designers whose creations were in the films, promotional material for the series instead focused on highlighting Technicolor, as well as the Fashion Forecast models (Figure 3.7).

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Figure 3.7 Advertisement for the second film in the Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecast series. Of note is that both Natalie Kalmus and Richard Mueller receive credits in the advertisement. Neither would receive a credit in the following films in the series. In Motion Picture Herald 133, no. 11 (December 10, 1938): 6.

Newspapers and trade journals regularly mentioned Vyvyan Donner’s ability to pick exceptional models for her films, and Donner prided herself on selecting the best type of models for particular styles. Each short featured at least 20 women, introduced via advertisements as “America’s most beautiful models” or “the world’s most beautiful models.” The films starred women from various backgrounds, including Dorothy Pinto, Anita Colby, Elsie Reade, Patricia Larkin, and Edna Blue, identified in promotional material—and in the opening credits of the films—as “Classical Beauty,” “Most Beautiful Face,” “College Girl Type,” “Most Patrician,” and “Most Photographed Mother,” respectively.

In some instances, models appeared in multiple films in the series and in those cases, they were introduced with different titles. In Fashion Forecast number two, Georgia Carroll was introduced as “Glamor Girl Model” and by the seventh film, her name appeared in the credits as “Most Famous Model.” Carroll’s upgraded star status was not unusual in Donner’s world, with newspapers crediting Donner with launching the careers of Ruth Warrick, Phyllis Brooks, Kay Aldrich, and Elise Knox—a few of the actors who first faced the camera in Donner’s films. While the majority of the models in the Fashion Forecast series were women, the films did occasionally feature male models, including Michael Whalen, Alan Curtis, and professional skier Birgir Roud, who made a brief cameo in the second film modeling the latest in men’s skiwear.

Another element of the films that received praise was the narration provided by stage star Ilka Chase who took on the role of commentator throughout the Fashion Forecast series. Like later films in the Technicolor Fashion News series that incorporated sound technology, the Fashion Forecasts were unique in that the display of gowns was not broken up by the appearance of intertitles on the screen, as was the case in silent fashion films. Instead, Ilka Chase’s scripts not only provided readers with details including the materials and colors of the clothing parading across the screen, but they also delivered the “crackling” commentary promised in the promotional material, for which the film received much praise. As mentioned in this chapter’s assessment of the film material, the existing copies of the Fashion Forecast films are preserved on nitrate and are only able to be observed on a winding bench for preservation reasons. This, of course, made it impossible to make note of Chase’s commentary as it appears in the films. Prior to its release in Sydney, Australia, however, a local paper reprinted some examples from the film’s

105 After her time with Fox Movietone, Donner continued to capitalize on her experience directing and arranging fashion films, lecturing young women and men studying modeling on the subject of modeling in fashion newsreels. See “Fashion Newsreel Modeling,” New York Post, November 18, 1941: 8.
107 Irene Thier, “Most Film Bills Hold; Party at ‘Citizen Kane,’” New York Post, May 27, 1941: 15.
108 Motion Picture Herald 33, 14 (December 31, 1938): 59.
script, as seen in this excerpt from the fourth *Fashion Forecast* released in the spring of 1939:

You, too, may own this magnificent mink wrap. Just marry a man with a heart of gold and a bankroll to match. Why, she’s crazy to take it off, and it is our good luck to see more of the lovely Natasha Dana who wears this blue lace evening gown with fuchsia colored flowers on the shoulder. The necklace—luscious fake pearls and gold.109

In reviews and write-ups about the films, Chase’s commentary was consistently recognized as being a contributing factor to the success of the *Fashion Forecast* series. While the current preservation status of the films does not allow one to be privy to Chase’s narration, the above excerpt allows one to glean that she did more than simply describe the ensembles, providing a sense of humor and action to the models’ movements. In commenting on Chase’s contributions, one reviewer noted that “Not only is this color fashion short superior to other fashion shorts because of the use of color, but by the effort to inject a greater amount of action to hold the attention of the public, by giving the models more personality, often using their names or allowing them to say a word or two…” 110 The practice of describing color as Chase did in the Donner films, or in captions accompanying color photography in print, was common practice throughout the 1920s through 1950s. While there is no documentation as to why this occurred so frequently, it is possible that the inclusion of such information served to emphasize the lifelike depiction of colors presented either in print or on-screen—a discourse which was so central to Technicolor’s marketing scheme.

As one contributing factor to the “superiority” of the series, the element of color consistently and logically received positive feedback in reviews. In general, the *Fashion Forecast* series was lauded in the trade press where their production was always reported on as seamless. Indeed, the discourse surrounding the production of the films tended to focus more on Vyvyan Donner’s ability to film on a tight schedule, her impressive taming of the crew, and her keen eye for fashions and models. Technicolor company records and inter-office correspondence detailing the making of the films reveals a more complicated story, particularly in regards to the film’s use of color. A deeper look into the production of the films also provides insight into how Donner and her staff cooperated with the Color Control Department provided and required by Technicolor to ensure a quality product. The following section delves into this element of the production of the *Fashion Forecast* films, re-


vealing Technicolor’s standards regarding color, the type of training the company provided to studios, and the oftentimes-fraught relationship the company developed with studios as a result.

“The Color Director Situation”

Throughout the 1920s, the studios handled the use of color in art direction and costume design, with good results being dependent upon a system of trial and error. As one *Fortune* writer explained the situation, “everybody on the sets had grown up in a black and white universe and did things in a black and white way. It was like a color-blind man trying to stage a Radio City spectacle.” As a deeper understanding of its color process was cultivated, Technicolor developed and provided an advisory service. The Technicolor Color Advisory Service, or Color Control Department, was officially established in 1926 to advise on wardrobe, sets, props, backgrounds “and other allied items.” Signing a contract with Technicolor offered the production crew not only the rental of Technicolor cameras, but also: a Technicolor cameraman who worked as an advisor to the studio’s cinematographer; advice given to art directors, set directors, and designers, wardrobe and property departments; use of Technicolor-approved makeup and assistance to the studio makeup departments; special lighting equipment; and laboratory processing up to and including the final release print. According to company documents, the Color Department strove to provide the following services in an effort to save the producer time and money:

A) Provide advice on correct shades of colors to be used to secure color desired on the screen.
B) Furnish samples of materials and colors used in previous Technicolor pictures to secure certain desired effects or results, saving unnecessary experimenting or testing.
C) Help to protect print quality and make greater shooting speed possible through advice on proper use of contrasts for Technicolor and effecting this before shooting time.
D) Advise on suitability of certain colors and color intensities to accentuate the beauty and personality of stars in keeping with the characterizations they portray.
E) Stimulate interest in and advise on good color balance in costumes, sets, and set dressing, and advise on good color juxtaposition between these units toward their proper integration colorwise and toward good color flow and color design.

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113 “The Technicolor Story,” November 1939, Mr. G.F. Rackett. From the Technicolor Corporate Archive, George Eastman Museum.
F) Advise elimination of distracting, bad colors and help maintain audience interest in the principal players.

G) Save staff time and money by following through details and affording the Producer more protecting on his final color result.

H) Consult on color flow—sequence of high and low key color sequences; sequence of warm and cool color sequences; color in relation to mood and characterization.115

In 1936, the cost of supplying a Color Director to the set of a Technicolor short on a one-week minimum charge basis was $150.116 While production time for the Fashion Forecast series was considerably shorter than one week, the contract between Technicolor and 20th Century-Fox stipulated the services of a Color Director during the shooting of the first film. In addition to providing guidance regarding Technicolor’s color standards, the company stood to benefit financially from the presence of a Color Director on-set.

In the early summer of 1938, trade papers reported Jack Painter, head cameraman for Fox Movietone News, was en route to Hollywood to arrange for the delivery of Technicolor cameras to be brought east to film the first of Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecasts.117 Painter had a longstanding working relationship with Donner, collaborating with her since the early 1930s on the Movietone fashion newsreels.118 While in California, trade papers reported that Painter would also study the “Technicolor technique in order to adapt it to…fashion shorts,” evidencing Technicolor’s desire to educate Painter about the process prior to filming.119 Despite Technicolor’s efforts, problems arose between the color motion picture process company and Fox over the course of filming the first films in the Fashion Forecast series—specifically, the first three films in the series.

Company records from Technicolor demonstrate that Richard Mueller, a Technicolor employee, served as Color Director during the filming of the first two films in the Fashion Forecast series. The trade press, however, credited Natalie Kalmus, the Director of the Technicolor Color Control Department, as supervisor of “the color work” and she was credited as “Technicolor Color Director” in the film’s opening titles, with Mueller receiving an “Associate”

115 Color Control Service, undated. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
116 Technicolor Inter-Office Correspondence, “Cost Estimates on Proposed Two-Reel Musicals,” October 6, 1936. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
117 “Paynter Starts West,” Motion Picture Daily 32, 132 (June 9, 1938): 6
Inter-office correspondence reflects a tense on-set relationship during the filming of the first film in the *Fashion Forecast* series, which took place between August 22 to 25, 1938. Fox personnel, including Vyvyan Donner and producer Truman Talley, voiced complaints about Mueller’s supervision, a number of which stemmed from his suggestions regarding certain costumes, some of which occasioned expenses the studio deemed unnecessary. The majority of these expenses, it was argued, resulted from the dyeing of certain garments in the “lace” segment of the film, which required repeated dyeing in order to come as close as possible to the color recommended and selected by the Color Control Department. The studio also complained they were allowed too little input in terms of their preferred colors regarding wardrobe, culminating with the sentiment that Mueller’s on-set opinions were too forceful. Mueller’s reports from the set, however, indicate that while Vyvyan Donner was present during the selection of fabrics and wardrobe, Fox personnel passed along the responsibility of color selection to Mueller more often than not.

Despite any issues Donner and the team at Fox had with the Technicolor Color Control Department, Donner was aware—at least in the press—of the need to develop a keen color sense when designing for the color picture. Having directed and designed both black and white newsreels and the Technicolor *Fashion Forecast* series, she noted in interviews that when it came to selecting models, “some [models] who are extraordinarily lovely in black and white are n.g. [no good] in Technicolor, and vice versa.” While this statement recognizes the need for a certain degree of “color consciousness,” it does not necessarily imply Donner possessed the particular sensitivity Technicolor deemed necessary to produce a successful Technicolor film according to the company’s standards. In a 1940 interview with Donner reflecting on the *Fashion Forecast* series, she expressed some pride in the choices regarding color in these films—as well as possibly snubbing the Color Control Department—claiming, “I’ve gone against every known color combination rule—and I’ve gotten such beauteous effects as they never dreamed of.”

The largely negative experience with Richard Mueller on the first *Forecast* led Fox to the decision that they no longer needed the services of a Color Di-

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120 *Motion Picture Daily* 44, 121 (December 21, 1938): 6. Opening credits viewed on *Fashion Forecast No. 1* (Vyvyan Donner, 1938) and *Fashion Forecast No. 2* (Vyvyan Donner, 1938) at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences Film Archive.

121 Inter-Office Correspondence, October 19, 1939, from G.F. Rackett to Herbert Kalmus, Subject: Movietone News, Color Director Situation. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

122 Inter-Office Correspondence, November 7, 1938, from Henri Jaffa, to G.F. Rackett. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.


124 Ibid.
rector on-set, requesting to be relieved of that contractual requirement in forthcoming productions of the series. Gerald F. Rackett, Technicolor’s then-laboratory chief, convened with Vyvyan Donner and her producer, Truman Talley, as well as Mueller, to discuss the situation. In a letter to Herbert Kalmus updating his boss on the situation, Rackett voiced the opinion “that Fox Movietone News people were viewing the situation from a viewpoint of prejudice and were over-emphasizing pride of authorship in their work.”125 Despite the tense experience during the filming of the first *Fashion Forecast*, it was ultimately agreed that the studio would acquiesce to the presence of a Color Director in future productions. As part of Technicolor’s contract, Richard Mueller provided some training in color direction in preparation for the second *Fashion Forecast*. Mueller’s student was George Gladden of Eastern Service Studios, Inc., a production studio based in Long Island City, New York that acquired its own Technicolor unit in 1938.126 The training Mueller provided to Gladden entailed trips to art and furniture galleries to discuss color usage and composition, studying the classification of all hues of fabrics, and reading books on color composition, range, and scale, as well as Paul Baumann’s color charts. The training also included watching numerous Technicolor features and clips in theaters and at Eastern Service and analyzing these scenes (or, as Mueller phrased it, “IN ALL EXAMPLES OF TECHNICOLOR SHOWN WE LITERALLY TRIED TO TEAR THE THING TO PIECES TO SHOW HOW A BETTER JOB MIGHT HAVE BEEN DONE IN COLOR IN EACH CASE.”).127 Despite his efforts, Mueller’s notes from the set of *Fashion Forecast* number two exhibit his concerns and frustrations regarding Gladden’s progress, as well as cameraman William Steiner’s:

As you might expect, Mr. Gladden and the rest down here are involving themselves in books, data and endless technical information which they neither understand nor can possibly use. The camera is like a pretty new toy to play with, so that such an attitude must be expected for a while. A little later I shall really start stressing the creative end—in this they are seriously lacking. BOTH STEINER AND GLADDEN HAVE LITTLE OR NO FEELING FOR COLOR COMPOSITION OR DESIGN.128

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125 Inter-Office Correspondence, October 19, 1939, from G.F. Rackett to Herbert Kalmus, Subject: Movietone News, Color Director Situation. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.


127 Technicolor Inter-Office Correspondence, November 7, 1938, from Henri Jaffa, to G.F. Rackett. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Emphasis in the original.

128 Notes on Richard Mueller, cc Mrs. Kalmus, 10/17/39. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Emphasis in the original.
Despite Mueller’s reservations regarding Gladden’s capabilities, his trainee took over as Color Director on *Fashion Forecast* number three regardless, but Fox viewed his contributions as insignificant yet costly, leading the studio to once again request continuing production without a Color Director. Fox argued the additional expense of this service, as well as sending Gladden to the west coast for additional training per Technicolor’s recommendation, might make it impossible for the company to continue with the series. Technicolor relented, sending a letter of permission to Fox Movietone to produce the fourth *Fashion Forecast* without a Color Director. While the opening titles for *Fashion Forecast* number four do not officially credit a Color Director, inter-office correspondence from the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation evidences Gladden was present during the film’s preliminary period of preparation. 

*Fashion Forecast* number five, on the other hand, was made entirely without the presence of a Color Director. According to correspondence from Henri Jaffa, one of Technicolor’s head Color Consultants, the film was “very badly handled from a color point-of-view,” with one segment in particular raising concerns. “Peacock Lane” was a nightclub scene in which audiences viewed well-dressed men and women enter the club and watched as they spent their evenings in different rooms of the venue, each with different backgrounds. At the club’s entrance were a black and white checkered floor, a velvet rope, a cerise satin screen, and yellow drapes through which the models passed to begin their evening (Figure 3.8).

According to Jaffa, the screen and drapes at the club’s entrance “completely submerged the colors and designs of all the costumes that appeared in the set.” Inter-office correspondence argued the decisions regarding set “defeated [the] object of displaying costumes by having such powerful colors in their backings as to distract one to the extent of being unable to describe the color of any costume which came in the foreground.” With fashion being a crucial element of the *Fashion Forecast* films, it was imperative the ensembles stand out, with the colors presented in the fabrics accurately reflecting the ones Ilka Chase described in her narration. This particular remark exemplifies Technicolor’s desire to have a Color Consultant working with production staff during

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129 Inter-Office Correspondence, October 19, 1939, from G.F. Rackett to Herbert Kalmus, Subject: Movietone News, Color Director Situation. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

130 Rough Draft, letter from Henri Jaffa to Herbert Kalmus, October 19, 1939. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

131 It is likely the segment borrowed its name from what came to be known as “Peacock Alley,” the long corridor connecting the Waldorf and Astoria hotels in New York City. As Lucy Fischer points out, the narrow halls resembled a “fashion runway” with women wearing fine clothes and jewelry. See Lucy Fischer, “Poetry in Motion: Costume, Choreography and the Showgirl Revue in American Cinema in the 1920s–40s,” in *Birds of Paradise: Costume as Cinematic Spectacle*, ed. Marketa Uhlirova (London: Koenig Books, 2013), 224.

132 Inter-Office Correspondence, October 16 1939, desk note for Mrs. Kalmus. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
the pre-production phase: at a time when Technicolor hoped to establish, improve, and demystify the three-strip process, there was little room for errors in set design and wardrobe. Natalie Kalmus herself recommended Fox resume the use of a Color Director on the *Fashion Forecast* films in order to protect Technicolor “against the misuse of color,” reflecting the company’s desire to present an impenetrable final product. At least one Technicolor employee, however, recognized the differing approaches to color standards presented by Technicolor and Fox, wondering whether the fifth *Forecast* presented “a sufficient display of color misuse” to put them in a position where Technicolor could demand the presence of a Color Director on future *Forecast* sets.133

**Figure 3.8** Stills from the fifth Vyvyan Donner’s *Fashion Forecast*, or the film that was “very badly handled from a color point-of-view.” These stills reflect Henri Jaffa’s concerns regarding clashing sets and gowns in the entrance to the night club in the “Peacock Lane” segment. Images courtesy of the 20th-Century-Fox Collection at the Academy Film Archive.

133 Inter-Office Correspondence, October 19, 1939, from G.F. Rackett to Herbert Kalmus, Subject: Movietone News, Color Director Situation. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
The fuss surrounding the “Peacock Lane” segment illuminates the oftentimes-tense relationship between Technicolor and production crews. Technicolor’s efforts at maintaining specific color standards not only posed a financial strain to Fox, but were also too finicky, to a degree. In the aftermath, Technicolor’s philosophy and specialized knowledge regarding color proved too precise for Vyvyan Donner, her production crew, and even critics. One reviewer countered the Technicolor staff’s sentiments regarding the set entirely, noting the film’s “Backgrounds are most effective for the mink and tweed-clad beauties and the haughty damsels in evening clothes.”

Further evidencing the discrepancy between Technicolor’s standards and the critic’s opinion, Fashion Forecast number five was selected as Box Office magazine’s “Short of the Week” upon its premiere. With positive reviews rolling in, Natalie Kalmus’s recommendation that Fox resume using a Color Director on the Fashion Forecast shoots proved fruitless and the contract between Fox and Technicolor was amended to determine the presence of a Color Director on a picture-by-picture basis. Company records do not provide information regarding the production of the Fashion Forecast films beyond the fifth film in the series. An examination of the opening credits, however, evidences that Fox continued to produce the Fashion Forecast films without the guidance of a Color Director, with that position going uncredited on the sixth, seventh, and eighth shorts in the series.

The Fashion Forecast “Color Director Situation,” as it was referred to in inter-office correspondence, offers a glimpse into the tense on-set relationship between the studio and the Color Control Department—a situation which was, allegedly, not very uncommon during these years. As Henri Jaffa related to Gerald Rackett in the midst of the discussions between Fox and Technicolor, “The feeling of a group of studio people that they could do a better job without the Color Control Department’s services is nothing new in our experience.”

In a 1938 interview with George Archainbaud after filming his first Technicolor feature, Jungle Love, the director reflected on his own experience with the Color Control Department, predicting, “the more directors learn about the technical end, the less they will be at the mercy of the ‘can’t be done’ experts,” noting that “the ‘it can’t be done’ lads among the technicians are getting scarcer all the time...because every time an expert shook his head some other

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134 “Short of the Week,” Box Office 35, 18 (September 23, 1939): 45.
135 “Short of the Week,” Box Office 35, 18 (September 23, 1939): 45.
136 Inter-Office Correspondence, October 19, 1939, from G.F. Rackett to Herbert Kalmus, Subject: Movietone News, Color Director Situation. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
137 Technicolor Inter-Office Correspondence, November 7, 1938, from Henri Jaffa, to G.F. Rackett. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
expert got busy and found that it could be done.”

In previous research, disagreements between producers and directors regarding the Color Control Department have been similar to Archainbaud’s—that is, largely anecdotal. The “Color Director Situation,” however, offers a glimpse into the inner workings of the department, revealing not only the kind of preparatory work they conducted, but also the aesthetic standards Technicolor hoped to instill in the film industry throughout the subsequent decades.

Promoting Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecast

The release of the relatively short-lived Fashion Forecast series coincided with a surge in 20th Century-Fox’s promotional efforts. At the company’s 1939 sale convention held at Chicago’s Palmer House, Charles E. McCarthy, Fox’s advertising and publicity lead, announced the company planned to spend $2,000,000 on promoting its 1939-40 program—the largest amount the company had hitherto allotted to publicity. McCarthy outlined the majority of the advertising budget would be allocated to cooperative advertising in magazines and newspapers, with Fox’s schedule being printed in 300 daily papers with a combined circulation of 30,317,641. Compared to the 1938-39 combined circulation of 22,610,486, this promised a 25% increase in exposure for Fox’s program. In his address, McCarthy praised the daily paper as the medium best adapted to film advertising given its flexibility permitting the ads to coincide with release dates and local booking dates.

The first Fashion Forecast previewed on September 20, 1938 at a press screening at the Twentieth Century-Fox office, with invitations promising that “12 of America’s most beautiful models will be present to lend their personal pulchritude to the glamour of this unusual short subject.” Invitees included representatives of the trade press, but journalists from Harper’s Bazaar, Vogue, Vanity Fair, and House Beautiful comprised the majority of the audience, ensuring coverage of the films in a variety of appropriate media. The Fox publicity department took care to develop its relationship with the press,

140 “20th-Fox Sets $2,000,000 for 1939-40 Ads,” Motion Picture Daily 45, no. 62 (March 31, 1939): 1.
141 “20th-Fox Sets $2,000,000 for 1939-40 Ads,” Motion Picture Daily 45, no. 62 (March 31, 1939): 4.
inviting journalists to the 53rd Street studio in New York City to attend the shooting of the first *Fashion Forecast.*

The Vyvyan Donner films enjoyed widespread screenings across the United States and beyond. In total, 1,666 prints of the eight films in the *Fashion Forecast* series shipped domestically and internationally, shipping 1,222 prints within the United States and 444 prints to foreign countries. One newspaper estimated that the newsreels and *Fashion Forecasts* were seen by more than 40,000,000 people on a weekly basis in the United States and by 100,000,000 throughout the world. A survey of American theater listings in local dailies indicates that the Vyvyan Donner films preceded a diverse group of feature-length films, including: *The Hardys Ride High* (George B. Seitz, 1939), *Pearls of the Crown* (Sacha Guitry, 1938), *Love Affair* (Leo McCarey, 1939), *Let Freedom Ring* (Jack Conway, 1939), *Maryland* (Henry King, 1940), *Algiers* (John Cromwell, 1938), *Girls on Probation* (William C. McGann, 1938), and *Hold That Co-Ed* (George Marshall, 1938). These listings also reveal that newsreels and additional short subject films shared billing with the *Fashion Forecasts.*

Referred to as a “showman’s paradise” in advertising and write-ups, the Vyvyan Donner films were noted for their high exploitability potential, with one reviewer referring to the series as “a ‘natural’ for tie-ups with women’s shops and the newspapers.” Like other fashion newsreels of the time, the Donner films were thought to appeal to the woman customer. As *Motion Picture Daily*’s Sam Shain related after a viewing of the “interesting” *Fashion Forecast* at the Roxy, “Beautiful girls in beautiful clothes and bedecked with jewelry—a sight to entrance women customers and make men apprehensive about their pocketbooks.”

Reviews in trade and fan magazines recognized the added value the Technicolor process offered to films like the *Fashion Forecast*—films which strongly focused on presenting a variety of garments to audiences. In a write-up of *Fashion Forecast No. 3,* one reviewer noted: “The Technicolor makes the costumes stand out as no black and white picture can.” Like the talkies which were popularized in Hollywood in the previous decade, theaters took to playing up the technology in advertising color films throughout the 1930s. This practice applied not only to feature-length productions, but to short films as well. As one writer noted in 1929, “Why let the opportunity roll by to play

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146 “Fashion Film Producer Marks Tenth Year,” *Syracuse New York Journal,* 1940
147 Notably, the *Fashion Forecast* films never shared billing with other films focusing on fashion. In Wilton, Connecticut, for example, the *Fashion Forecast* played alongside a short featuring humorist Robert Benchley prior to a screening of *Love Affair* (Leo McCarey, 1939).
up a part of your show that is as entertaining, or sometimes more entertaining, than even the featured picture.” New York’s Roxy Theater gave Vyvyan Donner’s *Fashion Forecast* marquee billing, noting that the one-reel short would be presented in Technicolor (Figure 3.9). One paper reported that the film was the only fashion film “considered sufficiently important for billing on a theater marquee.” That a fashion short earned such prominent billing at the Roxy, one of the most popular movie theaters in New York City throughout the 1930s no less, demonstrates the *Fashion Forecast* series earned a certain degree of respect from exhibitors—at least in terms of their potential to draw a sizeable audience. Furthermore, this example provides insight into how theaters advertised the Donner films, highlighting not only the title but the technology as well.

![Figure 3.9 The Roxy Theater in New York City prominently advertises Vyvyan Donner's *Fashion Forecast*, giving the newest release in the series marquee billing. In *Showmen's Trade Review* 30, no. 15 (May 6, 1939): 48.](image)

In order to aid interested viewers in their purchases, 20th Century-Fox issued press books featuring the names and addresses of participating merchants.

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to exhibitors who, in turn, could include stills and merchant information in lobby displays. Fan magazines encouraged exhibitors to invite the fashion editor of local papers to private screenings of the shorts, thereby "[paving] the way for much extra publicity on the fashion pages." The organization of contests for hopeful fashion designers for the best sketches of spring and summer fashions was yet another suggestion for attracting attention to the films. Showmen’s Trade Review encouraged exhibitors to “Give [the Fashion Forecast] plenty of exploitation and advertising. Then watch the ladies (bringing the men with them) rush to your box office.”

The trade press also encouraged exhibitors to organize live fashion shows in their theaters alongside screenings of the Vyvyan Donner films in order to pique the interest of women audiences. Fashion shows in the movie theater were commonplace by the late 1930s, but were still considered a useful way to appeal to women audiences. In Mt. Vernon, Ohio, the Schine chain’s publicity man, Kroger Babb, reported record attendance numbers at Schine’s Vernon theatre after organizing a 32-minute fashion show in cooperation with a leading department store. The show featured a total of 90 garments modeled by 40 local girls, with the department store covering all costs of the production. The theater’s manager, Jim Platt, classed the event “as the most outstanding in his 30 years of show business.” Similar to the advice given to theater exhibitors, clothing stores were encouraged to organize fashion shows featuring the items displayed in the Donner films, advertise with local film showings, and to cooperate with local motion picture exhibitors in securing photographic stills, newspaper mats, and other promotional material specially prepared by 20th Century-Fox (Figure 3.10).

Outside of the theater, scores of retailers across the United States stocked up on the clothes and accessories featured in the reels, including Mark Cross bags and gloves, Lily Daché hats, Palter de Liso shoes, and David Gottlieb bridal dresses, amongst other creations. At the tail end of the Great Depression, brands like Mark Cross, Lily Daché, and Palter de Liso were not easily obtainable by the average American woman. Daché’s hats, for example, cost upwards of $20 at a time when hats could be easily purchased for a few dollars. Despite this, department stores readily participated in tie-ins with the Fashion Forecast shorts. Lord & Taylor department stores were praised for

154 “Short Subject Reviews,” Showmen’s Trade Review 30, 12 (April 15, 1939): 33.
155 “Scores of Tieups Made on ‘Fashion Forecasts,’” Showmen’s Trade Review 30, 12 (April 15, 1939): 32.
157 “Stores Advised to Use Film Showings,” Women’s Wear Daily 57, no. 56 (September 20, 1938): 25.
158 “Scores of Tieups Made on ‘Fashion Forecasts,’” Showmen’s Trade Review 30, no. 12 (April 15, 1939): 32.
their window displays in which evening dresses, lingerie, housecoats, and day-
wear featuring authentic early Victorian prints and weaves. A display card in
the Lord & Taylor windows informed shoppers they could see the items in the
newest Vyvyan Donner film featuring Arnotex cottons. Including this in-
formation in the windows had the potential to pique the interest of shoppers
who either had or had not seen the series; if an individual had seen the film,
they might be more inclined to purchase an item from the Fashion Forecast
and if they had not yet seen the film, they may be more interested in buying a
ticket from a nearby theater to see the item in the window on the screen.

In Cortland, New York, an advertisement placed in a local newspaper
alerted readers of a special promotion in which items from Fashion Forecast
No. 2 could be purchased through Stemens, one of the town’s department
stores. Placed amongst nationwide news, crossword puzzles, and advertise-
ments for other local clothing stores and auto mechanics, the ad also informed
Cortland residents where and when they could view the film. Printed in the
Friday evening edition of the Cortland Standard, the Stemens ad ran two days
before the Fashion Forecast would be shown at Schine’s State Theatre on
Sunday and Monday. The promotion, then, allowed keen shoppers to buy a
selection of looks from the film before it screened in town, enticing residents
with the promise that “tomorrow’s styles can be chosen today.” This adver-
tisement functioned as a cross-promotional opportunity for two local busi-
nesses—Stemens department store and Schine’s State Theatre—while simul-
taneously sparking an interest in the Fashion Forecast films amongst
Cortland’s theater-goers.

Fan magazines, too, publicized the shorts and the ensembles they featured,
with Photoplay publishing a two-page photographic spread in its fashion de-
partment coinciding with the release of Fashion Forecast No. 2. “Wardrobe
Wanderlust” included seven black and white photographs of Georgia Carroll
taken by Paul Hesse in which Carroll modeled some of the “snow togs and
play clothes” seen in the films. By 1939, Photoplay published color photo-
graphs in its fashion department. While the photos of Georgia Carroll were in
black and white, a note from Gwenn Walters, Photoplay’s Fashion Editor at
the time, mentioned that readers could see the outfits “on the screen in tinted
glory by Vyvyan Donner in her Technicolor Fashion Forecast,” effectively
advertising the color motion picture process as a selling point.

As previously mentioned, the Fashion Forecast films consistently received
positive reviews in newspapers, trade journals, and fan magazines. The first
film in the series received a particularly meaningful review, with one critic
exclaiming: “Here the color technique is so sympathetic with velvets, makes
them look so flattering on the figure, and is so delightful in deep jewel colors
that one is led to expect an increasing use of velvet in costumes for other color

160 “In the Shops This Week,” Women’s Wear Daily 58, no. 102 (May 25, 1939): 12.
films." That a reviewer might predict that the three-strip process might have a use in “other color films” was, from the perspective of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, an ideal response to the short films. The reviewer’s comments harken back to Herbert Kalmus’s remarks on the function of the short subject film: that it had the potential to persuade producers and impact. Reviewers continued to praise the Fashion Forecast series for being “tops in its field,” with one critic calling the series a “refreshing departure from the usual bromides about women’s clothes.” Such reviews suggest that the Vyvyan Donner films offered more to audiences—and the industry—by focusing on aspects of the production besides the presentation of garments. The Fashion Forecast series stood out to reviewers by presenting something outside of the spectacular fashions. While reviews for the Donner films consistently praised the color process, they often referred to the films as being “something new in shorts,” given their high production value, the beauty of their models, and humorous, witty commentary. These films smartly used the sound and color technology available to productions at the time, so much so that reviewers commented that the Vyvyan Donner’s films “[merit] separate billing on any program.”

The promotional blitz accompanying the Fashion Forecast series reflects the studio’s recognition of an opportunity to take advantage of not only a fashion film—a genre which had proven itself successful amongst theater-goers—but a particularly well-received fashion film. Despite the popularity of the Vyvyan Donner shorts amongst critics and audiences, in August 1940 it was reported that 20th Century-Fox would drop the Fashion Forecast series. Reports cited issues of timeliness and high costs as the main reasons for ceasing production of the series—two issues which were indeed related to the other. Because a large number of costly Technicolor prints were necessary to get sufficient playing time for reels before they were outdated, this added a great expense to the studio. Ironically, it was the high production value which originally endeared the films to reviewers that ultimately contributed to the end of production of the Fashion Forecasts. Even though the series proved popular and well-received, with 20th Century-Fox referring to the Fashion Forecast series as “the most talked-about reel of all” releases in their 1940–41 product announcement, the studio officially announced they would cease

165 J.M. Jerauld, “First 20th-Century Fashion Number in Color Previewed,” Motion Picture Daily 44, no. 57 (September 21, 1938): 1; Motion Picture Daily 44, no. 121 (December 21, 1938): 6; Motion Picture Herald 133, no. 3 (October 15, 1938): 42.
166 Motion Picture Daily 44, no. 121 (December 21, 1938): 6.
167 “Ripley Shorts for 20th-Fox; Fashion Forecasts Dropped,” The Film Daily 78, no. 28 (August 8, 1940): 4.
production of the films just three months later. While relatively short-lived, an examination of the Fashion Forecast series offers a glimpse into a significant time in Technicolor’s history. The manner in which the series utilized the motion picture technology available at the time allowed the Vyvyan Donner films to shine within the short subject genre. Their production evidences the obstacles that technology laid out for production crews, studios, and the Technicolor company itself. The Fashion Forecast films reflect Technicolor’s attempts to establish not only the three-strip process, but also the company’s approach to color, in Hollywood in the late 1930s.

168 “20th Century-Fox Film Corporation Product Announcement for 1940-41,” The Film Daily 77, no. 99 (May 20, 1940): 5.
4. Building the World of Tomorrow with the Tools of Today: Rayon, Technicolor, and Industrial and Sponsored Shorts

In the fall of 1922, William Travers Jerome outlined some benefits of displaying fashions and fabrics in the Technicolor process:

…the manufacturer of apparel will pick out his good numbers, dress them on attractive models, have them photographed on 1,000 or 2,000 feet of film, and have his salesmen show them from place to place by means of convenient hand projection machines [that] project a clear image on an eight-foot screen. The process will not only show up every detail naturally, but will even make possible a more minute inspection than if the garment were at hand. The fineness of the weave in material can be clearly measured.1

Jerome’s remarks highlight Technicolor’s potential ability to draw the audience’s attention to the filmed subject which, in this case, was fabric. In this example, Jerome specifically identifies Technicolor as an attractive option for industrial and advertising films made by the fashion sector over a decade before the process was actively used in the genre. As an early investor in the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, Jerome’s confidence in the process lends a telling perspective to his comments.2 Regardless of his position, Jerome’s remarks highlight an eagerness displayed by Technicolor to establish their products within the film industry that was exhibited since the company’s inception. His comments also draw attention to Technicolor’s consistent efforts to demonstrate and promote the merits offered by their product.

This chapter explores the use of three-strip Technicolor in industrial and sponsored shorts produced in the late 1930s and early 1940s, particularly those sponsored by the American rayon industry. With an increasing number of these films produced and subsequently viewed by millions of American (and

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1 “Sees Tinted Films Ousting Seller’s Textile Samples,” *Women’s Wear Daily* 25, no. 73 (September 26, 1922): 3.
oftentimes international) audiences, this period warrants closer examination. As harbingers of modernity in their respective industries, the mutually advantageous promotional relationship between Technicolor and the American rayon industry that blossomed in the late 1930s invites exploration. A tremendous period of growth, these years are productive to investigate in order to learn about Technicolor’s marketing efforts and technological development. As a crucial period of growth and development for Technicolor and the rayon trade, this chapter examines the methods of demonstration and promotion exhibited by the fashion and film industries to establish these two products as the most reliable and modern of their kind. A gathering of the latest in technological progress, the 1939/1940 New York World’s Fair provided American industries with a space in which they could demonstrate and sell their latest products, and color film played an important role there. The final section of this chapter examines the multifaceted relationship between Technicolor and rayon at one of the most popular World’s Fairs of the twentieth century.

Color has long been a crucial element in advertising, and its successful incorporation into print advertisements through chromolithography in the late 1800s was a portent of its popularity in industrial and advertising films in the twentieth century. In 1923 Matthew Luckiesh, a physicist who wrote extensively on the physiological effects of color, argued for the effectiveness of color in advertising while explaining its value within the field: “It attracts attention; it lends distinction; it vividly depicts the product or package...Color may be used to suggest or impress various qualities of a product such as attractiveness, refinement, dignity, smartness, delicacy, coldness, warmth, purity, cleanliness, solidity and ruggedness.” Luckiesh’s statements reflect a discourse embraced and disseminated by Technicolor since its inception, but which intensified with the release of the three-strip process: that unlike black and white film, color motion picture processes could bring products to life on the screen.

Corporations and businesses sponsored a large number of industrial films in the first half of the twentieth century—films shown in cinemas, schools, and training programs around the country, the purpose of which was not only educate and inform, but also subtly (or, as was often the case, not so subtly) sell the product or company featured in the film. As Rick Prelinger defines them, industrial and institutional films were those produced or commissioned by American companies for staff, customers, or the general public. He also establishes sponsorship as the common thread linking films funded by

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3 Between 1932 and 1952, Technicolor released over one thousand shorts and commercials across the country. See: “Release Shipments, 1924 to 1951 Incl.,” Technicolor, Corp, 1951. From the Technicolor Corporate Archive, George Eastman Museum.


5 As used here, an “advertising short” is a film specifically attempting to sell a particular product to its audience. “Industrial films” can be defined as a kind of “utility film” that is most likely sponsored by financial, government, or educational institutions.
for-profit and nonprofit entities, running through works made for internal viewing (such as training films) and titles targeting customers, business partners, and the general public. With sponsorship established as a common thread, this chapter recognizes Prelinger’s definition as a productive one.

A close look at Technicolor industrial films produced in conjunction with the American fashion industry—and the American rayon industry specifically—gives insight into the practices, ideologies and social concepts of previous eras. Rayon, the earliest manufactured fiber, was initially patented in 1855 by the Swiss chemist Georges Audemars. Originally called artificial silk, or “art silk,” rayon enjoyed increasing popularity in the United States from the early twentieth century. During the Great Depression, sales of silk plummeted while cheaper materials like rayon boomed and shoppers increasingly turned to man-made fibers as cheaper alternatives to cotton, wool, linen, and silk. As consumers economized and the ready-to-wear industry exploded, department stores reduced the amount of floor space allotted to fabrics and dedicated more space to feature ready-to-wear items. Initially, rayon and other cellulose-based fabrics owed much of their appeal to novel textures rather than to color. In the 1930s, however, the chemical industry developed methods for dyeing the viscose mass before it was spun into yarn and textile mills could weave cloth from colored rayon thread instead of dyeing the finished items. This improved the quality of the color, further reduced production costs, and contributed to rayon’s continued overall appeal.

The commercial relationship that developed between the American rayon industry and the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation in the 1930s and 1940s has fallen to the wayside in previous research, but it is key to understanding the mutually beneficial promotional relationship between the fashion and film industries. As early as 1929, rayon yarn producers were encouraging “movie stunts,” with one retailer suggesting that a short film illustrating the various steps in the manufacture of yarn and fabrics and their adaption to apparel “would be a good means of keeping rayons before the public’s eye.” Such “stunts” would not experience the popularity William Travers Jerome forecasted until the 1940s, for a few reasons. Nancy Green’s historicization of the ready-to-wear industry in Paris and New York highlights not only the anti-Parisian discourse that developed within the American fashion industry in the early twentieth century, but also the boon for domestic rayon producers as a result of embargoes against foreign silk producers during World War II.
Modern, lightweight, cheaper, and more durable than real silk, American rayon yarn producers promoted rayon as the fabric of the future throughout the 1940s and beyond. Coincidental with improvements in the rayon production process, the mid-1930s also witnessed the development of three-strip Technicolor. Consequently, this period saw an extensive use of color in short subject films, with distributors widely using Technicolor in a number of shorts. These technological improvements, coupled with the increasing ease with which these films could be projected, led to a spike in production of industrial and sponsored films from the mid-1930s onwards. The use of Technicolor in some of the films was a commitment for industrial and advertising filmmakers, with the color process being decidedly more expensive and difficult to shoot with. Technicolor’s popularity, monopoly-like hold on the film industry, and industrial film outreach program help explain the decision to film these shorts with the three-strip process. Barry Curtis contends that the 1930s “were a period of severe economic depression, ominous conflicts and considerable nostalgia, accompanied by a persistent infatuation with the future.” Curtis highlights fashion’s relationship “to the future and to living the modern life” in terms of its ability to merge with the present with the near future—a discourse to which the American rayon industry clung in its advertising in the late 1930s and beyond. With rayon dubbed the fabric of the future and the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation emphasizing the three-strip process as the future of filmmaking, this chapter argues industrial films provided a sound outlet through which Technicolor and American rayon yarn producers could collaborate, establishing their respective offerings as the future of American industry. Tom Gunning, Sara Street, Regina Lee Blaszczyk, and Joshua Yumibe have established the connections between color, film, and modernism. As these scholars demonstrate, color took on greater significance with the explosion of consumer culture in the 1920s, leading commercial, industrial, and aesthetic subcultures to intersect and enrich one another. The influx of new color media in print, advertising, dyed fabrics, and film transformed the public’s visual environment while increasing the democratization of art. Color became a hallmark of modernism, mass democracy, and consumer culture. Furthermore, color allowed dynamic exchanges to occur on an intermedial

10 “Short Subjects Rise in Quality as Quantity of Subjects Declines,” Showmen’s Trade Review 32, no. 5 (February 24, 1940): 17.
level, leading to an increase of possibilities for cross-promotions between the fashion and film industries.

The 1939/1940 New York World’s Fair offered an especially effective arena in which such cross-promotions could be displayed. As a celebration of American progress and technology, the World’s Fair presents a rich landscape for exploring the intersections of color, film, modernism, and fashion. With their reliance on attracting a variety of exhibitors to display the latest technological developments in their respective industries, World’s Fairs played an important role in the history of color industrial and sponsored films—particularly those made with color processes like Technicolor. While the cultural importance of industrial and sponsored films at World’s Fairs has been explored in previous research, this chapter examines the presence and significance of three-strip Technicolor films at the Fair, with a focus on those produced or commissioned by the American rayon industry.  

13 Constructed with the purpose of promoting the American fashion industry during the Great Depression, the World of Fashion exhibit that premiered during the 1940 season of the New York World’s Fair serves as a worthy case study for exploring the intersections between color, film, fashion, and modernism. The second half of this chapter explores: the World of Fashion’s focus on American innovation within the fashion industry, the role the exhibit played in cementing New York City as a worthy competitor of Paris, and how Technicolor films were utilized in the exhibit to encourage both of those ideas. Generally speaking, the World’s Fair was a logical and fitting venue in which Technicolor could showcase the three-strip process. This chapter examines the World of Fashion exhibit as a specific space in which the fashion and film industries could collaborate in an environment that encouraged modernism and American progress, with rayon and Technicolor as two points of focus.

Industrial and Sponsored Films in the Late 1930s and Early 1940s

While the bulk of this chapter focuses on the late 1930s through the early 1940s, the multifarious promotional relationship between color, clothing, and film may be traced to the late 1800s. As Eirik Frisvold Hanssen has adroitly

observed, a common factor in early cinema was the recurring tendency to
color clothes in hand and stencil colored films, with the clothes themselves
often constituting the only elements of the film being colored. Jennifer Lynn
Peterson and Tom Gunning demonstrate that industrial and sponsored films,
while marginalized, were regularly screened alongside comedies and melo-
dramas throughout the nickelodeon era—and well beyond. Despite the reg-
ularity with which they were screened in theaters, industry folk observed that
the heyday for these types of films had yet to come. In 1930, Milton Stark,
producer of over 125 industrial films, penned an article in which he argued
“the Industrial and Educational fields have been scarcely scratched, and ahead
lie developments and accomplishments which today may seem unbelievable,
providing Industrial or Educational picture firm will be as diligent and pro-
gressive as have been the amusement film concerns.” Stark concluded his
article by encouraging producers and advertisers in the educational and indus-
trial fields to take advantage of emerging film technology—including sound
and color—predicting such advancements would allow this particular area of
filmmaking to flourish within the next decade.

Stark’s premonition came to fruition, with the late 1930s and early 1940s
being a period of significant growth in the industrial film genre thanks to con-
tinued improvements in motion picture technology. Larger studios also be-
gan to recognize the potential of industrial films, with Paramount Pictures es-
ablishing an Industrial Film Division in 1940 and the Walt Disney Company
opening their own department in 1943 (Figure 4.1). In 1939, McCall’s pub-
ished an article written by Pare Lorentz in which the filmmaker and critic
discussed the commercial and artistic potential industrial films offered to pro-
ducers. After viewing Men Make Steel (Roland Reed Productions, 1938), a
ten-minute Technicolor short focused on the American steel industry, Lorentz
reflected:

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14 Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, “Symptoms of Desire: Colour, Costume, and Commodities in Fash-
15 See Jennifer Lynn Peterson, Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Non-
fiction Film (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 64; Tom Gunning, “Attractions: How
They Came into the World,” in The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded, ed. Wanda Strauven (Am-
sterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 37.
453.
18 Rick Prelinger argues several technical innovations fueled the popularity of nontheatrical
films, including the introduction of non-flammable film by Pathé-Frères in 1912, followed by
16mm nonflammable “safety film” introduced by Kodak in 1923. RCA’s 16mm sound camera
followed in 1934 and improvements in sound recording and track printing paved the way for
inexpensive sound film production. In 1938 Kodak perfected and improved the Kodachrome
process, bringing color to the 16mm market. See Rick Prelinger, The Field Guide to Sponsored
Films (San Francisco: The National Film Preservation Foundation, 2006) and Anke Mebold
and Charles Tepperman, “Resurrecting the Lost History of 28mm Film in North America,” Film
As far as Hollywood is concerned, the producers will say, "It's an advertising picture and has no box office worth" and let it go at that—that is, they will say that if they continue the policy they have maintained for years in the movie industry. But whatever they say, within the year these so-called industrial pictures are going to have a significant effect on the entire movie world. I have discussed this before, but now there is visible proof that by their own limitations Hollywood producers have lost millions of potential customers.¹⁹

Lorentz's review of the film, which he dubbed "the most beautiful color picture ever made," credited Technicolor as a key contributing factor to the short's success.²⁰ Lorentz took care to focus on the visual aspects of the film, remarking on the colorful depictions of steel mills and mines—"the red and gold fountains of molten steel." In short, Lorentz's review displays an acute awareness and appreciation of the three-strip Technicolor process.

²⁰ Ibid.
Even before the three-strip process was officially released to the industry in 1932, color was being considered for use in industrial and educational shorts. In a 1930 Los Angeles Times article, reporter Earle Crowe wrote: “Color work for the motion-picture studios is only one outlet for the color process companies. The industrial companies are already alert to the possibilities of color in industrial films for educational and sales promotion.”

Film industry folk also predicted that color on the screen could potentially influence the way in which viewers engaged with their surroundings and considerations given to new purchases. In his introduction to the 1930 Cinematographic Annual, John Seitz, a cinematographer who photographed several Technicolor titles, wrote: “Color cinematography will play a great role in the future, in influencing public taste in the choice of dress, household furnishings, wall and floor coverings; will make the public color conscious, teach them something of color harmony, of the effect of complementsaries…”

While a mainstay in the American film industry since the early 1900s, cultural critics regarded the growth of the industrial and sponsored fields in the late 1930s as something of a revelation. In a New York Times article from 1937, Douglas W. Churchill described “a new and profitable division of the cinema” that had “sprung up overnight,” explaining: “For fifteen years industrial films occupied an inconspicuous place in Hollywood’s mind, but suddenly the town’s attention has been attracted to them and lucrative employment has been provided [for] writers, directors, players and technicians.”

Considered an untapped genre with high economic potential, industrial and sponsored films presented the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation with an opportunity to capitalize on the increasing popularity of these films. With their focus on brand recognition and presentation of real-life settings, industrial films provided Technicolor with an opportunity to improve the three-strip process while showcasing its accuracy—one of the key discourses to the success of the new product.

Technicolor Takeover: Three-Strip Technicolor Sponsored and Industrial Shorts

Matthew Luckiesh’s aforementioned ideas on the positive effects of color in advertising align with the arguments put forth by Technicolor’s Natalie Kalmus for the use of color motion film processes. Luckiesh’s sentiments highlight how advertising executives and filmmakers came to understand the importance of color in print and, later, film. Just as Kalmus would twelve years

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later, Luckiesh described how color’s psychological values contributed to its success in advertising: “The physical characteristics of colors are perhaps the prime factors in attracting attention initially and particularly the psychological effects play a dominant part in holding the attention.”24 Luckiesh contended that color had the potential to capture the reader’s—or, in film’s case, the viewer’s—attention, continuing to engross them until the advertisement has concluded. Kalmus expounded upon this idea in relation to the black and white film in her artistic manifesto, “Color Consciousness,” arguing that, from a psychological perspective, black and white is the visual embodiment of monotony, and monotony is “the enemy of interest.”25 Furthermore, Kalmus maintained, “that which is monotonous will not hold our attention as well as that which shows more variety.”26 While they focus on different forms of media, the similarities between the texts written by Luckiesh and Kalmus evidence that the concept of color was, and would continue to be, a contentious subject in the field of industrial and advertising films.

Despite Technicolor’s assurance that the three-strip process was a necessity for modern filmmaking, producers and directors were largely hesitant to use the process in feature-length films due to its economic and technical demands. Similarly, Technicolor was met with doubt when they approached the industrial field, not least of all because it was considerably more expensive than the black and white alternative. In their 1938 book *How to Use Talking Pictures in Business*, Lyne Shackleford Metcalfe and Harold Gloy Christensen emphasized the usefulness of color in industrial and advertising films, but also cautioned that using the technology within this field was in no way a necessity. As they noted, “There is little point in shooting the interior of a factory in color unless a particular process—such as the processing of tomato juice, bacon, cosmetics, and other similar products—is of definite assistance either in selling or in identification.”27 The authors explained that the benefit of color came with more complicated challenges (including added expenses and greater technological demands), thus forcing the question of whether using color motion picture processes was worthwhile. While Metcalfe and Christensen seemed to stress that color was not necessarily worth the extra cost,28 the two

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26 Ibid.
28 The authors break down the cost as follows: “Cost of raw film stock (in color), laboratory work, and prints is about six times the cost of black and white for three-color and two and one-half times the cost of black and white for two-color.” Ibid.
authors did concede that the use of color could have some benefits, as “products may be ‘glorified’ in color photography, and shown in actual motion in the process of manufacture or use.”

The opinion voiced by Metcalfe and Christensen regarding the necessity of color demonstrates that questions surrounding the use of three-strip Technicolor in sponsored and industrial films remained a divided issue well into the 1930s. Despite the debate surrounding its use, the three-strip process was becoming increasingly prominent in feature-length films and in shorts in the years following its introduction. Furthermore, with increasing examples of color presented on screens across the nation, it was suggested that the audience’s expectations had changed, as they had with the introduction of sound. In 1940 Business Screen published an article stating that the “85,000,000 Americans who patronize the 17,000 theatres in this land of ours each week have been educated to standards of production quality and technical excellence far exceeding any period in our history.”

Filmmakers and producers were being urged to utilize modern innovations and technologies in order to attain critical and financial success.

As color became more widely available in the field of industrial and sponsored films in the 1940s, producers and filmmakers were required to determine which of the available color processes they would use in their productions. Cinecolor was beginning to increase its production rate as industrial films began to transition into color, and the Kodachrome process was easier to use and less expensive than Technicolor, which was inhibited by bulky cameras, high printing costs, and technical hurdles regarding lighting and production design. With these obstacles in mind, a question arises concerning why the industrial and advertising field used the Technicolor process at all when there were less expensive, less complicated options available. One possible explanation was the critical and economic success Technicolor had started to attain following the introduction of the three-strip process in 1932. Through extensive promotional efforts and an increasing number of films made in the new process, Technicolor was a well-known brand by the end of the 1930s; one that was becoming more strongly associated with box office success in the trade press. In a Showmen’s Trade Review poll conducted among theatre exhibitors in 1939, when asked whether or not Technicolor added to box office value, 77% of respondents answered in the affirmative. The publication concluded that the result, which showed “a much greater interest than formerly in color photography so far as the showman booking profit is concerned, [was] no doubt influenced by many outstanding examples of the improved color photography and its employment in the making of several of the biggest attractions released

"Ibid., 9.
31 “77% of Exhibitors State Technicolor is Box Office Aid,” Technicolor News and Views 2, no. 2 (February 1940): 1.
during the year.” 32 While the trade press credited Technicolor as a selling point for feature films and short subject films, the company turned its attention toward the advertising and industrial fields in an effort to widen its impact within the film industry.

While the introduction of the three-strip process received a wider display of praise from critics than the two-color process, the Technicolor laboratory continued perfecting it. As discussed in Chapter 3, fashion shorts like Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecast were conducive to experimentation, as they were lower in cost and shorter in length than feature-length films. Concurrently, the late 1930s and early 1940s witnessed the company making a concerted effort to reach out to a variety of American manufacturers to engage them in producing and sponsoring three-strip Technicolor industrial and advertising films. In 1940, for example, Oldsmobile agreed to make an industrial film for internal purposes in the three-strip process after the company reached out to them. While Gerald Rackett, head of the Technicolor lab, found faults in the coloring, photographic work, processing, and printing of the Oldsmobile film, his remarks were largely positive, explaining to Natalie Kalmus that:

…we have learned more during the course of these experiments in process control and subsequent reproduction than in all of our previous work…Part of this is because of the highly concentrated effort on the problem but as well part of it is because we are directing our efforts toward a commercial goal. I don’t think we have attained the latter as yet but are making rapid strides toward it.33

Rackett’s statements reflect the value such films offered to the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation during these years, and also demonstrate that the laboratory was still working on improving the product as late as 1940. Company records evidence that in the summer of 1940, Natalie Kalmus and Morgan Hobart from Technicolor made a list of prospective clients whom they would approach to engage in “some creative work for them concerned with an industrial motion picture program.”34 The list was ambitious, with Kalmus and Hobart soliciting some of the largest American companies at the time, including: Proctor & Gamble, DuPont, General Foods Company, American Tobacco Company, Elizabeth Arden, and the Ford Motor Company.35

In 1939, Technicolor manufactured and shipped approximately 2.5 million feet of 35mm and 16mm prints of industrial and advertising subjects. 36 One year later, Technicolor also announced a price reduction of one cent a foot.

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32 Ibid.
33 Letter from Gerald Rackett to Natalie Kalmus, August 17, 1940. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers – Correspondence (1930–1948), Margaret Herrick Library.
34 Letter from Morgan Hobart to Gerald F. Rackett, August 28, 1940. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers—Correspondence (1930–1948), Margaret Herrick Library.
35 Ibid.
36 “Right Off the Reel,” Business Screen 1, no. 8 (1939): 16.
applicable to domestic orders of 250 prints or more on features, or single orders of 125 prints or more on short subjects. This price reduction was well-received by industry folk, leading the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation to net a profit of $562,094.47 in the first three months of 1940. Of the overall improvements in Technicolor research and lower cost of film stock, Herbert T. Kalmus, Technicolor’s president and co-founder, prophesized that many films which otherwise might not find their way into the process would now be able to do so. Indeed, audiences viewing Technicolor films increased, and the Technicolor industrial shorts themselves represent changing techniques and styles in both advertising and entertainment in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

In 1939, Business Screen published an article outlining the benefits color motion picture processes offered American industries, arguing that “because color tells the story of the package or the process more completely than ever before, its selling powers are more certain and convincing.” Those in the film industry were increasingly assured that the box-office success of Technicolor would translate to increased sales for American businesses and industry, with Business Screen arguing “that color is sure-fire ‘box office’ will not be questioned by the average movie-goer. In the industrial-commercial field its success has been equally prominent and generously attended, moreover, by increased sales results.” The article sums up that color, specifically the “universally accepted” three-strip process by Technicolor, presented a dependable and invaluable aid for better selling.

The Textile Industry and Technicolor Industrial Films

Industrial films, while less popular than feature-length films, provided Technicolor with an opportunity to expand their customer base, the idea being everyday scenes and objects took on added interest and appeal when photographed in Technicolor. Three Women (1935), a feature-length sound film sponsored by General Electric Co., is widely believed to have been the first commercially sponsored film produced using three-strip Technicolor, with the single Technicolor reel showing a scene of food preparation. The household and food industries were just two of American industries that turned to Technicolor to sell their products in the late 1930s and early 1940s. This time period saw a sharp increase in industrial and institutional films produced in

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37 “Technicolor Price Drop to Cut Feature Cost $35,000,” The Film Daily 77, no. 79 (April 22, 1940): 1.
39 “Color Tells It and Sells It!” Business Screen 1, no. 3 (1938): 18.
40 Ibid.
Technicolor for an array of different American products and companies, including Bristol-Myers’ Ipana toothpaste, Kellogg’s Rice Krispies cereal, U.S. Steel, Chevrolet, and, in what is reputed to be the first sales promotion made by Walt Disney Co., an animated advertisement for Nabisco. *Meat and Romance* (National Livestock and Meat Board, 1940), a 37-minute educational film, was made in black and white save for a three-minute Technicolor insert. The segment, in which a housewife becomes entranced by a singular color photograph of a porterhouse steak in an otherwise black and white magazine spread, features a three-minute fantasy sequence of various meats displayed in rich color. One impressed critic summarized the sequence as follows:

Your mouth literally waters as the Technicolor camera moves along this parade of meat—first the uncooked meat and then the cooked meat dish, done to a turn and garnished to perfection. The camera captures all the natural color and beauty and appeal of the meat—you can almost smell the tantalizing aroma and taste the delicious goodness.42

As this reviewer implies, Technicolor assisted in bringing a sensorial familiarity to the products in question, perhaps increasing the viewer’s desire to purchase that particular product. Food was identified as an especially suitable product to film in the three-strip process and it was used in various industrial and advertising films produced by the food industry. In the late 1930s, MGM released several humorous instructional cooking films in the *Pete Smith Specialties* series starring cooking instructor and writer Prudence Penny.43 Unlike *Meat and Romance* which only featured a Technicolor insert, the Prudence Penny one-reelers, backed by an MGM budget, were shot entirely in three-strip Technicolor. Of the technology, Pete Smith, the producer and narrator of the Prudence films, commented: “A piece of roast beef will photograph perfectly in black and white, only it doesn’t make you want to draw up your chair and join in the meal.”44

Smith’s justification for using the three-strip process was precisely what Technicolor hoped would convince clothing manufacturers, among others, to film their products in color; that seeing products displayed in color on the screen would entice viewers to more actively participate in consumer culture. The textile industry long recognized the advantages of working with the film industry to display their products, and color played an important role in their interest from the beginning. In the early 1900s, British film pioneers Charles

43 At least five films in the *Pete Smith Specialties* series focused on food. Four of those films starred Prudence Penny: *Penny to the Rescue* (Will Jason, 1941), *Penny’s Party* (David Miller, 1938), *Penny’s Picnic* (Will Jason, 1938) and *Penny Wisdom* (David Miller, 1937). *Menu* (Nick Grinde, 1933), another food-centric short, provides us with an early example of three-strip Technicolor. It was nominated for an Academy Award in the Best Short Subject (Novelty) category in 1933.
Urban and George Albert Smith developed Kinemacolor, a two-color additive process which photographed and projected black and white film behind alternating red and green filters. Urban and Smith directed and sold a variety of films about the textile industry to theater owners. *Tartans of the Scottish Clans* (1906) and *Woman Draped in Patterned Handkerchiefs* (1908) are two examples of early Kinemacolor films that depict textiles, in color. Simple in presentation, each of the aforementioned films prominently feature tartan cloths either in extreme close-up, as seen in *Tartans of the Scottish Clans*, or draped over a woman rotating while standing in front of a plain, gray background in *Woman Draped in Patterned Handkerchiefs*. The selling point for each film was that Smith and Urban flaunted the vibrant colors in the plaids in reliable shades of red and green—the colors best displayed by the Kinemacolor process.

In the summer of 1913, *Exhibitors Times* reported the dry goods merchants in an American city arranged screenings of a short film detailing the manufacturing process of cotton, gingham, lace, and hosiery “to capacity houses.” At this time, producers and exhibitors agreed these films provided a clearer conception of the manufacture of commodities audiences encountered on a daily basis than could be obtained from books. Films about specific textile mills continued to proliferate throughout the 20s and 30s. *The Story of Chase Velmo* (Goodall Mills, 1928) documented the production of mohair velvet made by Sanford Mills in Sanford, Maine. The film, which spanned three reels, educated viewers on the entirety of the production process, including shots of hand shearing, dyeing, as well as the final product. A reviewer from *The Educational Screen* praised the film for its “unobjectionable” approach to advertising, noting that, “industrial studies of this nature should induce a keener appreciation of the difficulties involved, and of the great capital invested, for our ordinary comforts.” Later, *Threads of a Nation* (Ben K. Blake, 1940) documented the processes by which raw cotton was transformed into clothing, decorative materials and other articles of commerce, in color. This short film, produced by Columbia Pictures as part of its popular “Cinescope” series, received a number of endorsements by textile executives and others connected with the American cotton industry. The 11-minute film, narrated by American actor and opera singer Basil Ruysdael, was described as “interesting screen fare for any kind of audience.” Columbia Pictures also arranged for a tie-up with the Cotton Textile Institute in which 22,000 two-color brochures were prepared and distributed to department stores and dry goods stores throughout the United States.

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45 “Motion Pictures of Textiles,” *Exhibitors Times* 1, no. 3 (May 31, 1913): 25
46 “Film Reviews,” *The Educational Screen* 7, no. 4 (June 1928): 168.
47 “Short Subject Reviews,” *Showmen’s Trade Review* 32, no. 5 (February 24, 1940): 18.
48 “Columbia Sets National Tieup For ‘Threads of Nation,’” *Showmen’s Trade Review* 32, no. 20 (June 8, 1940): 42.
Aside from garnering more attention (a concept vital for advertisers), Technicolor was often also integral to the plots or general message of industrial and advertising films. The ability to accurately portray brand labels and colors, as well as depict intricate patterns, fabrics and more, was an attractive concept to advertisers and producers, allowing for brand recognition and added visual appeal. Technicolor worked hard to convince industrial motion picture advertisers, agencies, and producers to use the three-strip process in industrial and advertising films. To increase interest among prospective clients, Technicolor made its own short film as a means of demonstrating the three-strip process and the wide range of products one could film in a realistic yet eye-catching display. Technicolor for Industrial Films (Technicolor Corporation, 1940/49) was originally produced in 1940, then slightly changed and re-released in 1949.49 This demonstration reel was produced with the intention of convincing producers and corporations, including the American textile industry, to take advantage of the Technicolor three-strip process. According to company records, the film was intended to demonstrate not only “the quality and value of Technicolor as used to show nationally known products and materials but also to show the usual surroundings or scenes which might normally appear in an advertising picture.”50 The company was also confident the reel could be used “as a means to demonstrate the various laboratory special effects which can be made available in Technicolor, such as fades, lap dissolves, wipes, multiple printing and montages.”51 Vivid in color, Technicolor for Industrial Films demonstrated exactly how Technicolor could recreate various colors and shades—something exceedingly important for brand recognition and the re-creation of industrial environments. The short film methodically examines various reasons a sponsored or industrial film necessitates the use of color, focusing specifically on the various benefits offered by the three-strip Technicolor process.

The company wanted Technicolor for Industrial Films to include “excellent examples of control of color [in the reel] to demonstrate the methods of

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49 The catalog record for the 1949 re-release, held at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences (AMPAS) Film Archive includes the following information:

“This is a revised version of the film, and includes a tag at the head that is absent from the other version (Title No. 5093). Title cards on tag read, per item #F09545:
Color by Technicolor
World Favorite in Motion Pictures

Aside from the opening tag, this version is very similar to Title No. 5093, although it appears that most scenes are slightly shortened, and that scenes of the Technicolor lab and its employees transporting film cans are excluded.”

50 “Proposal for Technicolor Demonstration Sales Reel Designed for use in Shows for Industrial Motion Picture Advertisers, Agencies and Producers,” undated. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers – Demo Reel, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

51 Ibid.
presenting the products in the best possible way for eye appeal by the proper selection of color.”

To ensure “the proper selection of color,” as well as a product that was up to Technicolor’s standards, Gerald Rackett requested the Color Control Department be involved in the preparation stages of the short. Rackett defended this desire in a letter to Natalie Kalmus in which he argued that one of the company’s “chief difficulties” in filming the corporate industrial short for Oldsmobile in 1940 were “the excessively bright colors which they used,” which he attributed to the absence of the Color Control Department on the set. In addition to requesting the department’s involvement with the early preparatory phase of the project, the proposal for Technicolor for Industrial Films called for the short’s narrator to point out that the services offered by the Color Control Department were used “in suitable places” within the film.

In the film’s last minutes, the narrator explained that while the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation was largely known for its consulting, cinematography, and laboratory work in feature-length films, the company would provide the same level of technical support to industrial clients. In the film, the narrator introduces the Color Control Department and its purpose to potential clients:

“A group of trained operators helps in the selection of paints, fabrics, materials and wardrobe, all aimed towards displaying a product or person—the principal object—to the very best advantage. Following through from a sketch design to the finished set, the guiding hand of this special service is an important part of attaining the perfection of color that has become the keynote of Technicolor.”

In addition to demonstrating the accuracy and potential of Technicolor, this short film aimed to convince producers and advertisers not only of the importance of the Color Control Department, but also to use the department in the production of industrial films. As Chapter 3 has demonstrated, Technicolor financially benefitted from the presence of a Color Director on-set. Convincing producers and advertisers in the industrial field to use the Color Director would not only ensure the use of color was up to Technicolor’s standards, but would also increase the amount of money Technicolor would earn on that picture.

Technicolor for Industrial Films depicts outdoor and indoor scenes, industrial processes, and product shots, all shown in three-strip Technicolor. Company records evidence that Technicolor identified three general groups of

52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Letter from Gerald Rackett to Natalie Kalmus, August 17, 1940. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers – Correspondence (1930–1948), Margaret Herrick Library.
55 “Proposal for Technicolor Demonstration Sales Reel Designed for use in Shows for Industrial Motion Picture Advertisers, Agencies and Producers,” undated. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers – Demo Reel, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
56 Technicolor for Industrial Films, 8 minutes, Technicolor Corporation, 1940/1949.
products exhibiting a high potential for inclusion in motion pictures: 1) Products with top advertising budgets “which permit the use of motion pictures even though they may comprise a group who have not used motion pictures extensively” 2) Products with more limited advertising budgets which were “not so free...to use color extensively in their motion pictures” and 3) “Very colorful products which have not been shown to any great extent in Industrial motion pictures but which because of their colorful nature invite the use of motion pictures in color: plastic, paints, fabrics and clothing including furs.”

Over scenes featuring rolls of colorful rayon, swaths of muted plaids, and various drapery materials printed with striped and floral patterns (Figure 4.2), and a sweeping soundtrack, the film’s narrator boasts:

The beautiful glossy sheen and luster of colorful modern rayons are strikingly shown. Plaids and color patterns can be shown in their true value only by using color. Texture, weave, and pattern of woolen fabrics are reproduced in color so accurately that a film could be used to replace the sample books of salesmen. The delicate differences in textures of drapery materials between glossy or soft matte surfaces are clearly shown.

As it did with food in the *Meat and Romance* or the *Pete Smith* cooking films, *Technicolor for Industrial Films* maintained that the three-strip process stood to increase rayon’s appeal and attractiveness to the viewer, creating a detailed and colorful presentation. Furthermore, the film’s narrator points out the process draws the viewer’s attention to rayon’s modern attributes—something Technicolor, another modern invention, was poised to deliver.

Color was seen as the best way to capture and present everyday, familiar items to audiences—and the best way to sell them. The film stressed the importance of brand recognition and the ability of Technicolor to perfectly match colors in nationally known products and materials, including food, beverages, paint, plastic, household goods, or fabrics. It also showcased how well Technicolor depicted various settings and backgrounds often shown in industrial pictures. The film’s narrator promised all the featured consumer goods and places featured in the short would “take on an added interest and appeal when photographed in Technicolor.”

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57 Products in the first group included: soap products, cigarettes, automobiles, and food products. Products included in the second group were oil products, refrigerators and ranges, housing materials, cosmetics, and beverages. In “Proposal for Technicolor Demonstration Sales Reel Designed for use in Shows for Industrial Motion Picture Advertisers, Agencies and Producers,” undated. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers – Demo Reel, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

58 *Technicolor for Industrial Films*, 8 minutes, Technicolor Corporation, 1940/1949.

59 Ibid.
Figure 4.2 Still from Technicolor for Industrial Films (Technicolor Corporation, 1940/49) displaying various types and shades of rayon fabric.

The narrator of Technicolor for Industrial Films also informed viewers that any product or location has “added eye appeal, [and] more attention value in Technicolor. This, a comparatively new medium for advertising, combines quality, increased value and realism with action to motion picture advertising.” To emphasize the visual power of color, the otherwise entirely color film switches to black and white for roughly 30 seconds to offer a direct comparison between the “full color and realistic package” of products shot in Technicolor and the “flat and uninteresting” look of those same products in monochrome. Business Screen recognized the commercial value of featuring products on the screen in dynamic color, maintaining that while Technicolor may be more expensive and time-consuming than other color processes, the fact remained that “quality rather than economy still rank first in the commercial user’s ratings.”

Due to the nature of their content and purpose, industrial and sponsored films were screened outside of the cinema more often than not, and were instead shown at department stores, museums, schools, and sales exhibitions designed to sell a particular product to the audience. By the late 1930s, the film industry began to see the genre as one more tool that could assist in boosting sales, with Business Screen calling the industrial motion picture “an invaluable aid” in selling a variety of products. Given their long-standing symbiotic relationship, the fashion industry began easily incorporating films into

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60 Ibid.
61 “Right Off the Reel,” Business Screen 1, no. 8 (1939): 15.
department store displays or in sales exhibitions demonstrating seasonal items or new fabrics to shoppers. In addition to those intended to help sell goods, *Business Screen* identified two other kinds of films that could be shown in the department store environment: first, those teaching employees *how* to sell, with the magazine suggesting this type of film be shown in after-hours meetings or at regular training sessions. The second type of film was designed as a program for customers arranged in conjunction with a “well-rounded program” arranged with special departmental promotions. *Business Screen* used Chicago’s Marshall Field’s as an example of a department store that targeted women shoppers by screening films in various dress sections of the store. Like many “department store-films,” as they were called, those screened at Marshall Field’s were 16mm safety and were screened from continuous projectors, thereby requiring little attention from employees throughout the day.  

Looking at the 1930s, one sees an increasing number of industrial films produced with rayon as their subject. In 1938, for example, the American Viscose Company sponsored an exhibit at the New York Museum of Science and Industry demonstrating the manufacturing process of rayon. The exhibit consisted of a long glass case divided into three sections, designed to give visitors a general idea of the various stages of rayon development. At the end of the exhibit visitors were invited to sit down and watch a five-minute color film titled *The Romance of Rayon* shown on a small boxed screen demonstrating the step-by-step process of rayon yarn manufacture (Figure 4.3).  

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*Figure 4.5 American Viscose’s film setup in the rayon exhibit held at the New York Museum of Science and Industry. In Business Screen 1, 3 (1938): 30.*

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63 “Motion Pictures in the Department Store,” *Business Screen*, 1, no. 1 (1938): 36.
64 Shaw, “Visualizing the Industrial Exhibit,” 30.
The short film showed the process through which Crown Rayon—a popular yarn company acquired by American Viscose in the 1930s—was made. Robert P. Shaw, the Director of the museum, noted the film brought “the whole exhibit alive and [gave] it unity and significance.” The challenge faced by large companies like the American Viscose Corporation was to establish a link between their products and the end goods eventually available to consumers. For example, rather than being available for sale by an end user, most of American Viscose’s rayon products were sold to companies that then incorporated them into finished goods. With the right sales pitch, it was argued that consumers might be more interested in buying a dress or shirt made of rayon, and films stood to strengthen those associations, which would ultimately benefit a company like American Viscose.

American Viscose was just one rayon producer to acknowledge the educational and selling value of industrial films. Indeed, the late 1930s witnessed the production of a number of these films sponsored by textile companies, which only increased in the following decade. The largest American rayon companies sponsored industrial shorts of varying lengths, with topics ranging from the educational (covering production and care) to more direct selling techniques (generally presented to audiences as a narrative). In a 1937 article published in the *American Silk and Rayon Journal* Ephram Freedman, Director of Macy’s Bureau of Standards, argued that while the production of rayon steadily increased, the amount of information available to consumers was not sufficient. Freedman wrote:

> Consumers are really becoming more information-minded. Consumers are insisting upon having information attached to their merchandise so as to permit them to know what they are paying for, how it compares with other merchandise and how they should use it in order to obtain satisfactory service. Even though most people know so little about rayons or how they are manufactured we find that rayons are becoming increasingly popular.

Freedman maintained it was the responsibility of rayon manufacturers and distributors to educate the public in order to increase the popularity of the material.

To this end, various training materials were produced to educate retailers and staff on rayon as a material and provide ideas on the best way to sell rayon items. American Viscose Corporation prepared *Your Attitude Is Showing* (American Viscose Corporation, 1949), a sound slidefilm in color for use in retail sales training, to present suggestions on how to sell their products. The

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65 Ibid.
slidefilm was made in response to a survey conducted by graduate students of
the New York University School of Retailing and addressed the five most-
asked questions regarding rayon, including concerns about: washability,
shrinkage, ironing instructions, wearing quality, and soiling. As a part of
American Viscose’s rayon education program, Your Attitude is Showing was
made available to retailers, along with accompanying leaflets on rayon facts,
for the cost of $10.68

In 1940 DuPont produced a 33-minute black and white film titled Fashion’s Favorite (DuPont, 1940) designed, as one DuPont employee explained,
to “end confusion on the subject of rayon by explaining what rayon is, how it
is made, and its chief characteristics from a consumer’s viewpoint.” DuPont
acknowledged the very nature of rayon precluded the film from being used as
an active sales promotion device. Rayon, as produced by DuPont, was simply
the basic material from which goods were manufactured and distributed
through a long line of middlemen. Fashion’s Favorite, then, was made with
the intention to purely educate; to inform consumers, retail clerks, textile stu-
dents, and cleaners about rayon. The film was loaned to various colleges and
high schools, buyers and retail clerks in department stores, and Lions, Rotary,
and Kiwanis Clubs all over the country. The medium of film presented the
rayon industry with an opportunity to educate an increasingly curious public
on the production of and how to care for rayon items.

“The Exquisite Beauty of Fabrics”: Aristocrats of Fashion

The advertising short Aristocrats of Fashion (American Bemberg Corpora-
tion, 1940) captured what Technicolor strived to do more of throughout the
1930s and 1940s: film quality advertising shorts that featured recognizable
items from established American industries. At the end of February 1940,
American Bemberg Corporation announced its sponsorship of a 12-minute
Technicolor fashion film to be directed by Roland Reed featuring summer
fashions made exclusively from Bemberg rayon. In partnering with American
Bemberg Corporation, the largest rayon manufacturer in the United States be-
tween 1928 and 1942, Technicolor ensured a high degree of exposure. The
company began manufacturing artificial silk, or “art silk,” at its new plant in
Elizabethton, Tennessee in 1926. American Bemberg’s parent company, J.P.
Bemberg, was the German affiliate of Vereinigte Glanzstoff Fabriken (VGF),
one of the international giants in the production of rayon. In August 1928 VGF
opened another rayon plant in the small East Tennessee town. This plant,
called American Glanzstoff produced viscose rayon, whereas Bemberg uti-
lized the cuprammonium process. By the end of 1928, the two plants employed over 3,000 workers and employment and profits continued to grow throughout the 1930s and 1940s despite the economic hardships posed by the Great Depression and World War II.

Bemberg’s choice to sponsor a short filmed in Technicolor proved a logical option in turning the audience’s attention “to the exquisite beauty of the fabrics” the film’s opening credits promised. Color comprised a significant amount of focus in discourses surrounding the appeal of rayon, with manufacturers arguing the fabric surpassed others in terms of color options it offered. In its own advertising and in a larger narrative distributed by the media, Technicolor maintained it was poised to capture the entire range of hues available in Bemberg fabrics while presenting the most accurate representation of these colors to the masses.

*Aristocrats of Fashion* revolves around a simple storyline involving the engagement of Carol (played by Dorothy Fay) to Charlie, who is referenced in name only. The film’s opening titles appeared over a swath of royal purple rayon and promised viewers “a thrilling array of new fashions for active sports, for informal afternoon and for gala evening wear,” featuring “georgettes, chiffons, sheers and numerous original creations, all made from BEMBERG rayon, the aristocrat of man-made yarns.” And this is precisely what *Aristocrats of Fashion* presents. While the film mostly revolves around the stylistic appeal of the clothing, it briefly acknowledges the practical advantages offered by rayon fabrics. In one scene, Martha, played by actress Bette Miller, accidentally spills iced tea on Gloria, actress Ann Rountree. Immediately, screen star Muriel Evans, the film’s narratress, reassures the audience in a comforting voice-over: “Don’t you worry. All rayons clean easily. And that handsome cocoa print will come out just as lovely as ever.” While Carol’s engagement story provides a loose overarching narrative for the film, Evans’s voiceovers take care to direct the audience’s attention to the real stars of the films—the various rayon fabrics comprising the ready-to-wear items worn by the actresses. At the end of the film, once Charlie has proposed to Carol, Evans reflects, “Alright, Carol and Jane. Be smug. You got your men. But don’t forget—nice clothes do help, don’t they?” These efforts to present a storyline—even a simple one—in a sponsored film did not go unnoticed by reviewers, with one commenting, “It is made interesting by virtue of the fact that the characters, instead of being merely mannequins, are young ladies who chatter about their boy friends, stopping only to permit Narratress Muriel Evans to describe the fashions and to mention the quality of Bemberg fabrics.”

*Aristocrats of Fashion* presented more of a narrative than other sponsored films from this period and certainly more than what was offered in earlier fashion shorts in which the models—or “mannequins” as they were called—

70 *Aristocrats of Fashion*, 12 minutes, Technicolor Corporation, 1940.
while mobile, rarely spoke. Sponsored films in general were often packaged as narratives to make their message more accessible to audiences. There are, however, a number of examples of models cast in starring roles in feature-length films from this time period, which receives further attention in Chapter 5. In *Aristocrats of Fashion*, however, the cast is mostly comprised of Hollywood actresses modeling the Bemberg creations, which might be one explanation for the comparatively complicated narrative; the models were expected to act in addition to displaying the clothes. Furthermore, as established and trusted purveyors of style, the decision to cast actresses from the screen as models supplied a certain degree of influence to *Aristocrats of Fashion*. While not explicitly named, actresses Bette Miller and Dorothy Fay appeared in print advertisements for the Bemberg tie-up, which effectively highlighted the actresses appearing in the film, the film itself, department stores engaging with the promotion, American Bemberg, and even Technicolor, with the process being emphasized in the ad’s copy (Figure 4.4).

It was initially reported that American Bemberg sponsored the film to better assist retailers in merchandizing rayon garments. The company also imagined the film would be screened in select retail stores selling Bemberg fashions in an effort to draw the shopper’s attention to the season’s newest items. The plan was to distribute the short to retailers who would screen the film in their stores at the same time the garments featured in the film were also in stock. To avoid local restrictions for screening 35mm films, *Aristocrats of Fashion* was made available for distribution in two forms: in 35mm Technicolor and also in 16mm Kodachrome. This solution of producing the film in both formats made it possible for more stores to screen the film to the largest number of shoppers possible.

Indeed, while the original intention was to screen *Aristocrats of Fashion* in retail stores, the company quickly determined the film possessed the potential to be screened to a wider audience. American Bemberg appeared to recognize the value in screening the film in a theater setting, as well. By the end of March 1940, the American Bemberg Corporation premiered *Aristocrats of Fashion* for the press in Technicolor’s projection room housed in the R.C.A. Building’s...
Rainbow Lounge. Shortly after its private premiere, the film enjoyed screenings in the public sphere, with the New Yorker ad demonstrating the film played in at least seven New York City theaters during the summer of 1940.

Figure 4.4 Advertisement for Bemberg items seen in Aristocrats of Fashion featuring actresses Bette Miller (left) and Dorothy Fay (right). New Yorker, June 22, 1940.

Outside of New York City, the film enjoyed screenings in “key cities” across the United States, including Rochester, Phoenix, Louisville, and Tucson. Local newspaper listings evidence the short played alongside a variety of feature-length films throughout the month of May 1940, including Waterloo Bridge (Mervyn LeRoy, 1940), Saturday's Children (Vincent Sherman, 1940), Buck Benny Rides Again (Mark Sandrich, 1940), My Favorite Wife (Garson Kanin,

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In total, thirteen 35mm prints running 996 feet were made for distribution in the United States, while four 16mm prints running 398 feet were ordered. The relationship between American rayon producers and Technicolor continued well throughout the 1940s with the production of several other titles, including *Tomorrow Always Comes* (Burmil Rayons, 1946), a time travel story promoting rayon lingerie, and *Tequila Cocktails* (Marvin Textile Associates, 1944), a film depicting the inspiration behind and manufacturing process of a group of rayon jacquard fabrics sold under the name “Tequila Cocktail Fabrics.”

The industrial and sponsored film market was steadily growing in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The rising popularity of three-strip Technicolor during those same years promised advertising agencies and sponsors a way to get ahead and ensure their films would be seen and talked about. In the pre-World War II period, Technicolor helped impress the industry and critics, showcasing the innovation of modern man, and hinting at a bright and colorful future. The 1939/1940 seasons of the New York World’s Fair presented an opportunity for fabric conglomerates with household names like American Viscose and DuPont to showcase the future of textiles more directly to their targeted consumer base through industrial and sponsored films.

**Fashioning the World of Tomorrow: Technicolor, Rayon, and Modernism at the 1939/1940 World’s Fair**

The 1939/1940 seasons of the World’s Fair were held in Flushing Meadows, New York and acted as a catalyst for the production of hundreds of industrial and sponsored films. With millions in attendance, the Fair had the opportunity to do, as the Fair’s Director of Advertising William A. Hart called it, “a public relations job that has never before been possible.” With the Great Depression coming to an end, the Fair was eager to offer attendees an optimistic view of the future. At their Futurama Exhibit at the 1940 World’s Fair, General Motors distributed souvenir pins to attendees printed with the words: “I have seen the future.” This phrase captured the spirit behind the World’s Fair, allowing American industries and companies to introduce new products that promised

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77 List of Technicolor Advertising Films. From the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation Papers, George Eastman Museum.


79 Correspondence from William A. Hart to Grover Whalen, April 14, 1939; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
to improve the American way of life. The World of Fashion building constructed for the 1940 New York World’s Fair provided a forum in which progress in both the American fashion and film industries could be emphasized. Specifically, this section considers the mutually beneficial relationship demonstrated between Technicolor and the American rayon industry at the Fair. As previous research has demonstrated, fairs and expositions were a forum in which American advertisers and corporations could advertise products and educate the public via films outside of the cinema. As Business Screen phrased it: “A new formula will be disclosed for advertising and selling, for education, and for public relation purposes… as new powers of the motion picture are disclosed, new uses will be realized.” The new “uses” Business Screen identified for the motion picture agreed with the concept of the Fair itself whose 1939/1940 theme was “Building the World of Tomorrow With the Tools of Today.” The Production and Distribution Zone of the fair included manufacturers like Con Edison, U.S. Steel, and DuPont, and was primarily devoted to industries which transformed natural resources into commodities necessary to the daily life of Americans, such as gas and electricity, cars, household goods, and clothing.

Recognizing the potential motion pictures offered towards the promotion of the Fair, the World’s Fair’s Newsreel and Motion Picture Department accomplished the following during the interim period between the 1939 and 1940 seasons: the release of fourteen Fair-related newsreels; the production of the promotional film Let’s Go to the Fair, a two-reel 800 ft. 16mm Kodachrome motion sound picture; the completion and distribution of a 35mm color slide film series illustrating a 20-minute lecture on the Fair; and the production and distribution of 400 copies of a motion picture survey of the 1939 Fair. In preparation for the 1940 season, the Fair’s Attendance Development Department aimed to circulate the aforementioned materials to theatres and

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83 Memorandum from Claude Collins to C.E. O’Neil, “Progress Report to Date and Plans for Remainder of Pre-Fair Period,” March 6, 1940; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
schools across the nation, recognizing the educational industry as the “most fertile field for wide-spread publicity.” One of the greatest concerns regarding effective promotion of the 1940 Fair season was how to sell it as an occasion of compelling importance to fairgoers. The Vice President & Chairman of the Fair’s Committee on Theme wrote:

The Fair, as a whole, is much larger than the sum of its parts. It is an educational experience…We must convince all our citizens that the Fair offers a mirror of American civilization, a clearer view of what life is in this country and what its potentialities are. If a general understanding of what the Fair is and what it offers were spread through the country this winter, there would be no difficulty about attendance. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that this should be at the objective of any and all Fair promotion. “It’s Fun at the Fair” may be a slogan to stimulate attendance with a local audience. No one can be expected to spend his savings to travel from Iowa or George or Maine merely to have fun.

The World’s Fair Corporation recognized the persuasive power of film, sending a small sound-picture truck unit to 28 cities on the East Coast over a period of as many days. With the 1940 Committee on Theme approaching the promotion of the Fair from a more explicitly educational standpoint, one can observe an increasingly enthusiastic engagement with the motion picture industry, particularly in the use of newsreels as promotional fodder.

Likewise, the film industry jumped on the opportunity to capitalize on the “educational promotion” tactic, with various newsreel production companies soliciting the Fair to use their services in advertising the 1940 season. At the same time, newsreel companies like Fox Movietone and Hearst Metrotone News competed to secure the earliest footage of the Fair’s construction and exhibits. Other industrial production companies scrambled to secure promotional opportunities in conjunction with the Fair. As a follow-up to the 1939 traveling operation, for example, the Jam Handy Organization presented an extensive publicity program to popularize the 1940 Fair through the following: the dissemination of literature on the Fair and selected exhibits; working with newspaper editors and radio station managers in promoting the Fair and its exhibits; and the production and distribution of a feature-length sound film educating the public on “What the Fair is really like” to be screened from an “Automovie,” a mobile projection unit taken to public spaces.

84 “Area Concentration Plan for Promotion and Publicity Activities,” Attendance Development Department 1940; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
85 Memorandum from Vice President & Chairman, Committee on Theme to Mr. Harvey D. Gibson, “Division of Educational Promotion,” October 9, 1939; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
The exhibitors participating in the Fair desired to increase name recognition among fair-goers and were willing to spend large amounts of money to make their pavilions more memorable and more modern than those of their competitors. Industrial films were central to the Fair in achieving those goals. Many exhibits in the Production and Distribution Zone of the fair incorporated the latest technology into their designs to increase audience interest and to generate associations of progress between the company and its product.

Color was a particularly important design element at previous world’s fairs. The 1933/1934 Chicago World’s Fair—with the theme “A Century of Progress”—hired Joseph Urban, the Austrian-American architect and colorist, to design the Fair’s color scheme. 10,000 gallons of color paint were produced at a Chicago factory to be used on the thematically-grouped buildings situated at different sites across the fairgrounds, ultimately creating a “Rainbow City” intended to lift the spirits of a crowd coping with the Great Depression. Of Urban’s color design, one cultural critic argued, “Ask ten persons what impressed them most at the Fair and probably nine will reply ‘the colors.’ A few may object to their loudness, but the vast majority of visitors react enthusiastically to Joseph Urban’s gorgeous palette of dashing shades.”

The 1939/1940 World’s Fair continued the practice of utilizing color in its visual design, organizing a Color Committee comprised of Julian Garnsey (Color Consultant), Bassett Jones (Consultant on Lighting), and Ernest Peixotto (Consultant on Mural Paintings), with Peixotto conceiving an overall color theme for the Fair. Paying homage to the official colors of New York City, orange and blue were selected as the designated colors to represent the Fair, and they appeared prominently throughout the Fair’s exhibits and grounds. At the core of the fairgrounds were the Trylon and Perisphere, two off-white modernistic structures that formed the Fair’s Theme Center. Radiating from the Theme Center were three main avenues that began as white but progressed in gradients to culminate in three individual paths of gold, red, or royal blue. Three plazas situated toward the end of each avenue were connected by a single arc-shaped avenue known as “The Way of the Rainbow,” or “Rainbow Avenue,” which progressed from gold through reds to blues to mimic a sunrise or sunset, depending on the visitor’s path (Figure 4.5).

Color coordination at the Fair was further reflected in the uniforms worn by employees, described as “poster-bright and smart as paint” by one Times reporter. The uniforms were color-coded to designate different positions and types of services offered to visitors. A basic color scheme for the Fair of navy

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89 See Ketcham v. NEW YORK WORLD’S FAIR 1939, 34F. Supp. 657 (E.D.N.Y. 1940).
90 Correspondence from Marcia Connor to Dorothy Dignam, February 3, 1938; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
blue and fawn was individualized based on the department to which the employee belonged. Those working in the treasury department, for example, wore gray-beige gabardine jackets with orange epaulettes, orange stripes down the trousers, and orange breast bands on pockets, advertising the wearer’s position at the Fair, such as “Cashier” or “Collector.”

In addition to the Color Committee, Marcia Connor, a former publicist for the Associated Dry Goods Corporation, was hired as the 1939 Fair’s Fashion and Color Executive. Connor aimed to organize a fashion merchandizing program in which six shades would be released to textile manufacturers every three months over the course of a year for pre-Fair merchandise and promotion. Connor explained that the colors—inspired by New York City’s architecture, murals, decorative schemes, and gardens—would be “keyed with the mode and color card of Paris and New York…to insure their practicality and commercial success.” The program, which was proposed to begin in February 1938, would culminate with “a revival of the shades which [had] been promoted during the previous months.” Connor outlined the color release plan at an early meeting of the Fair’s Fashion Council:

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92 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
By staggering the colors in a series and by launching the colors through high fashion channels, better manufacturers, and uptown stores, we hope to have the colors drift into volume in a normal way. Then by 1938-1939 the World’s Fair colors will be definitely in the volume brackets for mass promotion.95

Ultimately, budget issues limited Connor’s Fair color series from six shades to two: Aqualon Pastels and Mural Shades.96 Once the Fair ended, the New York School of Applied Design for Women organized a series of lectures in which Fair engineers and consultants reviewed and analyzed the modern use of color and design at the Fair for interested parties.97

The connection between color, technology, and modernism was evident, particularly in the use of color lighting and color motion film processes in the pavilions. The 1939 World’s Fair saw the first public demonstration of several lighting technologies that became more common in future decades, including the introduction of the first fluorescent light and fixture. Similar to the clothing of Fair employees, different zones of the Fair were distinguished by color cues, including a variety of wall colors and colored lighting. Fixtures in a progression of shades of blue, for example, lit the exhibits and facilities along the Avenue of Pioneers, with pale tints marking the beginning and a deep ultramarine lighting the end. One reporter visiting the fair commented that the illuminations turned Flushing Meadows “into a dream city,” creating a “Wellsian fantasy of color” at night.98 Color films—particularly those filmed in the Technicolor process—also enjoyed a strong presence at the Fair, screening in various locations multiple times per day.

The desire to maintain an image of progress and modernity at the Fair led to American industries choosing to feature new technological developments in Technicolor, encouraging the notion that three-strip, not black and white, was the future of filmmaking. Rather than officially sponsoring an exhibit at the 1939 World’s Fair, the Technicolor Research Department used the event as an opportunity to conduct a study, requesting information on the types of products advertised at the Fair. Everette E. Griffith, head of Technicolor’s Research Department, contacted the Fair hoping to procure the following:

1. List of industrial exhibitors at the Fair.
2. List of products exhibited by (1).

While Griffith did not specify why such information might be applicable to the Technicolor Corporation, it is likely the company was interested in gathering information regarding new products that might be suitable to film in Technicolor. It is also likely that the company was interested in gauging which companies or industries might be interested in making an industrial or sponsored film in the three-strip process. Correspondence between Grover Whalen, the President of the World’s Fair and Morgan Hobart, manager of Technicolor’s New York office, confirms the Fair did reach out to the company about sponsoring a special day at the 1939 Fair, but Hobart declined to participate, reasoning “only four or five” Technicolor employees were based in New York, and the number of employees from the west coast and London who would be in New York in the Summer of 1939 would be too small. While Technicolor refrained from participating in the Fair in a more official manner, Everette Griffith’s inquiry reflects Technicolor’s interest in getting more involved with the industrial and sponsored film genre in the late 1930s.

While neither Technicolor nor the film industry were formally represented at the 1939 World’s Fair with a dedicated exhibit, their presence was undeniably felt by reporters and fair-goers alike. As one reporter observed, “If art is only good when it serves a functional purpose, then the motion pictures will certainly rate among the genuine arts at the Fair.” Indeed, Technicolor shorts like Men Make Steel (Roland Reed Productions, 1938), To New Horizons (Jam Handy Organization, 1940), and The Middleton Family at the New York World’s Fair (Audio Productions, Inc., 1939) were noteworthy not only for their impressive use of color, but also for the method in which the films sold the products, or industries, in question. These films represented a new kind of advertising, altering how corporations and industries advertised themselves. Rather than focusing on the creation of goods—the factory lines, the steel mills, the workers—the aforementioned films created an effective, colorful narrative to sell a progressive image of capitalism and industry in general. Promoting the “American way of life,” and focusing on the ideals of having a happy, curated home and appearance, the Technicolor films at the World’s Fair were forerunners to the post-war advertisements and entertainment that would blossom on the screen—both in the movie theater and in the home—in subsequent decades.

Reporters attending the 1939 World’s Fair commented on the increasing number of films used to “put on a show” and create an atmosphere generally

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99 Correspondence from E.E. Griffith to New York World’s Fair, September 14, 1939; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

100 Correspondence from Morgan Hobart to Grover Whalen, June 26, 1939; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

conducive to sales and institutional public relations. Business Screen reported there were over 600 films screened at the 1939 World’s Fair (404 in standard 35mm, 191 in 16mm). That total included projections of transparencies and film loops integrated with exhibits, changing programs of educational films and documentaries, and sponsored films that complemented stage shows or stood alone as special attractions. After interviewing exhibitors at the 1939 World’s Fair, the editors of Film News noted that exhibitors “now rate moving pictures well ahead of most static exhibits,” a claim borne out of the increase in construction of new theaters for the 1940 fair season. Large American companies like Chrysler, General Motors, and the United Stated Steel Subsidiaries constructed exhibits capable of screening the newest in film technologies, including 3-D and color.

The American fashion industry also enjoyed a strong presence at the New York World’s Fair, thanks in large part to the development of the World of Fashion exhibit during the 1940 season. In correspondence to prospective exhibitors, Mary Lewis, Director of Fashion for the 1940 season, explained, “This is so definitely America’s year in every way that I feel it cannot fail to be America’s year in Fashion, too, and it is our hope to make this building, as far as possible, the ‘Fashion Capitol’ of America this Summer.” Lewis’s words illustrate the 1939/1940 Fair’s central role in a period between two World Wars, when New York was striving to establish itself as a fashion world leader. The World of Fashion exhibit provided an unprecedented opportunity that allowed the fashion industry to demonstrate that New York was more than the garment manufacture hub of America. Between the Great Depression and the beginning of World War II, the New York retail industry, along with American fashion magazines and cultural organizations, implemented a series of changes to grant American fashion a significant role in the world with a strong identity that differentiated it from European fashion. In highlighting the dynamics between New York City, American fashion, and modernity, the World of Fashion exhibit provided a space in which American designers and the newest fashion technologies could be displayed, establishing not only New York City as a fashion leader, but also the United States.

The World of Fashion building, designed by Ian Woodner, was approximately 26,130 square feet in size and contained sub-divisions like the Hall of Textiles, Parade of Labels, Fashion at Your Feet, Fashion in Furs, Fashion in

102 “New York Fair Films,” Business Screen 2, no. 3 (1940): 34.
105 Correspondence from Mary Lewis, March 16, 1940; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
Action, and Fashion in the Films in which various firms could rent space and
design an exhibit to feature new items. Inspired by the successful Pavillon de
l’Elegance at the 1937 Paris Exposition, the World of Fashion exhibit aimed
to bring attention to American progress in the fashion industry with the slogan
“the World of Tomorrow looks to America.” In the Fair’s opening week, the
World of Fashion drew approximately 37% of the net paid attendance—a
higher percentage than any building had previously received in the Fair’s his-
tory.106

The American rayon industry received the largest amount of display space
at the exhibit, renting 6,000 square feet to feature creations from the following
companies: American Viscose Corporation, American Bemberg Corporation,
North American Rayon Corporation, American Enka Corporation, Tubize
Chatillon Corporation, and the Celanese Corporation of America (Figure
4.6).107 In organizing booth rentals for the 1940 Fair, the Department of Ex-
hibits and Concessions began soliciting a number of American rayon compa-
nies in December 1938 in hopes of ensuring their participation at the Fair, as
this excerpt from a letter to the sales manager at Industrial Rayon Corporation
illustrates:

In this building will be shown displays of fabrics entering into the
life of a woman; garments made from those fabrics; and accessories
which are a necessary adjunct to the garments...There is, as you
know, considerable interest in Rayon and the showing of a new pro-
cess would be most desirable from a publicity and a sales stand-
point.108

According to one New York Times reporter, the vast majority of the rayon
items displayed in the World of Fashion building were simply tailored, useful
pieces designed to appeal to the average woman fairgoer, creating an overall
message of keeping prices down while emphasizing the exhibit’s “made-in-
America aspect.”109

As Rebecca Arnold explains, the success of 1930s ready-to-wear was the
creation of an interchangeable wardrobe of color-coordinated separates with
simple, easy designs.110 This idea was clearly conveyed by Barbara Graves, a
close associate of Mary Lewis. During a radio interview during the 1940 fair

106 Correspondence from W.F.L. Tuttle to C.S. Walsh, June 22, 1940; from New York World’s
Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
107 Memorandum from the Director of Exhibits to the President, February 27, 1939; from New
York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York
Public Library.
108 Correspondence from E.H. McKitterick to A.A. Schoenberger, December 1, 1938; from
New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York
Public Library.
110 Rebecca Arnold, The American Look: Fashion, Sportswear and the Image of Women in
season, Graves explained the general status of American fashion and how it would be presented at the New York World’s Fair:

Feeling that with world conditions as they are, America must not only carry on, but assume leadership. So we show the American woman what fine creative talent there is in this country. We have a display of fall and winter styles, made in America, designed in America, and inspired by American women.111

This image has been removed due to lack of copyright permission but can be viewed in the printed version.

Figure 4.6 A rendering by Ian Woodner of the Rayon Show, sponsored by the Rayon Yarn Producers Group, located in the World of Fashion building at the 1940 World’s Fair. Image courtesy of the New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Ready-to-wear comprised a significant part of New York’s fashion output since the 19th century, when the city first began establishing itself as a manufacture hub in the industrialization period, and by 1920 producing 80% of the national garments. Ready-to-wear was all of what Paris’s haute couture was not; it was a product designed for the masses that was reproduced many times over and was dominated by the cost-efficiency imperative. As Christopher Breward argues, the production characteristics of New York City led garments created in response to the social and cultural demands of American consumers.

in general.\textsuperscript{112} The World of Fashion building was an effective venue to showcase these contributions to the American fashion industry.

To further press the economical, patriotic conceptual undertones behind the World of Fashion, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt attended the opening of the building on June 1, 1940, telling reporters the exhibit stood to “show what you can do with taste even if you haven’t much money.”\textsuperscript{113} The First Lady’s sentiments were especially meaningful to American fair-goers to whom a sense of style remained pertinent in the midst of coping with the devastating economic impact of the Great Depression. Furthermore, Roosevelt’s comments and presence at the event strengthened the message of American innovation and resourcefulness that the Fair aimed to instill in fairgoers and the American public. Roosevelt was a strong supporter of the fashion industry in large part due to women’s roles in its growth and because the fashion industry employed many women—two factors which were especially important as the country was beginning to emerge from the Great Depression.

In addition to the exhibit area, the World of Fashion building also featured a theater with a seating capacity of 299 and was equipped with a stage, four 2,000-watt spotlights, one stereopticon machine, and one 16mm projector and amplifier on which colored films could be shown (Figure 4.7).\textsuperscript{114} The Fair allowed exhibitors to rent the theater in the World of Fashion building by the day, week, or month to host a variety of live shows or to screen industrial and sponsored films.\textsuperscript{115} With the Fair Committee promising an array of advertising opportunities to vendors, companies eager to display their products at the Fair solicited the committee, and the theatre in the World of Fashion building was an active space in which these products were regularly showcased. For example, Theodore Wood, the manager of American Bemberg’s Merchandising Department, contacted Mary Lewis to inquire about incorporating Aristocrats of Fashion into the World of Fashion’s schedule, arguing that, “the reaction to our new technicolor [sic] fashion film…has been so unanimously enthusiastic that I feel sure you may wish to include it in your programs during the

\begin{itemize}
  \item“World of Fashion,” June 13, 1940; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
  \itemProposed costs for renting the theater in the World of Fashions building during the 1940 season of the New York World’s Fair were as follows:


\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
Weekdays – per day & \$50 \\
\hline
Weekends and Holidays – per day & \$75 \\
\hline
Weekly & \$300 \\
\hline
Two weeks & \$500 \\
\hline
One month & \$1000 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\end{itemize}

The live performances presented in the theater housed in the World of Fashion building also featured more educational programs, including a presentation sponsored by the McCall Corporation and R.H. Macy titled “See a Dress Made in 30 Minutes On Our Human Pin Cushion,” in which a representative from the McCall Co. shared “pertinent information on sewing the modern way,” discussing proper use of fabric, colors, and styles. Each performance featured a different pattern sewn on the “pin cushion,” a model from the John Robert Powers Agency.

Between July 1 and July 20, 1940 the Rayon Yarn Producers Group rented the theater to host a five-stage Fashion Review which would demonstrate “the adaptability and importance of this modern man-made textile.”

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116 Correspondence from Theodore Wood to Mary Lewis, March 29, 1940; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
which ran every hour, featured 24 ensembles—each selected to suit the pocketbook of the average customer, designed to show “the adaptability and importance of this modern man-made textile”—with pieces ranging in price from $12 to $85. Exhibit attendants provided information sheets containing store and department information to curious fairgoers hoping to procure the clothing items featured in the show for themselves. Three of the five stages in the live show featured birdcages “of heroic size” filled with live, colorful exotic birds, which revolved to allow the entrance and exit of the models. Color was a particularly important element of the live show, with the original rayon creations combined with the plumage of the birds creating an exciting, colorful display. A background of multi-colored rayon fabrics draped the entire backdrop, dramatizing the range and beauty of colors achieved in rayon fabrics. The shows produced by the Rayon Yarn Producers Group proved popular, with daily audience numbers averaging 1,100.

In the list of participating yarn producers, DuPont is notably absent, most likely because the company sponsored their own building during the 1939 and 1940 seasons and hoped to avoid a conflict of interest. Walter Dorwin Teague, the designer of the exhibit, attempted to convince Leonard Yerkes, general manager of DuPont’s rayon division, to participate in the exhibition, arguing “In the Fashion Center your fabrics would immediately identify themselves with the smart world of style and du Pont [sic] as a producer of fine fabrics would register here more effectively than in our own building.” Despite Teague’s pleadings, DuPont abstained from participating in the World of Fashion exhibit, instead choosing to feature their products in their own “Wonder World of Chemistry” exhibit instead. With 5,500,000 attendees, DuPont’s sponsored building was one of the top ranking exhibits at the 1939 World’s Fair, and proved to be a popular draw during the 1940 season as well. Similar to DuPont’s educational films, the company’s exhibit at the Fair aimed to promote DuPont products while simultaneously educating fairgoers on the production process. The exhibit stressed three principles: 1) Chemistry creates better raw materials than nature provides; 2) These new raw materials reduce...
the cost of products to the consumer; 3) Privately-owned research facilities make these forward strides possible.125

The DuPont building at the World’s Fair spanned 36,222 square feet and cost $500,000 to construct for the 1939 Fair. The building featured a variety of DuPont products from the home, agriculture, transportation, and beauty sectors, as well as a special rayon fashion display consisting of original designs and a variety of samples made from DuPont fabrics like rayon and nylon. Mannequins designed by Cora Scovil, credited for producing “the most realistic” figures, sported wigs made of the then-futuristic material of Lucite, and two dresses of original design. One of the gowns was a black rayon chiffon dinner dress with a matching lace-trimmed jacket designed by Frankie; the second dress featured in the exhibit was a white formal dinner gown made of rayon crepe trimmed with a beaded design, created by Marcelle Chaumont and produced by Nanty. The background draping of fabrics included rayon crepe jersey, rayon crinkled chiffon, and rayon suede crepe in colors ranging from off-white into pastels to dark tones, providing contrast for the black and white costumes displayed.

In addition to mannequins modeling rayon designs, a live show titled “Fashions out of Test Tubes” supplemented the DuPont exhibit at the World’s Fair in which a model informed audiences that all the clothes and accessories presented were created in DuPont’s laboratory. Items displayed in the show included a variety of casual wear, as well as a white rayon satin evening gown with a draped bodice and classic full skirt.126 In addition to rayon, “Fashions out of Test Tubes” featured women wearing bathing suits, evening dresses, hats, shoes, and other apparel developed by industrial research between 1935 and 1940 made from a variety of unique materials, including glass, coal, tar, salt, camphor, and soybeans. While the presentation certainly appealed to women attending the Fair interested in viewing live models wearing the latest in rayon modes—and perhaps those who were interested in the outfits made from obscure materials—the show’s producers hoped “Fashions out of Test Tubes” might offer more than the average fashion show. A playbook for the stage show explained, “This presentation, a dramatization of industry forging ahead through research and science, is a dramatic challenge to those who claim there are no longer any frontiers for Americans.”127 The show also provided an optimistic outlook for Americans exiting the Great Depression era, with one New York paper commenting that the “products showed great possibilities for America’s future. In the making of them, in finding new and

125 DuPont, E.I. de Nemours Co., Inc. (1940), Box 343, Folder 5; from New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
126 “Fashions Included In DuPont Chemistry Exhibit at the Fair,” Women’s Wear Daily 6, no. 93 (May 10, 1940): 30.
127 Pamphlet, “Fashions out of Test Tubes,” presented by the National Association of Manufacturers (1940); NAM Public Information Program 1940 (for discussion by Public Relations Advisory Group, Tuesday, February 20, 1940),” folder 74 NAM-Public Info Program-1940 (Mr. Mullen’s files), box 78, NBC/SHSW.
wider uses for them, lay the promise of more jobs and new payrolls for Americans everywhere.”128

Coupled with the live fashion show, the DuPont exhibit also featured a Technicolor short showing various uses for DuPont products in the home, as well as in fashions. Technicolor contacted DuPont in 1940 as part of their outreach for its industrial motion picture program and it is possible the film screened at the World’s Fair was a product of those efforts.129 The film included shots of two women wearing rayon dresses, one a yellow dress in a semi-sheer weave; the other a wine color print dress in a chiffon sheer weave. Incorporating active components into the exhibit such as “Fashions out of Test Tubes” and the Technicolor short brought an otherwise static presentation to life. Furthermore, the fashion show and the film contributed to strengthening the relationship between the conglomerate of DuPont and some of its popular by-products, namely rayon. Rayon was indeed presented as a fabric of the future at the World’s Fair, highlighting at once American style, resourcefulness, and progress. Thus, DuPont succeeded in improving its brand recognition and by using futuristic materials in its fashion show, as well as screening a short shot in the latest color motion picture technology, established its position as a forward-thinking American company.

Conclusion

The increasing use of color in industrial shorts resulted in many collaborative efforts between Technicolor and the American rayon industry. With both presenting themselves as the future of their respective industries, modernity and progress were powerful commonalities between the two. As a genre primed for demonstration and promotion, industrial and sponsored films were logical areas in which the fashion and film industries could collaborate. Technicolor’s interest in developing an industrial motion picture program in 1940 led to the company reaching out to some of the largest companies in the United States. The results of those efforts were effective in increasing interest from a wide variety of American industries, leading to the production of thousands of films, ranging from straightforward documentary or instructional style, to large-scale musicals and soap opera type dramas. Many of the industrial and advertising films shot in three-strip Technicolor reflect the consumer society that blossomed in the United States following World War II, a theme that appeared in various advertising and industrial shorts both before and after the war.

The introduction of safety film in the early 1920s, followed by the release of the improved Kodachrome process in 1938, effectively brought color to the

129 Letter from Morgan Hobart to Gerald F. Rackett, August 28, 1940. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers – Correspondence (1930–1948), Margaret Herrick Library.
16mm market. This made it simpler to screen color films in public spaces like department stores, museums, and World’s Fairs in addition to more traditional theater settings. Some notable examples discussed in this chapter have included department stores, museums, and exhibitions and fairs. The case of the 1939/1940 New York World’s Fair provides an excellent setting to explore American values and advancements in American industry at that time. Furthermore, the extensive and innovative use of industrial films at the Fair reflects the changing approaches to advertising in America throughout the twentieth century.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, American industries increasingly recognized the commercial, educational, and artistic value industrial and sponsored films offered through advancements in film technology, like color and sound. According to Business Screen, these improvements in motion picture technology gave “millions of Americans a new educational form, a new advertising medium, a new method of sales training, a new way of getting understanding of significant events…and all of these far greater in effect and result than any other method of idea communication in modern business.”"130 The rise of sponsored and industrial films shot in the three-strip Technicolor process evidence the increasing popularity of color in the 1930s and 1940s. Examining their popularity provides insight into changing advertising and filmmaking styles, attitudes towards non-feature films, and the impact Technicolor had on the film industry during these years.

5. “Now You’ll Be Color Conscious”: Three-Strip Technicolor, the Feature Film, and Color Promotions

In the January 1935 issue of Photoplay, Kathryn Dougherty, the magazine’s Editor-in-Chief, posed the following question to her readers: “What effect will the developed Technicolor process have on women’s clothes?” Noting the forthcoming release of Becky Sharp (Rouben Mamoulian, 1935), the first feature film to be made in the three-strip Technicolor process, Dougherty continued: “I wish to go on record as making this forecast: Spring will witness the gayest adornment on ladies we have seen in many a season.” Dougherty also proposed that one shade in particular would “sweep the country,” announcing that “Becky Sharp blue” is symbolic of the revolution that has overtaken us practically overnight.” While the shade did appear in special promotions with select department stores in larger cities on the East Coast, one would be remiss in arguing “Becky Sharp blue” swept the country to the extent that Dougherty predicted. Nevertheless, Dougherty’s comments remain significant, reflecting a particular excitement and confidence surrounding not only the technological advances offered by the three-strip Technicolor process itself, but also the new promotional opportunities ushered in by the improved color process.

This chapter explores the feature-length Technicolor film and the complex promotional relationship it developed with the American fashion industry in the years spanning the mid-1930s to the late 1940s. This time period may be regarded as significant for a few reasons, as it witnessed the introduction of the three-strip Technicolor process, as well as a steady increase in promoting Technicolor features through fashion, and vice versa. This chapter begins in 1935, considering the impact of Becky Sharp and the stage it set for future

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2 Ibid., 21.
promotions of three-strip Technicolor features, as well as the aesthetic precedent it set for the productions that followed. Previous research on this time period in Technicolor’s history has proposed that *Becky Sharp* was key to establishing a more restrained color palette largely encouraged and executed by Natalie Kalmus and the Color Control Department. In addition to fleshing out those claims, this chapter uses *Becky Sharp* as a jumping off point for exploring the new opportunities three-strip Technicolor presented to the fashion and film industries using color as the unifying promotional force.

The public’s increasing response to color throughout the twentieth century was demonstrated by the growth of colored movies, photographs, magazine illustrations, and more color in newspapers, buildings, interiors, and men’s clothes. In the early 1930s businesses heightened the amount of research that went into the technical perfection of color—obtaining it, reproducing it and transmitting it. Consequently, a greater variety of products, amusements, advertising, and publicity employed color to increase public demand. The growing organization of color in ready-to-wear promotions was not “a fashion whim.” *Women’s Wear Daily* reported that between 1937 and 1938, the sale of color in women’s wear fabrics increased 10 percent to 40 percent (as opposed to black), and that the increase of color in fashions present in the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s represented “an angle of a broad trend toward color that has parallels in many other phases of daily life.”

As one of the key leisure sites for American women, department stores set the stage for such color promotions to take place. In her examination of the role of the woman spectator in a society influenced by the fledgling film industry, Shelley Stamp has explored the increasing desire to develop promotions targeted toward the female consumer during the 1910s. Both Stamp and Jane Gaines have focused on the efforts made by exhibitors to conflate the consumerism of the cinema with the department store, drawing upon the spectatorial experience shared by the activities of cinema-going and shopping. To this end, Gaines argues, the department store window and the screen were analogous, converging “as display media because of their similar commercial and aesthetic aspirations.” Richard Abel finds other similarities “between the shop window, theater lobby, and screen,” noting the shared recognition “that

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8 Jane Gaines, “The Queen Christina Tie-Ups,” 55.
women viewers could be molded into desiring consumers in a double sense, not only to return again and again to adore their favorites but also to imitate them, especially in defining themselves through changes in fashion.” While window displays were regularly used to promote films through fashion since the late 1910s, the improvement and popularization of the Technicolor process in the mid-1930s introduced a particular promotional trend. The color promotions explored in this chapter were heavily featured in department store windows, utilizing fashion to promote the latest color films through catchy associations (à la “Becky Sharp blue”). With the cinema and the department store being key sites of leisure and consumption for American women, exploiting color trends through Technicolor films was a new addition to the long-established cross-industrial relationship between Hollywood and fashion in the 1930s and beyond.

Jane Gaines has identified the 1930s as being “the heyday of motion picture commodity tie-ups,” and, as Sarah Berry points out, the synergetic results of these cross-promotional efforts may be found in star endorsements, reproductions of film costumes available for purchase in department stores, product placement, and fashion publicity for forthcoming productions. With the advent of the three-strip Technicolor process, there is an increased interest in what kind of materials would photograph best in Technicolor, ushering in new opportunities for tie-ups. As the “first big color fashion film,” examining the making and promotion of Vogues of 1938 (Irving Cummings, 1937), sheds light on the complex matrix that connected films to products, and the fashion industry to the film industry. Previous chapters have considered Technicolor’s burgeoning relationship with the American rayon industry in short subject, industrial, and advertising films in the late 1930s and early 1940s. With the example of Vogues, that relationship is considered through the feature-length film. This multifarious case study allows for the consideration of how Vogues mutually benefitted both Technicolor and American rayon yarn producers in their quest for becoming more deeply engrained and accepted in their respective industries.

Despite color’s role as an effective element in advertising, studios expressed a particular hesitance to produce color films, voicing a marked distrust of the technology in terms of its color reproduction capabilities, but also its high cost. Furthermore, the three-strip process presented technical challenges to film crews, resulting in a rethinking of color planning in costume and set design, as well as make-up. As a result, the mid-1930s were a period in which fabric and make-up manufacturers could collaborate with the film industry in

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10 Jane Gaines, “The Queen Christina Tie-Ups,” 38.
12 “…About Walter Wanger’s Vogues of 1938” pressbook. From the Charles Schalfier papers, Margaret Herrick Library.
new, innovative ways, promoting products (including rayon and Max Factor’s Pan-Cake) that were more obliging to three-strip Technicolor’s cameras and demanding lighting system. Despite technical hurdles, the introduction of the three-strip process led to an increased number of color features released from the mid-1930s onwards, with a significant number of these films emphasizing fashion, the fashion industry, or both in their storylines. The previous chapters in this dissertation have mentioned that the film industry was tentative to adopt three-strip Technicolor in feature films given its high costs and the technical hurdles it presented on-set. As the first three-strip musical released by Columbia Pictures, this chapter examines *Cover Girl* (Charles Vidor, 1944) as an example of the film industry’s rising willingness to adopt the three-strip process in feature films. With its behind-the-scenes focus on the fashion industry, the film was perfectly primed for cross-industrial promotions. Special attention will be paid to the long-range approach employed to promote *Cover Girl*, as it demonstrates the innerworkings of the exploitative relationship between the fashion and film industries.

Three-Strip Technicolor and the Feature-Length Film in the 1930s

Throughout the latter part of the 1930s and the entirety of the 1940s, Technicolor’s competition was on a relatively small scale, with Cinecolor, Brewster Color, Magnacolor, and Trucolor all proving inferior in color rendition and overall quality. To meet the growing demand for Technicolor film in 1938, $1.5 million was appropriated for plant expansion; additional cameras were built; the plant capacity was doubled; and a new office and research building were constructed. A picture of the growth of Technicolor between 1934 and 1938 can be determined from the record of volume of release print footage shipped, with 1934 seeing 11,564,771 feet shipped compared to 66,720,237 feet shipped in 1938. With the introduction of three-strip Technicolor in 1935, short subject and feature-length films became a laboratory in which Technicolor could not only improve its product, but also prove to the industry at large that it was a worthy product.

13 Between 1934 and 1939, fifty titles (live-action and animated) were released either in full Technicolor or featuring Technicolor inserts. Fourteen full-color live-action Technicolor features were released in 1940, fifteen in 1941, and thirteen and 1942. After 1943, there was a consistent rise in Technicolor productions each subsequent year. Twenty-two features were released in 1943, twenty-four in 1944, thirty in 1946, thirty-two in 1947, and forty-four in 1948. This project only considers productions before 1949, but it is likely the growth of Technicolor features continued throughout the 1950s.

14 Correspondence from Robert F. Cohen to Rackett, August 21, 1939. From the Technicolor Papers, George Eastman House.
Prior to the introduction of three-strip Technicolor in 1932, audiences were privy to demonstrations of two-color Technicolor in short subjects, cartoons, travelogues, industrial and advertising films, inserts, and features. Two-color Technicolor presented technical and design challenges to film crews during the pre-production and production phases, particularly in terms of lighting. The limited color palette and technical obstacles of the two-color process meant that certain colors could not be achieved in final prints, with blue being a particularly difficult shade to capture in the orange-red and green process. In later interviews, Ray Rennahan, one of Technicolor’s earliest cameramen, discussed the technological hurdles facing crews throughout the 1920s: “Everybody wanted a blue. The only way we could sell a blue was to use a light turquoise blue and then surround it with heavy green so that you would accept the turquoise as blue in contrast to the green. It was still not blue but it passed for blue.”¹⁵ Such techniques were integral to chemist and color theorist Michel-Eugène Chevreul’s research on color contrasts and discoveries concerning visual perception. Through his work, Chevreul ascertained that particular types of color combinations resulted in “agreeable impressions” grounded in either closely related or strongly contrasting colors.¹⁶ As Rennahan describes it, Technicolor designers and cameramen employed similar techniques in order to “trick” the visual perception of theater-goers into seeing a more complete color spectrum. While color contrast, “agreeable impressions,” and color harmony would continue to play an important role in production and costume design as the Technicolor process developed and improved, Rennahan’s example draws attention to the limitations of the two-color process and why the introduction of the three-strip process was an improvement to be celebrated in promotions for *Becky Sharp*.

Not being able to accurately replicate the color blue was a problematic technical issue in films explicitly incorporating the hue into its storyline. *Irene* and *King of Jazz* (John Murray Anderson, 1930), for example, were two films featuring musical numbers that used blue in a manner that was inextricably tied to the plot. Furthermore, with the examples of *Irene* and *King of Jazz*, the color blue was a particularly important color in costumes. In the case of *Irene*, which was originally a successful stage play, the song “Alice Blue Gown” proved such an integral part of the stage performance that it was impossible for it to not be included in the film adaptation. With lyrics like “Till it wilted, I wore it / I’ll always adore it / My sweet little Alice blue gown,” actress Colleen Moore wore a “blue” dress while performing the song in the film. To strengthen this association between the shade, the popular song, and the film, Colleen Moore wore an “Alice blue gown” at public appearances to

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promote Irene. Similarly, in King of Jazz, George Gershwin’s performance of his sweeping composition “Rhapsody in Blue,” was intended to be a celebration of the shade and the song, which was a bonafide hit by 1930. Louis B. Metzger, Universal Pictures’ sales head, maintained the inclusion of Gershwin’s piece would “absolutely assure” the film “tremendous success.” Like Colleen Moore in Irene, in his performance of “Rhapsody” in King of Jazz, Gershwin wears a “blue” suit while playing the tune at a colossal “blue” piano. In the filmic performances of “Alice Blue Gown” and “Rhapsody in Blue,” audiences witnessed an implied blue, a shade appearing more pale green in color than blue.

Critics, however, did not appear to fault the discrepancy, with one referring to the Gershwin number as “the standout” scene in the film, with another critic remarking the scene was “one of the most effective incidents of its kind that the screen has yet offered.” Despite the limits of the two-color process, one critic commented upon the “gorgeous setting with blue predominating” in the “Rhapsody” number. Similarly, advertisements for Irene promised audiences would witness a picture “filmed in actual COLORS—the famous Alice Blue Gown and all.”

Employing technical tricks like the ones previously mentioned by Ray Rennahan most likely helped audiences “see” blue more readily. In the instances of “Alice Blue Gown” and “Rhapsody in Blue”—two popular compositions outside of the films in which they were featured—one might also contend that the audience’s visual perception was influenced by a familiarity with the songs, encouraging an expectation of the color blue. While Irene and King of Jazz are unique in the manner in which blue was tied to their plots, they demonstrate an artistic and technical need to capture the hue on the screen while leaving room for exploitations to take place once a more accurate representation of blue was introduced into Technicolor’s color arsenal.

With the introduction of the fourth Technicolor process—three-strip Technicolor—in 1932, it became possible to capture and present an accurate representation of the color blue on the screen for the first time. In her review of Becky Sharp, Louella Parsons mused, “Until the advent of Becky Sharp blue was badly done. Miriam Hopkins’s lovely blonde hair is tied with blue ribbons and she wears blue again and again and each time I was impressed with the

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way it photographed.”23 In the company’s effort to capitalize upon this advancement in color motion picture technology, a shade called “Becky Sharp blue”—described by Screenland writer Helen Harrison as being “not so blue as delft and not so violet as periwinkle”24—started receiving mentions in fan magazines and in fashion promotions in conjunction with the release of the film in June 1935. In June and July 1935, department stores N. Snellenburg & Company and Franklin Simon & Co. in Philadelphia and New York City, respectively, both sponsored campaigns in their misses’ departments featuring fashions in “Becky Sharp blue” which, according to Women’s Wear Daily, “[reflected] strong acceptance of this color at the moment.”25 Both stores included daytime and afternoon dresses with design elements including sheers, all-around pleatings, and flowing sleeves. While “Becky Sharp blue” did not quite “sweep the country” as Photoplay’s Kathryn Dougherty predicted in August 1935, the displays in New York City and Philadelphia set the stage for similar promotions to follow as the release of Technicolor feature-length films occurred with increasing regularity throughout the remainder of the 1930s and during the 1940s, which will be discussed more thoroughly later in this chapter.

Prior to the release of Becky Sharp, Technicolor employed a media blitz unlike any they had with previous films in order to promote the film and the new color process. While “Becky Sharp blue” is one example, interviews with important cast and crew members were published in the New York Times and Variety, popular fan magazines like Photoplay, Movie Classic, Picturegoer, and Screenland ran articles heralding a new era of filmmaking with the release of Becky Sharp, and Technicolor employees published articles in more technical journals including American Cinematographer and the Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers explaining the new process and its improvements. Among the praise for three-strip Technicolor were predictions for how the process would contribute to and improve upon the film-going experience, with a notable amount of promotional coverage devoted to the educational opportunities color offered women in connection with fashion. In his interview with Screenland, Robert Edmond Jones, the color designer on Becky Sharp, raved, “No longer are fashions going to be color-blind, nor are our backgrounds. Everything is going to assume a new importance—the stars, their coloring, their gowns, their settings; and this is going to effect every woman, not only in America, but in the world.”26 Similarly, Movie Classic’s J. Eugene Chrisman argued that with the introduction of the three-strip process, audiences would be able to “take lessons in clothes glamorous—lessons not

only in style, but in the colors that will enhance your charm, your personality.”

The lessons to which Chrisman referred applied to women who shopped for their clothing in department stores, as well as the home seamstress. Chrisman suggested that with the improvement of the Technicolor process, “women will begin to think, as they see a picture, of the right cut coupled with the right fabric.” In this way, Chrisman’s comments were cleverly diplomatic, strengthening the idea that the possession of a color sense—or being “color conscious,” as Technicolor phrased it—was a useful trait for women of all backgrounds.

In addition to its purported educational value, the display of color in *Becky Sharp* was another attraction. One columnist emphasized that the gowns in the film would be shown “in their natural state,” allowing viewers to “get the sheen of the fabrics and all the details of color combinations which [designers] employ as an artist uses his paints.” While “Becky Sharp blue” may have been the most marketable shade from *Becky Sharp*, it was the film’s deft application of color consciousness that appealed to critics, particularly in one scene—the Duchess of Richmond’s ball. In previous research, Scott Higgins and Richard Neupert have explored the significance of the Duchess of Richmond’s ball sequence in *Becky Sharp*, establishing the scene as evidence of the dramatic, emotional approach to color taken by the film’s director, Rouben Mamoulian, and color designer, Robert Edmond Jones. The scene, in which Napoleon attacks and British soldiers rush out to meet him, employs a riveting use of color in costumes for dramatic effect. In his description of the scene, Mamoulian relayed his thoughts regarding the potential emotional impact of color on audiences, using the Duchess of Richmond’s ball as an example:

> Color, as you know, is symbolic. It is not an accident that traffic stop lights are red, go lights green. Red means danger, green safety and hope. So in the first few shots…the people who run by the camera are dressed in cool colors, starting with black and white and brown. Then we cut to a group in blues and greens, then yellow and orange; and finally, first to dull, then to flaming reds.

In an otherwise tepid review of *Becky Sharp*, Andre Sennwald, film critic for the *New York Times*, remarked that the Duchess of Richmond’s ball scene offered a “magnificent employment of color,” arguing Mamoulian successfully used Technicolor’s capabilities “not as a merely decorative scheme, but

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
as an authentic element in building the scene to its crisis, the hues mounting in excitement in great waves of color emotion and achieving an overwhelming climax in the angry blues and scarlets of the British officers as they rush to their posts.” 32 While emotional and cognitive associations with color were common since the days of tinting and toning, this approach to color design was not the long-term vision for color motion picture processes held by Technicolor or the film industry. 33 In his response to a fan writing with suggestions on how to use color, for example, Cedric Gibbons, MGM’s art director, relayed the following message in 1945:

I feel that color as an emotional factor must be supplementary to the elements of music, dialogue and movement—and not for the sake of color alone. Also, we have passed somewhat beyond the trite use of color symbolism as such. Instead of using red for passion, blue for serenity, etc., we think more of the inter-play of value, intensity and hue. 34

Gibbons’s response evidences a shift in the industry’s approach to color design, which was still in flux in the mid-40s, but was heading in a more practical, restrained direction.

As Scott Higgins has argued, Becky Sharp was “the first practical test of three-color’s aesthetic and dramatic potential for feature production.” 35 With its high production costs and a comparatively low domestic gross, however, Herbert Kalmus later reflected, “As a laboratory of the new process, Becky turned out to be an expensive proving-ground.” 36 Despite Becky Sharp’s financial shortcomings, its goal was as much to demonstrate the possibilities of three-color in feature-length films as it was to create a profitable or popular film. Technicolor had long faced industry-wide hesitations regarding its use; that photographing in color required more light, different costumes, a knowledge of color composition, and additional time and resources. 37 While

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34 Letter from Cedric Gibbons to James M. Beasley (suggestions from Henri Jaffa), May 15, 1945. From the Margaret Herrick Library.
hesitations remained, with the introduction of the three-strip Technicolor process we see a shift in the discourse surrounding color film within the film industry, as well as in comments from critics and audiences. Rouben Mamoulian, the director of *Becky Sharp*, offered the following thoughts on the new color process: “Unless you have seen the new Technicolor, to say you don’t like color on the screen is like saying you do not like horseback riding when all you have ridden is a three-legged horse.” Mamoulian’s almost challenging comments reflect an awareness regarding the limitations in previous renditions of the Technicolor process, as well as an eagerness to convince critics of its improvements. While *Becky Sharp* was not the most successful Technicolor feature by any means, it was, as Kalmus called it, a successful “proving-ground,” testing the artistic merits of the improved process, as well as new methods of promoting it.

“Showmanship With a Capital $”: *Vogues of 1938*, Rayon, and Technicolor

On the heels of the release of *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (Henry Hathaway, 1936)—the second full-length feature film shot in three-strip Technicolor and the first to be shot on location outdoors—Producer Walter Wanger took on a new project, a musical promoted by United Artists as the “first big color fashion film.” Released three months before *Vogues of 1938*, the musical *A Star is Born* (William A. Wellman, 1937) was advertised as “the first modern dress story in Technicolor.” Unlike *A Star is Born*, however, Wanger’s production was advertised as a big budget feature in which the glamour and color of women’s fashions formed the basis of the plot. Key to the promotion of *Vogues* was the intention to ensure the fashions presented in the film were ones that women viewers would want to hang in their own closets, as opposed to what Wanger called the “stagy” costumes presented in other musicals. Sarah Berry has argued that *Vogues of 1938* functioned as a mediator between “the aesthetic pretentions of European couture and the accessibility of American ready-to-wear.” Notably, Berry’s comments were made in regards to the film’s plot, which focused on the House of Curson, an American department store that purchased sketches from Parisian fashion shows to reproduce them in-house—a common practice in American department store

39 “…About ‘Walter Wanger’s *Vogues of 1938*’” pressbook. From the Charles Schalfier papers, Margaret Herrick Library.

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operations at the time. Curson’s rival, the Russian couturier Prince Muratov, ultimately flails while Curson manages to save his company from the brink of bankruptcy, effectively placing American ready-to-wear as the victor. To this end, *Vogues of 1938* was conceived and promoted as the perfect vehicle to arrange tie-ups with the fashion industry in which mass-produced reproductions of the film’s costumes were made available to purchase in American department stores. While *Vogues* inspired tie-ups with a range of fashions and accessories, this section demonstrates that the American rayon industry in particular proved to be a compelling partner, with Technicolor providing a mutually beneficial bond that was underscored in promotions for the film.

The August 17, 1937 issue of *Women’s Wear Daily (WWD)* included an eight-page insert devoted to the promotional opportunities offered by *Vogues of 1938*. The special section, which was directed toward business owners rather than the average American woman, included articles focusing on the production, placing an emphasis on the fashions and the host of symbiotic opportunities offered by the film. Information regarding the *WWD* feature could not be located in records related to the promotion of *Vogues*. One can surmise, however, that this insert was financed by the Advertising and Publicity Department at United Artists—possibly in conjunction with the Wanger organization—given that many details and information regarding the film printed in the magazine were directly lifted from the pressbook distributed by UA.43 One *Film Daily* writer who ostensibly had access to the pressbook described it as being crammed with “practical, punchy ideas” for promotions—particularly ideas for tie-ups with the fashion industry.44 Despite the potential for fashion tie-ups in *Vogues of 1938*, little attention was actually devoted to promoting specific designers or ensembles within the film. The most obvious nod given to the designers who contributed fashions and accessories to *Vogues* was in its opening credit sequence, which cleverly printed the credits on a red roll of rayon fabric. A few of the models featured elsewhere in the film would cut through the fabric with oversized scissors, pulling down the material to reveal more names of individuals involved with the production. In addition to listing actors and crew, the opening credits included an expression of gratitude directed toward some of the manufacturers and designers who contributed their products to the film.45 Of the film’s less overt methods of pedaling the fashions featured in *Vogues*, one *Variety* reviewer remarked:

43 “…About ‘Walter Wanger’s *Vogues of 1938*’” pressbook. From the Charles Schalfier papers, Margaret Herrick Library.
44 Ibid.
45 Of note are the following credits which acknowledged some key individuals providing wardrobe and make-up to *Vogues of 1938*: “We wish to thank the following for their many creative contributions to the production:

Jaeckel, Inc. – for furs
Irene – for Miss Bennett’s Wardrobe
Omar Kiam – for the Fashion Shows and Miss Vinson’s Wardrobe
Creations in silks, rayons and furs are assembled from recognized manufacturers, who are credited in a special title, but whose names thereafter are not mentioned. Although there is unquestionable commercial value to the tie-in, the film in no particular can be criticized as a commercial picture, deviating from accentuated principles.\textsuperscript{46}

That \textit{Vogues} did not mention or promote the wardrobe designers and manufacturers by name within the film makes the promotion surrounding the production all the more compelling.

The \textit{WWD} feature provided ample advertising space to some of the manufacturers and New York City department stores and shops involved in tie-ups with the film, including Schwartz & Ehrenreich, C.H.D Robbins, Mitchell & Weber, Sally Victor, Fieldcrest Fabrics, and Siegel Bros., Inc. This special section also included articles focusing on the relationship between rayon and Technicolor, with a strong focus placed on the ensembles featured in the film’s Rayon Ball scene. In the film, this scene was referred to—visually, on a sign at the entrance of the gala—as the “Fête de Rayon Fantastique,” while the press took to calling it the Rayon Ball. In \textit{Vogues of 1938}, the Rayon Ball featured a contest in which a prize was awarded to the woman wearing the best costume. In terms of highlighting both fashions and three-strip Technicolor, the Rayon Ball packed a powerful promotional punch. While short in length, the scene received a great deal of attention in the months leading up to the film’s release, with discourses focusing on the beauty of the rayon costumes presented. As a narrative-motivated use of Technicolor, the Rayon Ball scene was an ideal way to highlight the three-strip process.

Critics generally praised \textit{Vogues of 1938} for its presentation of color, with one \textit{Motion Picture Daily} writer commenting upon its “flamboyant, and delicate employment of pigmentation.”\textsuperscript{47} Another point upon which critics agreed was that the film lacked a plot, with the Rayon Ball scene in particular doing little to advance the existing storyline.\textsuperscript{48} Upon seeing the final script, Bella and Sam Spewack, the film’s original screenwriters, issued the following thoughts in an urgent memo to producer Walter Wanger: “A great many funny lines were lost on the Rayon Ball scene and perfectly meaningless dialogue

\begin{quote}
Max Factor – for Color Harmony Make-up  
Sally Victor – for a great many of the hats  
John-Frederics – for the hats and accessories in the Fall Fashion Forecast  
Trabert & Hoeffer Inc. “Mauboussin Jewels” – for the jewelry  
I. Miller & Sons – for the shoes
\end{quote}

And the many others whose creative efforts have found expression in this motion picture.”

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Variety} 127, no. 8 (August 4, 1937): 18.  
used in place of it. We do not mind losing the funny lines, but do strongly object to a long, lame scene being put in its place… if you do not throw out [the Rayon Ball scene] you will be hurting the picture.” \(^{49}\) Despite a lack of critical enthusiasm for the Rayon Ball’s contribution to *Vogues*’s plot, examining the scene from a promotional angle renders it essential, offering the American rayon industry and Technicolor a rich opportunity to collaborate on a mutually beneficial tie-up. One writer went so far as to refer to the Rayon Ball scene as “the crux of the story” but perhaps a more appropriate description would have been “the crux of the promotion.” The coverage surrounding this particular tie-up provides a fuller story from which we can glean the multilayered promotional benefits offered by the scene.

First, let us examine the probable inspiration for the scene. The idea for the Rayon Ball featured in *Vogues of 1938* was most likely taken from the New York City Beaux-Arts Ball, an annual costume gala organized by the Architectural League of New York which assigned a different theme and title every year.\(^{50}\) The 1936 ball was held at the Hotel Astor on December 4, and was called the “Fête de Rayon Fantastique.”\(^{51}\) Examining the organization of the 1936 ball, it becomes clear that it was sponsored by the American rayon industry. While some members of the Beaux-Arts Committee insisted “rayon” was meant to be interpreted through its French definition (“ray,” “stripe,” or “beam”), the relationship between the ball and the rayon industry was difficult to escape, particularly considering Carl Reimers, an advertising executive from America Enka Corporation—one of the largest rayon manufacturers in the United States—was the head of the Beaux-Arts Program Committee at the time.\(^{52}\) Contributions from the American industry could be seen in the “thousands of yards” of the fabric in varied shades and textures reportedly donated by a group of manufacturers. According to one *New Yorker* writer, rayon was “the keynote of decoration” in the Hotel Astor.\(^{53}\) While significant to the ball’s

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\(^{49}\) Correspondence from Bella and Sam Spewack to Walter Wanger, May 20, 1937. From *Vogues of 1938* production files, Margaret Herrick Library.

\(^{50}\) Organized for architecture, painting, sculpture, and engraving students of the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris since the late 1800s, the Bal des Quat’z’Arts, as it was called, was an annual costume ball encouraging outrageous, creative costumes to be designed around a theme which changed every year. Imitations of the ball, with its somewhat debaucherous reputation, eventually spread to the United States, with the Architectural League of New York organizing their first Beaux-Arts Ball in 1918. See Melissa McCaffrey, “Le Bal des Quat’z’ Arts: Revelry and Debauchery in Turn of the Century Paris,” *recto/verso* (blog), September 8, 2015, [http://rectoversoblog.com/2015/09/08/le-bal-des-quatz-arts-revelry-and-debauchery-in-turn-of-the-century-paris/](http://rectoversoblog.com/2015/09/08/le-bal-des-quatz-arts-revelry-and-debauchery-in-turn-of-the-century-paris/)


\(^{53}\) “The Talk of the Town,” *New Yorker* 12, 41 (November 28, 1936), 10.
décor, attendees were not required to dress in rayon, but invitations provided the following stipulation: “Costumes required—fantastic—the sky’s the limit.” As in Vouges, all decorations and costumes worn in the pageant performed at the Beaux-Arts Ball were made from rayon, with one reporter describing the scene as follows:

The scene in toto was set in hangings and draperies of vari-colored rayon in an ever-changing color effect produced by the action of light from a special illumination process. In a striking departure from the more stabilized décor used for the ball in past years, the decorations moved in changing combinations throughout the sequences of a spectacular pageant which served to formally open the ball, and at the conclusion of this spectacle all the decorative units were combined to form the main background.

The 1936 “Fête de Rayon Fantastique” was a departure from previous galas, where historical themes were the predominant focus, with one columnist describing that year’s event as “a ball of color and fantasy” rather than one with a historical motif. While celebrated as a success in the society pages, the 1936 Beaux-Arts Ball was considered an even greater triumph for the American rayon industry. One year after the gala at the Hotel Astor, The Literary Digest published an article tracing the history of rayon and its impact on American society. Reflecting on the Beaux-Arts Ball, the writer argued that with that event, “rayon achieved the final and indubitable stamp of smart consumers’ approval.” The author went on to argue that while the ball “indicated rayon’s acceptance by fashion and the haut monde, it indicated even more the alert showmanship of the [rayon] industry. This showmanship has persistently and ingeniously dramatized rayon’s qualities.” Having attained a stronger sense of showmanship, as well as an increased level of respect among consumers and the fashion industry at large, American rayon was poised to seek a collaboration with the film industry.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the American rayon industry capitalized on the concept of the modern woman. As a national promotional event for American progress and technology, the 1939/1940 New York World’s Fair was an important opportunity for American rayon to exhibit their latest products in an eye-catching manner, which included fashion shows and films. In addition to the Fair, the American rayon industry enjoyed an increasingly strong presence in popular culture by way of print ads, department fashion shows, museums

54 “Goings On About Town,” New Yorker 12, 42 (December 5, 1936), 6.
55 “Beaux-Arts Ball is Cosmic Pageant,” New York Times (December 5, 1936), 14.
56 Ibid., 73.
58 Ibid.
exhibitions, merchandising forums, and, with the case of *Vogues of 1938*, feature-length films.  

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 5.1** Special insert featured in *Women's Wear Daily* highlighting the numerous merchandising opportunities presented by *Vogues of 1938*, publicized as the "first big color fashion film." In *Women's Wear Daily* 55, no. 33 (August 17, 1937): 3II.

Besides sharing a name, there are several other similarities between the 1936 New York ball and the "Fête de Rayon Fantastique" featured in *Vogues*. As in *Vogues of 1938*, the presence of rayon allowed for an other-worldly, fantastical, and colorful presentation at the 1936 Beaux-Arts Ball. Perhaps the most striking similarity, though, is that both balls were elaborate collaborations with the American rayon industry. While reports vary on how the American rayon industry became involved with *Vogues*, the consistent narrative presented in media outlets including local newspapers and the trade press was that several American rayon yarn producers were approached with the idea of

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incorporating various rayon fabrics into the Rayon Ball scene. As was the case with the 1936 Beaux-Arts Ball, it was not one particular rayon producer that agreed to tie-up with the film, but many, revealing an interest in collaboration from the trade as a whole.\(^{60}\) Furthermore, the *American Silk and Rayon Journal* announced that Charles Whitney Dall, then President of the National Rayon Weavers Association, offered to extend his expertise to Walter Wanger throughout the filming of *Vogues*.\(^{61}\) While records regarding the degree of Dall’s actual participation, if any, were unavailable, that he publicly offered his assistance to the production reflects some enthusiasm from the American rayon community—another example of “the alert showmanship of the industry” that was observed in their collaboration with the Beaux-Arts Ball. Various rayon companies agreed to provide the materials needed available to *Vogues*’s designers and the film’s wardrobe inventory evidences that a variety of rayon fabrics (including crepes, satins, and sheers) were consequently used in the film.\(^{62}\) While the word was only mentioned twice throughout the entirety of the film, “rayon” became a secondary character in *Vogues* through promotional efforts and in the media surrounding the film itself, ultimately creating an effective relationship between Technicolor and the American rayon industry.

The relationship between the three-strip process and rayon became more solid through accounts of the pre-production phase for *Vogues*. One story that made the rounds in a few different journals and trade magazines was that after a number of experiments conducted by Technicolor, it was discovered that rayon photographed better in the color process than other materials thanks to its ability to retain its coloring under the notoriously harsh lights required on a Technicolor set. The results of these experiments demonstrated that rayon, unlike other materials, would remain “as bright and fresh at the end of filming as at the beginning,” a benefit for scenes shot over the course of several days in which any change of color in the materials, no matter how slight, could not be tolerated.\(^{63}\)

The claim that rayon photographed best in Technicolor than any other material benefitted the American rayon industry in a few different ways. Post-World War I saw an increase in popularity for processed cellulose fabrics,\(^{64}\) while they were not credited in the film, the following American yarn companies cooperated in supplying the film’s producers with rayon fabrics: American Viscose Co., Du Pont Rayon Co., American Bemberg Corp., North American Rayon Corp., American Enka Corp., and Tubize Chatillon Corp. In “Rayon Featured in Technicolor Film,” *American Silk & Rayon Journal* 57, no. 9 (September 1937): 14.


\(^{61}\) “Wardrobe Inventories for *Vogues of 1938*,” Box 64, Folder 27. From the Walter Wanger Papers, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

particularly viscose, which was originally marketed as an alternative to silk—
called artificial silk, or, more often, “art silk.”64 While extremely popular, art
silk had a reputation for being of poor quality and largely unreliable, not able
to withstand multiple washes.65 In the mid-1920s, the name of the fiber officially
changed from art silk to rayon, and the 1930s was a period of significant
research, leading to improvements in rayon technology. In an effort to pro-
mote these improvements, American rayon underwent a rebranding of sorts—
not too dissimilar from Technicolor’s efforts at promoting its improved three-
strip process—and by 1936, U.S. rayon producers increased their output to
277,626,000 pounds, accounting for one-fourth of the world’s rayon manufac-
ture.66 In July 1937 Ephram Freedman, the Director of Macy’s Bureau of
Standards, penned an article in which he reported that while rayon was be-
coming increasingly popular in the United States, he had learned many Amer-
icans “realized that they knew little or nothing about rayon,” which he called
“a marvelous opportunity for the rayon industry.”67 A major tie-up with a fash-
ion-centric feature film afforded the American rayon industry a remarkable
promotional opportunity in which the benefits the fabric offered to consumers
could be highlighted. As demonstrated earlier, rayon companies marketed the
material to Americans as being not only a cheaper alternative to fabrics such
as silk and cotton, but also a hardier one, capable of withstanding spills and
grime. That rayon could also retain its chromatic values even under Techni-
color’s infamously demanding lighting requirements was one more guarantee
the American rayon industry could offer their customers. In other words, if the
fabric’s vibrant colors would not fade even under the most severe lighting
conditions, it would surely be suitable for the average American. With rayon
being predominantly featured in and discussed alongside Vogues, the fabric
received an exceptional amount of exposure with clothes-and-color-conscious
audiences.

While records supporting these color tests and the extent to which they
were reportedly conducted have not been recovered, the discourse distributed
by the Publicity and Advertising Departments at United Artists and Wanger
Productions, Inc. was widely circulated and remains accessible via trade and
fan magazines. To ascertain what tones and shades of different colors photo-
graphed best in three-strip Technicolor, milliner Sally Victor reported to
Women’s Wear Daily that “yards and yards” of different fabric textures and

67 Ibid.
colors were tested, with each shot and each fabric being numbered in order to simplify the process of elimination. The rushes not only determined qualities in color, but were also used to discover how different complexions reacted to color filming. In terms of costuming, it was reported that the costume design team for *Vogues of 1938*, which included Omar Kiam, Irene Lentz-Gibbons, and Helen Taylor, gathered 4,818 different fabrics from India, China, Scotland, France, and America, 132 of which were selected and pre-tested in Technicolor in early January 1937. In addition to discussing original designs made for *Vogues*, trade journals like *WWD* and *The Film Daily* took care to mention color tests, publishing reports that the first tests made for the film were of Jaeckel fur coats worth a purported $500,000. The film’s pressbook increased that number to $750,000. Surveying the wardrobe inventory for the film, however, the end cost for wardrobe on *Vogues of 1938* was a comparatively modest $48,615.40, with the final cost of manufactured items totaling $26,907.72. While this sum did not factor in items provided by designers like Jaeckel, for example, it draws attention to the discrepancy between reported figures intended to intrigue audiences versus actual wardrobe costs.

In order to keep the tests and the styles and designs they featured under wraps, trade magazines reported the studio “borrowed” methods from the Paris couturiers to ensure “absolute secrecy.” Production records regarding such methods were not available, but a six-page spread in the August 1937 issue of American *Vogue* offers some useful information here. In its coverage of *Vogues of 1938*, the fashion magazine featured a photo collage of images from the set, with one photograph depicting a sign yielding the following message in bold lettering: “Warning! The fashions and designs used in Walter Wanger’s *Vogues of 1938* are fully protected by copyright and any attempts...”

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69 Notably, Helen Taylor did not receive screen credit. In an initial draft of the billing clauses for *Vogues of 1938* it was written that “no one will be given credit in connection with the wardrobe or costume of said photoplay more prominently or in type larger than that used to display the name of Alexander Kiam.” In the opening credits of the film, however, he shared equal billing with Jaeckel, Irene, Max Factor, Sally Victor, John-Frederics, Trabert & Hoeffer, Inc., and I. Miller & Sons. From “Billing Clauses—Walter Wanger’s *Vogues of 1938*,” United Artists Corporation Records: Series 4G: Wanger Pre-Production Files, 1936–1956, *Vogues of 1938*, Box 3, Folder 2. From the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
70 “…About ‘Walter Wanger’s *Vogues of 1938*’” pressbook. From the Charles Schalfier papers, Margaret Herrick Library.
72 “…About ‘Walter Wanger’s *Vogues of 1938*’” pressbook. From the Charles Schalfier papers, Margaret Herrick Library.
73 “Wardrobe Inventories for *Vogues of 1938*,” Box 64, Folder 27. From the Walter Wanger Papers, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
to reproduce them either photographically, through sketches or finished fabrics will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law! No cameras allowed! Sketching positively prohibited!" 75 (Figure 5.2) While it’s unclear whether that sign was actually posted on the United Artists lot or that featuring it in a fashion magazine was the result of clever marketing, it does provide further insight into efforts made toward promoting the fashions from the film. That a respected publication like Vogue provided such extensive coverage to the film was noteworthy in itself, with the pressbook gloating: “So important are the creations in ‘Wanger’s Vogues’ that the editor of smart-chart Vogue came to Hollywood to photograph and describe the clothes” for the magazine feature. 76 Perhaps somewhat ironically, reproductions of select ensembles from the film were made available to women via an exclusive tie-up with R.H. Macy & Co.—a collaboration which will receive further attention later in this chapter. Published one month prior to the film’s release, however, the Vogue spread had the potential to lend an air of exclusivity to privy readers of the magazine.

The color film test was considered one of the most crucial yet costliest factors in the pre-production phase of a Technicolor film. Technicolor offered studios the services of its Color Control Department in conducting preliminary color tests for three-strip productions, with a Color Director available to organize and advise the shooting of such tests. 77 An undated document distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s Art Department discussed the merits of making color tests for three-strip Technicolor features, pointing out that while color tests were expensive, thousands of dollars were wasted in tests that were either useless because of the way they were made, or because they were simply unnecessary. 78 The document, penned because there was a noticeable “lack of a color design directive when the studio prepares a color picture,” offered some tips regarding color tests for costumes—the colors of which were identified as “the most important factor of color design.” 79 Most of the tips were practical in nature, including suggestions for testing different costumes on “a standard test set” in which some background and set dressing colors were constant, or ensuring tests were conducted only on completed wardrobe items. Another tip, however, called for a general color awareness among studio personnel, pointing out that “confidence in the taste of its personnel” would increase the overall efficiency of the pre-production stage. If such confidence existed, “the wardrobe [could] be tested in black and white for style and line,

76 “…About ‘Walter Wanger’s Vogues of 1938’” pressbook. From the Charles Schalfier papers, Margaret Herrick Library.
77 See Inter-Office Communication from F.L. Hendrickson to W.K. Craig, February 1, 1941. From the Margaret Herrick Library.
78 “The Need for a Color Department,” undated. From the MGM Art Department files, Margaret Herrick Library.
79 Ibid.
or in Kodachrome if only a suggestion of the color [was] wanted." Both alternatives, the document noted, would be "far below" the cost of running color tests in Technicolor. In some perspective, in 1937, a two-hour, 10-minute Technicolor test cost $509.20. Comparatively, a black and white test lasting two hours and 45 minutes cost $349.08. Such tests, while strongly encouraged by the Color Control Department, were optional, and some producers expressed hesitation over spending exorbitant costs on conducting them.

![Figure 5.2 Vogue of 1938 photo collage published in Vogue. Of note is the image in the bottom left quadrant of the warning sign meant to keep the designs used in the film an absolute secret—a method reportedly borrowed from French couturiers.](image)

In addition to being useful for individual productions and studies, color tests proved important for the Technicolor labs around the time three-strip Technicolor was introduced in 1932. After spending an afternoon attempting to woo Samuel Goldwyn with previews of the short films La Cucaracha (Lloyd Corrigan, 1934) and The Flying Mouse (David Hand, 1934)—both

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80 Ibid.
81 "Comparative Cost of Color and Black and White Tests," August 19, 1937. Selznick International Pictures, Inc., Inter-Office Communication, from DOS to George Cukor. From the George Cukor Collection, Margaret Herrick Library.
82 During the pre-production phase of Gone With the Wind (Victor Fleming, 1939), for example, producer David O. Selznick voiced full confidence in Production Designer William Cameron Menzies' judgment regarding color decisions. Selznick did, however, distribute the following memo throughout the studio: "[Menzies] has the privilege of making a test of any material or color any time he sees fit and any time that he is in doubt – although I am hopeful that with the wide experience the studio has already had in color we can cut down and largely eliminate the extravagance which has been indulged in regarding tests." Inter-Office Communication (Selznick), from DOS to Menzies, January 28, 1939. From the Margaret Herrick Library.
filmed in the three-strip process—Herbert Kalmus reported back to Technicolor’s Vice-President and Treasurer that while Goldwyn was positive about the demonstration, he and the producer engaged in negotiations regarding who would pay for color tests, which, according to Goldwyn, “would be for the purpose of studying just what effects [the three-strip] process gave with the sets, costumes, etc.” After some time, the men arrived at the agreement that Technicolor might, on occasion, supply a camera and crew to conduct color tests free of charge. Kalmus explained his rationale behind the offer: “My reason for doing that is to encourage [Goldwyn] to make a lot of tests which, considering the extraordinary pains to which he is going to get values, will be just the sort of tests we would like to be making on our own responsibility entirely if we felt we could afford to do so.” In the end, Kalmus and Goldwyn struck a deal, and *Kid Millions* (Roy Del Ruth, 1934) became the first Goldwyn vehicle to feature the three-strip process, in a lavish insert.

Despite their importance in pre-production, color tests were not typically a point of focus in promotional material for films. The pressbook for *Vogues of 1938*, however, made a point of mentioning the tests, revealing that the film’s Art Director, Alexander Toluboff, had made a 22,000-foot-color test of 584 different fabrics and materials to find those most appropriate to appear in front of Technicolor’s cameras, proudly reporting that the rayon fabrics and their colors stood up remarkably well. Given the general reluctance expressed by studios regarding color tests, it is possible that these numbers were exaggerated in order to increase anticipation for the fashions and colors that made the final cut. While existing production files make no mention of the extent to which color tests were made, that they were mentioned at all in promotions for the film is noteworthy. As mentioned in Chapter 3, promotions for Vyvyan Donner’s *Fashion Forecast*, for example, mentioned the value of the ensembles to be featured in the latest short as a way of luring audiences to the theater. Similarly, drawing attention to color tests could be effective from a promotional perspective for two additional reasons: 1) They reinforced the idea that the film guaranteed a spectacular array of costumes, and, 2) Having undergone such extensive testing, *Vogues of 1938* was guaranteed to be successful from a color point of view.

The narrative surrounding the promotion of *Vogues* benefitted Technicolor in a few different ways, all of which ultimately praised the three-strip process. The film received tremendous praise from critics not only within the film industry, but in the fashion industry as well, with one fashion editor referring to

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83 Letter from Herbert Kalmus to A.J. Callaghan and S.M. Corekin, July 19, 1934. From the Natalie Kalmus papers—Herbert Kalmus. Margaret Herrick Library.

84 Ibid.

85 If shot on 35mm, a 22,000-foot color test would translate to about four hours of footage, thus costing the studio $1,018.60.

the beauty and accuracy of the colors in the film as “a constant wonder.” In an article printed in *American Cinematographer*, Technicolor cinematographer William Stull regarded the picture as an “achievement” in color filmmaking, asserting that the film, “viewed either from the technical or the artistic viewpoint [was] 11 reels of the finest colors I have ever seen produced by any subtractive process.” Additionally, Stull remarked “the flesh tones were, for almost the first time, natural” and that “the reproductions of the tones and textures of fabrics, costumes, walls, and the like virtually were perfect.”

While depicting natural and true skin tones was one of the main concerns in Technicolor filming, the same fashion writer argued the “vital development” presented in *Vogues* laid in “the rich character of fabric colors and the vitality which is given to fabric weaves which makes the screening of fashions a bigger and a better story.” Another fashion writer credited Technicolor for bringing “fabric textures more to the attention of the spectator than ever before” in *Vogues*, adding “a new element to be considered in future cinema production.”

Fabric texture was a particular point of discussion in the press surrounding the film, emphasized not only by critics and technical writers, but also in promotional interviews with those directly involved with the film. The film’s producer, Walter Wanger, argued the manner in which color was represented in *Vogues* brought forth a new achievement in color photography in that it gave “almost the effect of a third dimension on the screen,” which he predicted would be the next step in motion pictures. Similarly, Helen Vinson, one of the film’s stars, took care to remark upon some of the benefits of filming in Technicolor in an interview, pointing out that the process better displayed the weave of fabrics featured in the film, including the nubs in tweeds standing out and the working of furs pelts more pronounced, “with interesting lights and shadows apparent.”

Such interviews and articles—published in the months leading up to the release of *Vogues*—notably drew attention to the manner in which three-strip Technicolor complemented the various materials on-screen, thereby enhancing the overall appearance of the ensemble.

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89 Ibid.
When interviewed about Vogues and any technical challenges encountered during filming, Wanger addressed some issues regarding costumes and wardrobe, noting that finding a consistent color harmony among the different designers working on the film “introduced a much more difficult situation than is usual with color since the fashion angle involved made it essential that all accessories and costumes of Miss Helen Vinson should harmonize with all accessories and costumes of Miss Joan Bennett.”94 Indeed, a number of designers contributed to Vogues of 1938, several of which were thanked and listed in the film’s opening titles, including Jaeckel, Inc. (for furs), Irene (for Miss Bennett’s Wardrobe), Omar Kiam (for the fashion shows and Miss Vinson’s Wardrobe), Sally Victor (for a great many of the hats), John-Frederics (for the hats and accessories in the Fall Fashion Forecast), Trabert & Hoeffer Inc. (for the jewelry), and I. Miller & Sons (for shoes). Wanger added, “The difficulties of getting designers of all these different fashions to work into similar or carefully ensembled color harmonies took a finesse and diplomacy which far surpassed that of the average picture where only one or two designers are working and these not in costumes in color which is reproduced.”95 The need for coordination among wardrobe department personnel was a noted issue among studios, particularly regarding color.96 To be sure, several individuals contributing garments and accessories to one production would require a set agreement and awareness of the film’s general color palette, which might include some consideration of the color of accessories with the costume, as well as any other important wardrobe present in the scene. Wanger’s comments draw attention to some of the technical and organizational hurdles facing a Technicolor production like Vogues of 1938, and they also provide a promotional spin, standing to increase curiosity about the film and how the crew managed to create color harmony with so many individuals contributing costumes and accessories.

As Chapter 4 demonstrated, cooperating with various sectors in the industrial film genre allowed Technicolor to demonstrate how the three-strip process benefitted industries by accurately depicting colors and shades. In industrial and advertising films like Aristocrats of Fashion and Technicolor for Industrial Films, the American rayon industry placed faith in Technicolor’s ability to capture and present everyday, familiar items to audiences—not to mention, the best way to sell these products. As Vogues of 1938 demonstrates, however, feature-length films were an equally appealing format through which Technicolor could cooperate with the fashion industry, not only in accurately depicting items better than other color processes, but in the discourse that the three-strip process lent a unique selling factor to fabrics. The “Fête de

95 Ibid.
96 See “The Need for a Color Department,” undated. From the MGM Art Department files, Margaret Herrick Library.
Rayon Fantastique” is one such example of this synergetic relationship, with the scene bringing attention to the three-strip process and the American rayon industry via the production itself and through outside promotions.

The Rayon Ball scene, clocking in at five minutes in length, is intriguing from a promotional perspective given that the film did not make it explicitly clear viewers were watching a scene comprised entirely of rayon creations. Indeed, few references were made to rayon fabrics or fashions throughout the film, so the promotional discourse beyond the film itself provides a richer area to explore the connection between Technicolor, Vogues of 1938, and American rayon producers. The scene itself is worth examining from a design perspective, though. After a tuxedo-clad gentleman announces, “Ladies and gentlemen, the ballroom of rayon is waiting,” the scene becomes a prolonged rush of color and movement as the models take their places backstage in varying shades of green, red, yellow, and blue. From a color and costume perspective, however, it becomes immediately clear the Rayon Ball scene stands apart from the rest of the film. The glittering, brightly-colored costumes worn by the models in this scene are far removed from the ensembles featured elsewhere in the film in terms of color and style. Indeed, the colors selected for the everyday costumes worn by Joan Bennett, Helen Vinson, and others were more subdued, or “softly handled,” as one fashion editor phrased it.97 Apart from the Rayon Ball, the color combinations dominating the film emphasized sensible shades of mulberry, green, gray, light blue, and pink. What Vogues’s team of designers presented in the Rayon Ball, on the other hand, were fantastical creations in an otherwise practical display.

As Scott Higgins and Richard Neupert have argued, the dominant ideology of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation in the mid-1930s and beyond advised a restrained use of colors with an emphasis on naturalness, with color considered subordinate to action and story development.98 J.A. Ball, developer of the three-strip camera, argued the improved process made such a restrained approach possible, noting, “When our color was of inferior quality, we used to hear the expression ‘color interferes with the drama.’ Since the introduction of the three-color component process, the expression has been rapidly fading out of use. Good color assists good drama.”99 While generally well-received, the critical response Becky Sharp met upon its initial release was also littered with comments recommending Technicolor exercise greater color restraint in future feature-length releases. One Variety critic remarked that “some of the less happy [color] combinations are considered due to the fact that Technicolor is using Becky Sharp as its showcase, incorporating many colors merely

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to show the range of the process to the trade.” In a less forgiving review written by Andre Sennwald of the New York Times, the film critic conceded that while Rouben Mamoulian, the film’s director, and Robert Edmond Jones, the film’s color designer, managed to accurately reproduce a wide array of colors in the film’s settings and costumes, their presentation was too outrageous to be representative of color arrangements seen in everyday life. “The next step,” remarked Sennwald, “must be to repress color deliberately to the needs of our modern literature and to recite films in grays and pastels and the subdued colorings of the life which we live in these 1930s…the next great step forward must be in the direction of realism.” Three years after the release of Becky Sharp, Robert Edmond Jones penned an article for the New York Times in which he acknowledged the “color sequences in the first feature pictures to be made in the new three-color process were blatant and violent,” which Jones attributed to the fact that these early productions “were hastily planned…were directed without any conception of a color technique, and…were so stupidly put together that the color sequences exploded against one another on the screen like bombs.”

In order to attain more realistic, less abrasive, results, one Variety critic recommended directors enforce “selectivity in use of tone and tint for agreeable impression of both the cultivated and the average audience eye. This is the realm of the artist, but an artist who must know more of color values than the staid painter or lithographer.” For Technicolor, such artists were Natalie Kalmus and those working with her in the Color Control Department. Kalmus, head of this department since its inception in 1935, promised that the department would ensure mistakes seen in previous versions of Technicolor and in the early three-strip releases would not recur in future films made in the new process. Kalmus argued: “We must constantly practice color restraint. In the early two-color pictures, producers sometimes thought that because a process could reproduce color, they should flaunt vivid color continually before the eyes of the audience. This often led to unnatural and disastrous results.” Costume designers also proved to be aware of the need for “softly handled” colors, as well. As Travis Banton related, “Early Technicolor pictures looked rather as if they were trying to get their money’s worth in color.” On designing Carole Lombard’s costumes in Nothing Sacred (William A. Wellman, 1937), however, Banton successfully attempted to create “everything subtle and soft,” with the softness of color being “a relief from the vibrations of vivid reds, greens, and blues.”

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The general accessibility of the fashions presented in *Vogues of 1938* was a major selling point for the film, leading to successful tie-ups with designers and businesses across the nation. Notably, Walter Wanger was awarded the gold medal of merit by the Fashion Academy on the grounds that *Vogues of 1938* presented the “first authentic fashions in gowns, furs, and millinery” on the screen. With nine pages highlighting the national cooperative tie-ins on the film and an additional 19 pages of exploitation and publicity material, the pressbook for *Vogues* took great care to emphasize the promotional opportunities the film offered to various industries. Fieldcrest Fabrics, one of the companies that collaborated with *Vogues*, placed a two-page advertisement in *Vogue* magazine featuring three reproductions of costumes from the film. The advertisement stated that department stores in six major cities across the United States would carry the line in the Fall of 1937. The rationale behind such a tie-in might be found in another Fieldcrest Fabric advertisement directed to store managers placed in *WWD* prior to the film’s nationwide release: “When your customers see the spectacular Technicolor film, *Walter Wanger’s Vogues of 1938*, they are going to do something more than covet the glamorous fashions shown—they are going right out to find them.”

The most expansive tie-up we can see, however, is the one involving the Modern Merchandising Bureau. The Bureau, headed by Bernard Waldman, specialized in producing reproductions of cinema fashions and distributing them to participating stores. Studios supplied the Bureau with sketches or photographs of styles worn in productions, sometimes a year in advance of a film’s release; Waldman and his staff evaluated these styles, determining which would best be suited for distribution to outposts around the country. Tellingly, for his work on *Vogues of 1938* Waldman had the title “exploitation consultant” bestowed upon him. In the Bureau’s promotion for *Vogues*, Waldman arranged for retailers in 400 cities across the country to tie-up with the picture as it was released in their city. The Modern Merchandising Bureau reportedly made available 52 dresses, 24 hats, and various accessories from *Vogues* in the first weeks of September 1937 to coincide with the film’s wide release on September 17, 1937. On a local level, New York theater managers used the Modern Merchandising Bureau tie-up to promote the film at their

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110 *Time*, (August 30, 1937). Manufacturers making reproductions of the merchandise shown in the film and cooperating with Waldman included: Sally Victor, Inc.; Gotham Silk Hosiery Co.; Schwartz & Ehrenreich; Harry Cohen, Inc.; Jack Herzog; C.H.D. Robbins, Inc.; Siegel Bros., Inc.; Fem-Robes, Inc.; Jay-Knit, Inc.; J.H. Kimball; Levi-Simson; Bacmo-Postman; Harry Rosenfeld; Ben Hur Products; Stole & Kline; Eastern Footwear; and Sorority Frocks.
establishments. Al Rosen, managing director of Loew’s State in New York City, promoted 5,000 vouchers for distribution to patrons good for local stores cooperating in the promotion.\(^{111}\)

Perhaps the most prominent department store to be involved with the Modern Merchandising Bureau’s tie-ins with fashions from *Vogues of 1938* was R.H. Macy & Co., the largest department store in the United States at the time. Two weeks prior to the film’s opening at New York’s Radio City Music Hall, Paul Hollister, Macy’s executive Vice President, spoke about the tie-up which was, according to Hollister, in large part due to the department store’s efforts. While denying authorship of the film itself, Hollister acknowledged the department store had aided and abetted the tie-up, or the “experiment” as he referred to it, conceding the store was “sort of godfather to the idea.”\(^{112}\) According to Hollister, a film like *Vogues of 1938*, with its strong focus “on the romance of clothes might be indirectly helpful to the entire fashion industry, and perhaps even directly productive to the trade.”\(^{113}\) Macy’s was the only store in New York to feature reproductions of the costumes worn in the picture, devoting two windows to promoting the items and the film itself. As the largest department store in the United States at the time, however, a promotion exclusive to Macy’s was quite the coup for any Hollywood production. Prior to the Great Depression, department stores were reluctant to promote rayon garments largely due to the instability of the items in the 1920s.\(^{114}\) That Macy’s reportedly initiated the tie-up with *Vogues of 1938* and American rayon producers demonstrates a shift within the fashion industry reflecting a trust in rayon products, but also provides further evidence of the rebranding efforts made by rayon manufacturers. Both Macy’s windows dedicated to *Vogues* were decorated with an imposing facsimile of a film unwound from a large spool standing in the corner. The center point of interest in the windows was a reproduction of a gold evening dress with a square cut décolleté worn in the film, priced at $68.75.\(^{115}\) With the average weekly earnings of New York women being $28.37 in 1936—and the average dress selling for less than $12.95—a dress such as the one on display in the Macy’s window was a highly expensive garment in 1937.\(^{116}\)

To make the transition from screen to street style a more seamless one, and to ensure the fashions depicted in *Vogues* were those American women might

\(^{111}\) “Quick Reports From the Field,” *Motion Picture Herald* 129, no. 2 (October 9, 1937): 68.
\(^{113}\) Ibid.
\(^{115}\) “R.H. Macy Presents Reproductions of Costumes Worn in New Technicolor Film,” *Women’s Wear Daily* 55, no. 23 (August 3, 1937): 22. For some perspective, a dress with a price tag $68.75 in 1937 would cost roughly $1,185.60 in 2017.
covet, it was reported that R.H. Macy & Co. sent one of its own employees as an envoy to assist designing the fashions in the film. Marjorie Castle, head of Macy’s style division, reportedly worked alongside designers like Omar Kiam, Irene, Sally Victor, and John-Frederics to forecast fall and winter styles in lines, colors, and fabrics while the film was in its planning stages. To that end, the editors of *Vogue* and Macy’s Paris fashion staff collaborated with the film’s designers to work on long-range forecasting. Additionally, Lillian Farley, professionally known as Lillian Fischer, Paris editor of *Harper’s Bazaar* signed on as the official “fashion advisor” of *Vogues of 1938* on January 13, 1937. In an effort to develop the widest possible coordination of interest in connection with the film, Fischer spent 12 weeks in Paris to attend the couture openings and bring back unusual fabrics, accessories, and other accoutrements gathered from couturiers to be used in the production. Once in Paris, Fischer’s contract stipulated she contact “a minimum of twenty of the outstanding couturiers located in Paris, and [secure] from a minimum of twelve of these couturiers a minimum of four original and exclusive designs from each.” Just prior to the film’s release, Paul Hollister, V.P. of Macy’s, credited the group of designers for their work on *Vogues*, announcing that the garments worn in the picture had overcome the “lag” between the production dates of the film on the West Coast and its New York release on the heels of the Paris openings. As a result, the fashions presented in *Vogues* represented “the true trend of fall and winter fashions for 1937–1938.” Neither Marjorie Castle nor Lillian Fischer received credit on the film, although it’s possible they fell under the broad category of “the many others whose creative efforts...found expression in this motion picture” listed in the opening credits of *Vogues*. Regardless, the stories surrounding the involvement of Castle and Fischer lent an authoritative boost to the film’s publicity and, similar to the six-page spread featured in *Vogue*, demonstrates more established names in the fashion industry had a keen interest in collaborating with the film industry.

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121 A telegram from Bernard Waldman maintained, “Sally Victor and I. Miller & Sons are the only firms we promised screen credit,” although the opening credits reveal that this list grew, significantly. Telegram from Bernard Waldman to Harry Kosiner, May 27, 1937, United Artists Corporation Records: Series 4G: Wanger Pre-Production Files, 1936–1956, *Vogues of 1938*, Box 3, Folder 2. From the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
The stars of *Vogues of 1938* also worked to promote the accessibility and beauty of the fashions featured in the film. In *Modern Screen*’s “Fall Fashions Forecast” for 1937, *Vogues* star Helen Vinson told her interviewer she had no need to figure out her Autumn wardrobe, revealing she “was so enchanted by” Omar Kiam’s designs for the film, that at the end of filming she simply bought them from the studio for herself. The article stressed Omar Kiam’s talents and insight, arguing that since his arrival in Hollywood, it had “been a toss-up whether Paris followed his innovations or whether he had second sight that told him which way the Paris fashions were heading.”

The October 1937 issue of *Screenland*, another popular fan magazine, featured *Vogues* star Joan Bennett on its cover, her likeness portrayed in a color portrait taken by prolific Hollywood photographer Marland Stone. That same issue published photographs and an interview with Helen Vinson, Bennett’s co-star, in her Beverly Hills home. Vinson was photographed in her dining room wearing the “deep coral hostess gown” and matching sandals she wears in the film which were designed by Kiam. The interviewer commented the dress “brought out the warm tints in her skin, made her hair seem more golden, her eyes a richer brown.” While the feature was published in the October issue of *Screenland*—a few weeks after the film’s release in mid-September—it still had the potential to publicize the film, which was still enjoying local screenings around the United States.

Color became an important factor in promotions for *Vogues of 1938*, with the film using color photography to promote the film. The Kodachrome process was used to take color promotional stills of the actors in the film, which were then distributed to the few American newspapers and magazines capable of printing color photographs (Figure 5.3). Producer Walter Wanger reportedly convinced such publications to use the Kodachrome stills, which *Variety* reported was “a radical departure from previous color photos of picture subjects for newspaper and fan mag reproduction.” Wanger was a proponent of Technicolor, with one reporter dubbing him “an outstanding crusader for color pictures.” That Wanger reportedly ordered between 300 and 400 of the Kodachrome stills in addition to the usual quota of several hundred black and whites demonstrates a particular dedication to finding creative ways to promote Technicolor titles through color. One of the Kodachrome stills, published in the *New York Daily Mirror* featured six models who appeared in *Vogues of 1938* donning ensembles featured in the film, with all of them wearing fur coats. In addition to rayon, furs were another material said to have an added appeal when captured by Technicolor’s cameras. Prior to *Vogues*’s release, *Women’s Wear Daily* printed an item explaining that American furriers

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predicted natural or dyed pelts would reach new levels of popularity thanks to the three-strip process’s ability to capture the texture and coloring of particular furs. Designers argued the growing popularity of Technicolor films would bring “new uses of fur which will increase their popularity with motion picture audiences.”

Figure 5.3  Kodachrome publicity still printed in the New York Daily Mirror Sunday Magazine section, August 1, 1937, to advertise Vogues of 1938. Image from author’s personal collection.

While admired for its promotion, *Vogues of 1938* received decidedly mixed critical praise. One area where the film consistently received rave reviews was its presentation of color, with Technicolor receiving due credit there. There were, however, detractors, evidencing the three-strip process had its fair share of skeptics in 1937. For example, in his review of the film, Burns Mantle, an established theatre and film critic, remarked:

There are shots in *Vogues of 1938* that, while as beautiful as animated paintings on the screen, are a shade too beautiful to be true. Taxicabs and milk wagons, dolled up in colors, are pleasing to the eye but destroying to the illusion. A drab city street takes on picture value with bright colors, but it ceases to be a drab city street. Painting the slums would, in another sense, be as foolish a business as gilding the lily.128

Mantle’s review echoes Andre Sennwald’s critique of *Becky Sharp* in 1935; that the colors presented on-screen were too outrageous or, in Mantle’s opinion, too beautiful to reflect New York City’s true environs. While the mostly pastel palette of *Vogues* is evidence of the push toward the restrained 1930s aesthetic explored by Scott Higgins, Mantle’s review demonstrates a desire for the three-strip process to reflect a more natural version of reality on-screen. Interestingly, promotional material for the film credited *Vogues of 1938* as “the first film to premiere night-and-day shots in color of metropolitan New York,”129 which one reviewer referred to as “fascinating.”130 Naturally, opinions vary among critics, but these opposing opinions reflect not only the practice of commenting upon color on the screen in the late 1930s, but also Technicolor’s continued struggle to cater to the conflicting desires for spectacle and reality, as well as differing opinions on what “reality” would look like on the screen. Nevertheless, *Vogues of 1938* was a success from an economic standpoint. Within its first two weeks of playing at the Music Hall in New York City, *Vogues* grossed $194,135 and went on to become one of the top-grossing films of 1937.131 Before moving on from *Vogues of 1938*, we will consider one more element in the film influenced by three-strip Technicolor from a design and promotional perspective: makeup.

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129 “…About ‘Walter Wanger’s *Vogues of 1938*’” pressbook. From the Charles Schaffier papers, Margaret Herrick Library.
Max Factor and Technicolor Values

In addition to costumes and sets, makeup was another part of the mise-en-scène that presented new challenges to the three-strip Technicolor cameras. When applied to appear in front of Technicolor cameras, the heavy makeup techniques used in black and white photography did not translate, largely due to three-strip Technicolor stock which required a higher level of illumination than black and white. It was the lighting which proved most problematic for makeup personnel, with the thick greasepaint used on black and white films becoming reflective and unnatural when filmed in the three-strip process.\(^{132}\) Such results were not acceptable for Technicolor films, with Herbert Kalmus maintaining that actors’ “faces must be smooth and of natural color; otherwise, the beauty is gone and the reason for preferring Technicolor to black and white is removed.”\(^{133}\) Films shot shortly after the introduction of the three-strip Technicolor process were also not quite what Technicolor envisioned in their films, with Natalie Kalmus lamenting over the “lobster-and-mayonnaise faces” presented in *Becky Sharp*.\(^{134}\) As with costume design, then, three-strip Technicolor demanded makeup manufacturers rethink products used, as well as their application. Prior to the release of *Vogues of 1938*, the film’s director Irving Cummings commented on the potential three-strip Technicolor offered to actors’ appearances, stating, “If and when color supplants black and white, it’s going to work just as much a revolution in picture production technique as did sound. Old faces are going to disappear from the screen. New ones are coming onto it.”\(^{135}\) In her examination of the 1935 “Hollywood Powder Puff War,” as it was named by the press, Kirsty Sinclair Dootson has traced the mid-1930s rivalry between Max Factor, the House of Westmore, and Elizabeth Arden to obtain dominance in Hollywood through endorsements, with a Technicolor

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\(^{133}\) Inter-Office Correspondence from Herbert Kalmus to L.T. Troland, F.R. Oates, S.M. Corekin, March 24, 1928. From the Technicolor Corporate Archive.

\(^{134}\) Ida Zeiffin, “Great Women of Motion Pictures: Natalie Kalmus—The Technicolor Girl,” *Screenland* 38, no. 4 (February 1939): 74.

\(^{135}\) “Cummings on Color,” *Motion Picture Herald* 127, no. 7 (May 15, 1937): 41.

contract being a coveted prize.137 While Max Factor’s Pan-Cake makeup developed specifically for Technicolor proved successful outside of film studios, it is worth noting that Technicolor maintained a strong relationship with House of Westmore from the late 1930s onwards, with Natalie Kalmus providing written endorsements for the company to use in advertisements on a yearly basis.138

The makeup used in Vogues of 1938 was called “entirely revolutionary” by the press, as well its inventor, Max Factor. The tie-up between Max Factor and Vogues sheds light not only on challenges the three-strip process introduced to the film industry, but also the symbiotic opportunities that developed between Technicolor and various American industries in response. The Max Factor promotion, like the one with American rayon manufacturers, capitalized on the interest and curiosity surrounding the three-strip process to promote their own new products. Such promotions can be interpreted through Kathy Peiss’s work, which has demonstrated that such business practices “highlight the decisive turn of the cosmetics industry towards national advertising and media-based marketing in the 1920s” and beyond.139

Max Factor maintained that it took six years of lab work to develop Pan-Cake, as it would be called, a new type of makeup especially for color film to demonstrate “for the first time a screen make-up which [allowed] the natural flesh tones to show through.”140 Indeed, Max Factor discussed the need for “Technicolor make-up,” as he referred to it, in interviews as early as 1930. One such interview acknowledged an increasing anxiety in Hollywood surrounding an actor’s coloring, similar to the one surrounding voice with the introduction of sound technology. In 1930, however, the question became: “Have I Technicolor values?”141 Prior to the release of Becky Sharp, Robert Edmond Jones discussed the impending change sensed by the industry, noting, “It will change the standard of screen beauty. It will bring naturalness into favor and toss artificiality into the discard.”142 In casting the lead for Becky

138 Margaret Ettinger, an employee of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, did lightly suggest Natalie Kalmus inquire about the ethics of such endorsements, noting: “Because in the past there has been such a competitive feeling about screen make-up and because Factor, as well as Westmore, has a Hollywood campaign running, I think the matter of your signing the Westmore release should be discussed with Gerry [Gerald Rackett, Technicolor’s Laboratory Chief] so that no one gets into any trouble.” Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation—Inter-Office Correspondence from Margaret Ettinger to N. Kalmus, April 17, 1944. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers—House of Westmore, Margaret Herrick Library.
Sharp, Jones divulged that a blonde actress was favored, but that she had to be a natural blonde. According to Jones, “bleached hair which may be beautiful on the shadow screen, in Technicolor looks like a straw wig.”

According to Factor, attaining “Technicolor values” was simply a matter of testing and engineering a perfect makeup solution, the result of which would ultimately become Pan-Cake. Fred Basten’s book on the history of Max Factor offers excellent insight into the relationship between Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation and the makeup company. Basten relays that Herbert Kalmus reached out to Max Factor after the company’s grand opening in Los Angeles to inquire about the company developing a product specifically for Technicolor films. Not dissimilar from Technicolor’s approach to short subjects and films like *Becky Sharp*, Max Factor saw *Vogues of 1938* as one of two “trial films” through which they could exploit their newest development, Pan-Cake. According to Frank Factor’s records from the time, “Technicolor had at last been perfected and was being called the greatest advance in filmmaking since sound. Although the color process had been experimented with for years, it had not, up to this very moment, been perfected to a point where it was artistically or commercially successful to the fullest degree.”

For the makeup company, the improvement of the Technicolor process, which coincided with the company’s confidence in their new product, was an opportunity upon which Max Factor could capitalize.

Pan-Cake was marketed as a significant improvement from makeup used in previous color films which resulted in comparatively “jaundiced” complexions. Max Factor stressed that replacing the greasepaint/face powder combination of the past with Pan-Cake would not only simplify the application of makeup for the screen, but provide a unique smoothness to the skin’s surface, giving the skin “a photographic glow.” According to Max Factor, the makeup techniques of the past could take hours to apply whereas Pan-Cake could reportedly be applied in 15 minutes, thereby making the product more marketable to the public sector.

While *Vogues of 1938* was the first film with which Pan-Cake officially collaborated and in which the product received a screen credit, interviews with Factor reveal that the improved formula had been used in previous Technicolor films, including *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, *The Garden of Allah* (Richard Boleslawski, 1936), and *Ramona* (Henry King, 1936). With its focus on fashion, *Vogues* was a decidedly more glamorous production than the previous films in which Pan-Cake was used. Given the publicity storm surrounding *Vogues*, it was an intelligent choice to “debut” Pan-Cake in advertisements.

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145 Ibid., 168.
related to the film. In order to boost publicity for the makeup (and the production itself), reporters were invited to the set of *Vogues of 1938* to observe the application process. One reporter commented on the transparency and naturalness of Pan-Cake, expressing surprise upon being informed that Joan Bennett and Warner Baxter were already made up “for the exacting lenses and filters of the color cameras.” It was the transparency of the product Max Factor stressed, arguing the make-up’s chief function was to accentuate the natural coloring of the actor’s complexion “and enhance the wearer’s own beauty.” In the month coinciding with the release of *Vogues of 1938*, *International Photographer* published an essay penned by A. Bernard Shore, the Max Factor studio liaison, in which Shore discussed the significant relationship between makeup artist and cameraman, arguing the makeup artist carried the “heavy” responsibility of delivering “a made-up personality which, as far as its recording on film is concerned, must appear to have on no make-up whatsoever.”

With Pan-Cake being produced in limited quantities, it became an advertising point for the film, as well as Max Factor, with reviewers and fashion industry personnel building up the new makeup product. Early runs of *Vogues of 1938* were said to “show a naturalness not before attained in color make-up, attributed partly to the perfected color photography, but also to the tremendous improvement in the make-up.” One particularly enticing article informed readers the new makeup was being produced in the Max Factor laboratories, with all current output being used in the Walter Wanger production. Furthermore, tales emerged from the studio in which the models featured in the film enjoyed the new product so much they pocketed the makeup to wear off-set—a sure sign that Max Factor had developed a marketable product. In his compelling research on the company, Fred Basten reveals that Max Factor initially resisted releasing Pan-Cake to the public, clinging to a belief that the product was best suited to the screen and stage. Ultimately, however, Pan-Cake was released alongside *The Goldwyn Follies* (George Marshall, 1938), the second of the “trial films,” with a full-color advertising campaign and star

148 Ibid.
endorsements. Max Factor did, however, manage to capitalize on the anticipation surrounding *Vogues of 1938*, with advertisements featuring Helen Vinson applying the company’s products—“Hollywood’s magic wand of beauty”—appearing in popular fan magazines shortly after the film’s release. The advertisements featured Vinson demonstrating “how to create beauty with Max Factor’s Color Harmony Make-Up.” Readers were invited to send in a coupon to receive a purse-size box of powder and rouge in her color harmony shade, a lipstick color sampler of four shades, a Color Harmony Make-Up Chart, and a 48-page illustrated instruction book titled “The New Art of Society Make-Up.” In order for readers to receive the sample best suited for their coloring, the coupon included a questionnaire in which readers were instructed to select coloring elements like complexion shade, skin type, eye color, lash color, age, and hair color.

Labeled as the “first big color fashion film,” *Vogues of 1938* invited a variety of cross-promotional elements involving many different products in tie-ins, running the gamut from fashion to luggage. As a producer, Walter Wanger’s interest and enthusiasm regarding three-strip Technicolor demonstrates that he not only embraced Technicolor, but also displayed a keen awareness of the new opportunities for collaboration the technology presented. As the next section demonstrates, however, not all studios and producers were as eager as Wanger to finance Technicolor feature-length films.

*Cover Girl* (Charles Vidor, 1944), the case study presented in the following section, was released seven years after *Vogues of 1938*. As the following section demonstrates, while the adoption of Technicolor may not have been consistent across Hollywood, fashion and color continued to play important roles in promoting three-strip Technicolor titles during the mid-to-late 1930s and continuing throughout the 1940s.

*Cover Girl*: A Mirthful, Magical Musical!

By 1929, Warner Bros. and MGM were actively producing two-color Technicolor shorts, as well as inserting Technicolor sequences into black and white features like *The Desert Song* (Roy Del Ruth, 1929) and *Broadway Melody* (Harry Beaumont, 1929). Such efforts cemented the association between Technicolor musicals in the minds of audiences and studio executives. By 1944, however, Columbia Pictures, had produced only one feature in three-strip Technicolor: *The Desperadoes* (Charles Vidor, 1943), a western. Released one year later, *Cover Girl* offered Columbia Pictures its first musical filmed in the three-strip Technicolor process, which ultimately went on to be-

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154 Max Factor advertisement. *Motion Picture Magazine*, 54, no. 3 (October 1937): 91.
come one of the top box office successes of 1944. The film, starring Rita Hayworth in one of her first leading roles, and Gene Kelly, who choreographed his own dance numbers (another first), carried the tagline of “The Most Memorable Musical of 1944!” Like *Vogues of 1938*, Technicolor played an important role in the discourse surrounding *Cover Girl*, which was also notable for its varied commercial appeal. Prior to its release, one critic commented, “All that Technicolor, Terpischore and the allied forces of musical entertainment can contribute to an enterprise in customer and exhibitor interest” was present in *Cover Girl*. In addition to the unique promotional scheme carried out by Columbia Pictures in anticipation of the film, *Cover Girl* proved significant to the studio in terms of technical elements, as well. As one of Hollywood’s smaller studios during its early history, Columbia was relatively slow to move into sound and color—especially when compared to MGM, a studio known for exhibiting a particular receptiveness when it came to adopting new technology. The production and release of *Cover Girl* at once signifies Hollywood’s reluctance and eventual acceptance of Technicolor as a viable color film process.

As Richard Dyer has argued, one of the central paradoxes allowing the Hollywood star system to operate was that stars were presented as ordinary people who were simultaneously extraordinary, through wealth, talent, luck, or exceptional (and, usually, unassuming) beauty. This contradiction allowed fans to cherish stars instead of spiting them, especially during the Great Depression, or wartime. Following the rise of Rusty (played by Hayworth), a chorus girl turned highly paid cover girl, *Cover Girl* was a film that pursued “the myth of success,” as Dyer calls it. Rusty was presented not as a member of the elite, but as an ordinary woman who attained her lucky break through the unlikely combination of hard work and destiny.

As mentioned in the discussion on *Vogues of 1938*, the introduction of color film presented significant technical considerations for production designers, costume designers, and make-up artists alike. When interviewed about Technicolor’s impact on her craft, *Cover Girl*’s screenwriter, Virginia Van Upp provided the following response:

> You make use of a different technique in writing a script for a Technicolor picture than for one in black and white. You think differently, you plan differently. Color gives you more scope, develops mood and personalities, speeds up your action...I even found that the fact that the picture was to be in color determined the name of the star, Rita Hayworth. In black and white I might have called her Mary Ellen or anything else. But knowing that Miss Hayworth’s red hair would display its natural color, she became ‘Rusty.’

155 “Cover Girl,” *Motion Picture Herald* 154, no. 11 (March 11, 1944): 1793.
Van Upp’s interview brings to light a few elements worth considering. First, her comments shed light on a less obvious area of production that comes to mind when we think about color. Second, that Van Upp specifically mentions her desire to bring extra attention to Hayworth’s trademark red hair by naming the character “Rusty” is significant. While Hayworth rather famously dyed her naturally dark hair red to further detract from her Latina heritage, it ultimately became one of her calling cards. Tellingly, Van Upp refers to Hayworth’s “natural color” as red, revealing the deep association between Hayworth and her artificial hair color.

![Figure 5.1 Color advertisement for Cover Girl, part of a five-page color spread promoting the film. In Motion Picture Herald 154, no. 12 (March 18, 1944): 64-65.](image)

Emphasizing the fashions in Cover Girl was a major focus within the film, as well as a key promotional device. Modern Screen, a popular fan magazine during the 1930s, 1940s, and beyond, devoted a four-page spread to the fashions, modeled by Rita Hayworth and the film’s own “Cover Girls,” real-life cover girls from the Harry Conover Modeling Agency, one of the top model agencies of the time. While not extensive in length, perhaps, this article packed a great deal of promotional punch, publicizing the film, its stars, and managed to tie-in with not one, but three different clothing companies: Shire-Tex Slacks for Women, the W.T. Grant Company, and Hollander Persian Lamb Coats, a company which had a long-standing endorsement relationship with Rita Hayworth.¹⁵⁸ As a star, a large part of Rita Hayworth’s public image depended on the clothes she wore both on and off-screen. In 1940, Hayworth was named “Best Dressed Girl in Hollywood” by Look magazine, and later

modeled “The World’s Most Costly Gown” in Life magazine. These features were, of course, the product of clever publicity designed to get her name and image before the public, but fashion nonetheless remained a significant and lasting part of the construction of Hayworth’s star persona.\textsuperscript{159} Cover Girl and the publicity associated with the film were effective in cementing the public’s view of Hayworth as a stylish star—an especially useful trait in tie-ins between the fashion and film industries.

The promotional blitz for Cover Girl began nearly one year prior to the ultimate release of the film when Columbia approached some of America’s most established and most popular women’s magazines with an offer to participate in a cross-industry collaboration.\textsuperscript{160} The studio successfully engaged fifteen publications to cooperate in the promotion, with each magazine selecting one model to ultimately represent the magazine in the film, as well as in a year-long publicity tour across the nation. The selected women ultimately comprised the group known as “The Cover Girl Caravan.” The manner in which the magazines selected their model varied, with some organizing a readers’ vote and others allowing editorial or advertising departments to choose the representative. By the beginning of 1943, all fifteen Cover Girls were chosen and so began the year-long promotion between the fashion and film industries. Throughout the winter of 1943, various magazines began featuring their selected Cover Girls on the covers of their publications, making sure to include information regarding the model’s appearance in the forthcoming 1944 film.

In February, for example, Susann Shaw appeared on the cover of American Vogue’s “Beauty Issue” and was also chosen to represent Vogue in Cover Girl. The issue’s table of contents formally introduced readers to Shaw, “Vogue’s cover girl in Columbia’s picture, ‘Cover Girl,’ with Rita Hayworth.”\textsuperscript{161} The color photograph selected for the February 1943 cover of Vogue was taken by Horst P. Horst and captured Shaw’s likeness from seven different angles, presenting a collage effect. Beyond the cover, the magazine emphasized Shaw’s coloring, noting, “her delicate colouring, her green eyes and reddish blond hair hold up under the strongest lights. In the studio lingo, ‘she doesn’t wash out,’”

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\item \textsuperscript{159} Such discourses follow Richard Dyer’s proposal that “A star is an image not a real person that is constructed...out of a range of materials.” The stories published about Hayworth and her relationship to fashion—part of the “range of materials” identified by Dyer—were essential to the construction of her star persona. In Richard Dyer, Stars (London: BFI Publishing, 1979).
\item \textsuperscript{160} The following fifteen women ultimately represented these publications in the film: Jean Colleran (American Magazine), Francine Counihan (American Home), Helen Mueller (Collier's Magazine), Cecilia Meagher (Coronet), Betty Jane Hess (Cosmopolitan Magazine), Dusty Anderson (Farm Journal Magazine), Eileen McClory (The Glamour Magazine), Cornelia B. Von Hessert (Harper's Bazaar Magazine), Karen X. Gaylord (The Liberty Magazine), Cheryl Archibald (Look), Peggy Lloyd (Mademoiselle Magazine), Betty Jane Graham (McCall), Martha Outlaw (Red Book), Susann Shaw (The Vogue Magazine), Rose May Robson (The Woman's Home Companion).
\item \textsuperscript{161} “On the Cover,” Vogue 101, no. 10 (May 15, 1943): 29.
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and that’s vital in taking the colour pictures that make Vogue covers.”\(^{162}\) Notably, these qualities that made Shaw cover girl material to *Vogue*, also made her *Cover Girl* material to Columbia. Shaw’s ability to withstand the strong lighting required for a *Vogue* color cover shoot and not appear washed out in the final product lent to her success under Technicolor’s harsh lights. More generally speaking, maintaining a star’s vibrant and true coloring on-screen versus a “washed out” appearance was crucial to making a successful Technicolor film.

With familiar models like Susann Shaw featured in *Cover Girl*, Virginia Van Upp, the film’s screenwriter, focused on how filming in Technicolor benefitted the 15 models selected to appear in the film, as well as audience members in recognizing them. In an interview, Van Upp insisted, “Such pictures as *Cover Girl* might have been made in black and white when only that medium was available. But not when color is available. For in this picture we have 15 models for magazine covers whose faces are familiar, in color, to millions. In black and white, they would not be recognized.”\(^{163}\) Recognizing the models presented in the film and in its promotion was key to the success of the Cover Girl Caravan concept. With the models visible on the covers of popular magazines to promote the film and with their numerous publicity appearances, it was vital for the women to be recognizable. As *Vogue* pointed out, however, certain faces were more suitable for the screen than others, particularly when filmed in Technicolor.

How one’s coloring “holds up” under the lights on a photoshoot is demonstrated in *Cover Girl* in a short montage featuring Hayworth on-set for her character’s shoot to appear on the cover of the 50th anniversary issue of the fictitious *Vanity* magazine. Hayworth’s transformation into *Vanity’s* Cover Girl relied upon a particularly glamorous display in which the magazine’s makeup artist picks the perfect shade of red from a palette of similar hues to apply to Hayworth’s lips and powders her face, preparing Hayworth to appear in front of the color camera. Stephen Gundle has argued that glamour as presented by Hollywood was particularly accessible, with its “promise that anyone could benefit from the application of the techniques of the glamour factory.”\(^{164}\) This scene provides viewers with a behind-the-scenes look into that glamour factory, as Hayworth is preened for her color cover shoot, which includes a look at the intricate makeup application, harsh lights, color gels, cameras, and light meters involved. Viewers are also privy to the technical considerations these shoots demanded, as the photographer instructs a color operator to adjust the color gels in order to change the background from red to green after a quick light test. Notably, industry insiders like Harry Conover and Anita Colby received credits on the film as “Technical Advisors”—a title

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given to individuals who are experts in a particular field of knowledge—and it is possible Colby and Conover were on-hand to ensure industry-specific scenes like Hayworth’s *Vanity* shoot were authentic.

Colby took on another role in the film, as well, acting as an ambassador for *Cover Girl* on a tour of 26 key cities across the United States, regularly appearing on radio programs or at Fourth War Loan drives to sell impressive amounts of war bonds, helping Philadelphia’s WCAU sell $555,000 in bonds during a 12-hour sale. Local newspapers regularly covered Colby’s appearances, leading to a barrage of coverage for *Cover Girl*. Colby also toured with the Cover Girl Caravan around the country, appearing at various events prior to the film’s release. The narrative surrounding the Cover Girl Caravan was in itself a tantalizing Hollywood tale widely dispersed by the nation’s media. The group was said to live together in a Beverly Hills mansion once owned by Marion Davies, regularly appearing at Hollywood events en masse to promote *Cover Girl*. Furthermore, the women posed for a variety of product promotions in which the film’s title was mentioned, along with the model’s name. This method of promotion was not uncommon in the weeks or even months leading up to a completed film’s national release, but *Cover Girl* remains unique in that Columbia whipped up a publicity storm so early for a picture which, at the time, existed in title only. A report from the Audience Research Institute, the motion picture division of the Gallup Institute of Public Opinion, stated that by November 1943—five months before the film’s national release date—a check of 75 key areas showed that more than 22,000,000 people were at least aware of the forthcoming film. Of these, 66%, or over 15,000,000 potential customers, voiced their intention of seeing the completed film.166

Despite the amount of media hype surrounding the Cover Girl Caravan, their role in the film was limited to one scene, albeit a memorable one, in which all fifteen women emerge in a precursor to an elaborate musical number starring Rita Hayworth in which the Cover Girls earn their titles. As the curtains part at the Wheaton Theatre, a large cardboard camera—aperture slowly opening—descends behind the Cover Girls as they rush into formation. One by one, each Cover Girl steps behind the camera and poses while lights flash, giving the impression of the click of a camera. After a few seconds, the woman’s face appears on a mock cover of the magazine she has represented in real-life, a relationship solidified to viewers in the film’s opening credits. The scene, which lasts just over three minutes, is entirely reminiscent of a cover shoot, ultimately providing an effective display of the roles of the women featured in and outside the film. The importance of being chosen as a Cover Girl is emphasized throughout the film, as Hayworth and her fellow dancers vie to be the next Cover Girl for the fictitious *Vanity Magazine*. For

165 “Tour of Anita Colby Results in Barrage of ‘Cover Girl’ Publicity,” *Showmen’s Trade Review* 154, no. 11 (March 11, 1944): 27; *Broadcasting* 26, no. 9 (February 28, 1944): 63.
Rusty, winning the role of Cover Girl acts as a steppingstone for her desired career as a successful Broadway star. Similarly, becoming a member of the Cover Girl Caravan and earning a role in the film paved the way for several of the models to continue a career in Hollywood, with some possessing studio contracts by the time their Cover Girl publicity commitments came to an end.167

In addition to the fifteen women chosen to represent America’s top magazines in Cover Girl, women across the country competed in the National Cover Girl Contest conducted by Columbia Pictures in the months leading up to the film’s release in early April. Local businesses, including department stores and movie theatres, teamed up to find the city’s “Cinderella Cover Girl of ’44,” who would then have the opportunity to compete in the nation-wide contest. The local and national contests held in conjunction with Cover Girl provide solid examples of the cross-over potential the fashion and film industries offered each other. The extent to which local theaters promoted the contest varied across the country, and trade magazines covered some of the more innovative and extensive promotional efforts organized by theater managers.

In Boston, division manager Charles E. Kurtzman, theater managers Harry Greenman and Joe Kraska, Loew’s publicity and advertising director Joe Longo, and Abe Bernstein, Columbia exploiter organized a thorough publicity campaign for Cover Girl prior to the film’s opening. Local papers and radio announcements on four major Boston stations began advertising the film three days before the playdate. Elsewhere on the East Coast, George Landers, manager of the E.M. Loew’s theater in Hartford, Connecticut, worked with Columbia Pictures representative George Ettinger and the Hartford Times to publicize the local “Cinderella Cover Girl” contest in March 1944, one month prior to the film’s national opening. The winner of the contest received a complete Spring ensemble from Sage-Allen, a mid-market Hartford department store, and a $50 war bond from E.M. Loew’s theater, reflecting the political and economic status of the United States. This promotion, commented the Motion Picture Herald, “[gave] Landers good breaks, plus theatre mention and playdates, in featured stories concerning the careers and naming of famous Conover ‘Cover Girl.’”168 Newspapers, fan magazines, and radio coverage estimated the number of entrants to be 20,000.

The local winner received the opportunity to compete in the national “Cover Girl” contest, judged by artists Arthur William Brown, Dean Cornwall, Russell Patterson, and Bradshaw Crandall; Edmund Witalis, art director for Cosmopolitan; Harry Conover, owner of the Conover Modeling Agency; and Carter Blake, Columbia Picture’s Eastern casting director. Out of fifty finalists, 21-year-old Dorothy Hart, a brunette from Cleveland, Ohio, was chosen as the winner of the national contest. Hart was flown to New York as a guest of Columbia Pictures for a ten-day visit during which she reaped the

167 Ibid.
168 “Exploiting the New Films, Motion Picture Herald 155, no. 1 (April 1, 1944): 54.
rewards of her title, which included: a screen test for *Tonight and Every Night* (Victor Saville, 1945), another Technicolor vehicle for the studio starring Rita Hayworth; an oil portrait painted by Bradshaw Crandall, one of the nation’s leading artists, to be used on a cover of *Cosmopolitan* magazine; and a modeling contract with the Harry Conover Modeling Agency—the same agency representing the fifteen women who comprised the Cover Girl Caravan. Hart also appeared in a number of social events during her stay in New York, accompanied by several of those models appearing in *Cover Girl* who often posed as Hart’s knowledgeable instructors regarding all things beauty and fashion. While Hart was offered a contract with Columbia, she initially declined, delaying her Hollywood debut for three years to pursue her studies and a modeling career with the Harry Conover Modeling Agency. Hart’s story—and the extensive coverage that story received—was a true example of life imitating art, providing a near-perfect mimic of the very film through which she earned her own Cover Girl status.

The “Cinderella Cover Girl of 1944” contest was a tremendous undertaking involving the coordination of hundreds of local businesses nationwide, but Columbia reached even wider in its promotional efforts. The studio tied up with 22 national advertisers in a promotional campaign for *Cover Girl*, with fan magazines commenting that the exploitation angle laid out by Columbia was one of the most successful ever accomplished on a motion picture, to that date. The tie-ins with these companies provided Columbia with the opportunity to reach out to a variety of national publications and local businesses, resulting in an extensive cross-industrial, multimedia promotion.

In publishing, *Life* magazine devoted two stories to *Cover Girl* prior to the film’s release. In January 1943, the magazine featured Rita Hayworth on the cover in black and white, sipping a milkshake. Inside that issue, Hayworth appeared in an eight-page spread promoting *Cover Girl*—15 months before its release date. The magazine noted that while Hayworth was in New York, “it occurred to Columbia Pictures that [Hayworth] ought to go through a model’s routine to see how a photographer’s model really worked.” The pages present Hayworth living a day in the life of a New York City model, with *Life*’s cameras capturing her on a full day’s worth of fittings, castings, and photo shoots. The photo story is replete with significant fashion industry names of the time, like Harry Conover and several of the models his agency

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represented, Carmel Snow, editor of Harper’s Bazaar, and photographer George Hoyningen-Huene. The Life spread effectively established Cover Girl as a film with strong ties to the fashion industry by including well-known persons in the article’s visual narrative and through its depiction of Hayworth as an actress methodically familiarizing herself with her character’s role.

The distribution and organization of screenings for Cover Girl was as organized as its promotional extravaganza. Columbia organized a series of trade screenings for the film in key cities like Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Chicago in the month prior to its nationwide release. In larger east coast cities like New York and Boston, beauty and fashion became highlights in promotional schemes, with the organization of the “Cover Girl Fashion Show.” In New York, Saks Fifth Avenue sponsored the show and the Waldorf Astoria hotel acted as the venue. Fashion correspondents and representatives of the metropolitan and trade press were among the guests invited to attend the luncheon show. In addition to the fashion show cum luncheon, Saks devoted six of its Fifth Avenue windows, as well as newspaper advertisements, to “Cover Girl” fashions, giving full credit to the upcoming picture. The fashion show focused on ready-to-wear items from its Sophie Original label which consisted of items designed by Sophie Gimbel, Saks’ in-house ready-to-wear designer. In addition to Gimbel’s designs, the show featured a tableau of the more extravagant embroidered or applique designs one might see in leading magazines. Consequently, the show ran the gamut, featuring items ranging from a striped jersey cap sleeve dress under $15 to luxurious dinner originals. Anita Colby served as the commentator and six members of the Cover Girl Caravan modeled outfits in the show, which reportedly had to turn away crowds from the at-capacity venue. Notably, the Saks Fifth Avenue “Cover Girl Fashion Show” marked the first time the high-end department store tied in its regular weekly display with a motion picture title.

173 Hoyningen-Huene, preeminent photographer for Paris Vogue between 1930 through 1945, took an interesting turn as Color Supervisor on a number of Technicolor titles in the 1950s. George Cukor initially invited him to work as Color Supervisor on A Star is Born (George Cukor, 1954) to provide a subdued, more realistic color scheme to the film and Hoyningen-Huene continued to work in that capacity for years. While I have yet to find a proper contract between Hoyningen-Huene and Technicolor, his work on-set appears to have been critical to the film and as a relative company “outsider,” his association proves interesting given the Color Control Department was strict in terms of its guidelines and suggestions during the pre-production phase. Regardless, a 1967 oral history conducted with the then-active Color Coordinator evidences Hoyningen-Huene possessed the “color consciousness” desired by Technicolor’s Color Supervisors. See A Star is Born Correspondence, 1954. From the George Cukor Papers, Margaret Herrick Library; Elizabeth I. Dixon, George Hoyningen-Huene Oral History Transcript: Photographer, transcript of an oral history conducted 1967 by Elizabeth I. Dixon, The UCLA Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1982.

174 “‘Cover Theme’ Is Theme of Saks’ Fashion Show at Waldorf-Astoria,” Showmen’s Trade Review 155, no. 12 (March 18, 1944): 51; Showmen’s Trade Review 40, no. 10 (March 25, 1944): 27; “It’s Suits Again – For Saks-5th Ave. ‘Cover Girl’ Show,” Women’s Wear Daily 68,
The R.H. White Company, one of the largest department stores in Boston's shopping area of Washington Street, organized three significant promotions for the film: 1) seven windows featuring stills and large cut-out letters spelling out the film's title (Figure 5.5); 2) three large newspaper cooperative ads calling attention to the store's windows, as well as the "Cover Girl Fashion Show"; and 3) the fashion show itself, staged in the store twice per day in the weeks leading up to the film's Boston release. The attire worn by the models was developed under the name "Cover Girl" to more directly reference the film. Items in the series included the Cover Girl Suitlet, the Cover Girl Casual Suit, and the Cover Girl Scarf Dress, etc.\(^\text{15}\) Window displays played a significant role in promoting Cover Girl at the local level, with many of the nation's largest department stores devoting ample space to the fashion tie-in.

\[^{15}\] "Cover Girl Campaign One of Most Extensive," Motion Picture Herald 155, no. 3 (April 15, 1944): 19; "Cover Girl Angles Extensively Exploited in Boston Campaign," Showmen's Trade Review 40, no. 12 (April 8, 1944): 16.
Davidson-Paxton in Atlanta, for example, dedicated fifteen windows to “Cover Girl” fashions while Famous and Barr Co. in Downtown St. Louis designed a display of 13 of its principal windows to include items from the film. The entire fourth floor of the St. Louis store was devoted to “Cover Girl Fashions,” featuring 52 individual display pieces. In order to promote both the film and store’s efforts, Famous and Barr Co. also ran an 1800-line newspaper ad the day before the film opened in St. Louis.176

Through window displays and elaborate fashion tie-ins, the American department store played a key role in the promotions for *Cover Girl* and *Vogues of 1938* across the nation. With their obvious ties to the fashion world, collaborations with independent retailers, manufacturers, and larger department stores was a natural path for films like *Cover Girl* and *Vogues*. The final section of this chapter shifts to an exploration of the specific role color played in promoting titles filmed in three-strip Technicolor through tie-ins with the fashion industry. The color promotions discussed in the next section evidence the growing importance of Technicolor in American culture in the twentieth century, as well as a shift in the relationship between the fashion and film industries to increasingly focus on color in cross-industry promotions.

**Promoting Color: Technicolor Tie-Ins and the Department Store**

As discussed in Chapter 1, fan magazines encouraged women to use the screen as a guide to dress for her “type” beginning in the 1920s, which included identifying appropriate colors in makeup and clothing. With a greater number of color films being released in the late 1920s onwards, an increase in articles urging women to turn to the screen to choose their best colors appeared in magazines and newspapers across the country. Various publications also noted the screen’s ability to predict which colors might be in fashion in the upcoming season, as well as the potential impact the screen might have on how audiences thought about color. Gwen Wakeling, costume designer for *Cover Girl*, contended, “Technicolor is making Mr. and particularly Mrs. America color conscious as nothing else ever has. Hundreds of letters come to them weekly asking exact shades of color of dresses, rugs, furniture, walls, etc. . . a decidedly different trend of questioning than was prevalent three years ago.”177

After the 1935 release of *Becky Sharp*—and, consequently, “Becky Sharp blue”—a trend emerged within American department stores in which promo-

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associating a specific color or colors with three-strip Technicolor features became increasingly popular. By the 1930s, the formalized relationship between the fashion and film industries known as the “tie-in” was an established promotional tactic. Through this arrangement, films and stars promoted a variety of goods to American consumers, including soap, makeup, toiletries, home appliances, food, and, of course, fashions and accessories. This practice has been the focus of much research in the past, although color’s role in these promotions has been decidedly absent from the conversation. Victoria Jackson and Bregt Lameris have, however, demonstrated that we can trace color promotions involving Technicolor films back to the mid-1920s, with the popularization of “Phantom Red” and the repopularization of “Alice Blue” in clothing items and in make-up. Jackson and Lameris unpack the changing meanings attached to particular shades of blue and red in tie-ins with *Irene* (1926) and *Phantom of the Opera* (1925), two features filmed in two-color Technicolor. The research conducted by Jackson and Lameris establishes color as a rich landscape for promoting various products, including fashions and films, and their research encourages an exploration of such color promotions in a post-three-strip setting. According to Herbert Kalmus, the three-strip process, coupled with a broadening range of service marked “the second great rush into color” and it is within this period that we find not only a steady rise in the number of Technicolor films made, but also in the number of color promotions tied to color films.

As Jackson and Lameris contend, color films could act as predictors of color trends through tie-ins with newly-released color films—a promotional tactic which started in the mid-1920s and continued regularly throughout the following decades. Department store managers and local exhibitors often teamed up to create elaborate window displays featuring replicas of, or garments inspired by, costumes from current pictures, with film posters, production stills, and cut-outs of actresses serving as backdrops. Marketing color, however, was not new to department stores in the United States. As Regina Lee Blaszczyk has explored, certain industries, especially those in the textiles trade, found the need to be able to better predict and set upcoming color and


style trends as early as the end of the Industrial Revolution. As listings for Technicolor films became more consistent throughout the 1930s and 1940s, however, we begin to see a change in the manner in which the fashion and film industries worked together, with color being the newest promotional element to incorporate into tie-ins. As early as 1936, newspapers were reporting on the uptick in this promotional trend, or, as one St. Louis writer phrased it: “one of the regulation stunts in press-agenting a big movie these days.” The same writer offered an explanation of the mechanics behind such promotions: “The movie tribes work it smartly. After tying up with a fabric house, they fix up a color card and poll the country’s style writers, asking them to mark their first and second choices.” The result of such operations introduced consumers to “Becky Sharp blue,” for example, in 1935 and such promotions became increasingly regular throughout the 1940s. Other color promotions tied to newly-released Technicolor films included “Mountie Red” (Northwest Mounted Police, Cecil B. DeMille, 1940), “Mohican Red,” (Last of the Mohicans, George B. Seitz, 1936), and “Sutter’s Gold” (Sutter’s Gold, James Cruze, 1936), to name a few.

Prior to the release of Columbia’s romantic drama The Loves of Carmen (Charles Vidor, 1948), the studio enlisted “a number of designers, textile and fabric houses and apparel manufacturers” to select a color to be featured in fall fashion lines to promote the film. “Carmen Rose,” a vivid light red, chosen as “the most topical color of the fall season” was said to provide an “added impetus” to the film’s promotional campaign. Over 35 American fashion firms and designers reportedly cooperated with the “Carmen Rose” campaign in department stores across America. The “Carmen Rose” campaign was deemed unique in that the merchandising program for the film reached past metropolitan cities to smaller towns throughout the United States.

182 “A Woman’s New York,” The St. Louis-Post Dispatch, July 12, 1936: 70.
183 Ibid.
184 “Red as Fall Color Aids Campaign on ‘Carmen,’” Showmen’s Trade Review 49, no. 3 (July 17, 1948): 9; “‘Carmen’ Campaign to Reach the Small Towns,” Showmen’s Trade Review 49, no. 7 (August 14, 1948): 21.
185 “Red as Fall Color Aids Campaign on ‘Carmen,’” Showmen’s Trade Review 49, no. 3 (July 17, 1948): 9.
186 Included among the cooperating manufacturers were: Celanese and Julliard (fabrics); Joyce (shoes and bags); Arten (hosiery); Frank Starr (gowns); Madame Tewi (lingerie); Coro (jewelry); Luxor (hats); George Jablow (coats); Glentex (scarves). In addition to clothing, accessories, and jewelry, novelist Sophie Kerr prepared a 30-installment serialization of The Loves of Carmen for distribution in 600 national papers; Arthur Murray introduced the “Carmen Flamenco” in his dancing schools in 150 cities; modeling agent John Powers selected “the most typical Spanish beauty from America’s most beautiful models;” and psychiatrist Dr. Frederick Wetham prepared a psychoanalytical study of the character of Carmen to be published in a national magazine. See: “‘Carmen’ Campaign to Reach the Small Towns,” Showmen’s Trade Review 49, no. 7 (August 14, 1948): 21; “‘Loves of Carmen’ Film Tied-In With 35 Fashion Firms,” Women’s Wear Daily 77, no. 34 (August 18, 1948): 34.
sending a Columbia employee to these smaller cities to learn about the local market and discuss methods for maximizing the effectiveness of the promotion with exhibitors. Trade journals praised Columbia for this approach, with one writer recommending “that every executive spend a substantial part of his time in the field where point-of-sales is developed, to know and cultivate his company’s sales forces, to meet with the little and big exhibitors and to find out what they think about the way the company is advertising and pre-selling the product.” As a result of the expansive campaign surrounding *The Loves of Carmen*, Charles E. “Chick” Lewis, *Showmen’s Trade Review*’s Editor, predicted “in the near future all America is going to be Carmen-conscious”—a wry nod to Natalie Kalmus’s call for the development of a “color consciousness.”

As aforementioned examples demonstrate, color promotions, unlike strict fashion tie-ins which typically only occurred with fashion-heavy films, could be tied to films that did not necessarily have a strong focus in everyday, more marketable fashions, demonstrating the versatility color lent to such cross-industrial collaborations. John-Frederics, who designed millinery for *Vogues of 1938* and *Gone With the Wind*, added a new member to the off-white family in his Fall 1946 collection inspired by his work in Hollywood. “Technicolor White,” an ivory shade, was developed by John-Frederics to harmoniously blend with skin tones in shooting Technicolor films. The color promotion craze spread to animated releases as well, with the New York-based Brian Fabrics Corporation releasing a series of rayon scarves printed with characters from Technicolor shorts and full-length feature cartoons like *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Looney Tunes*, and *Merry Melodies*. The scarves were available in a variety of colors, including navy, red, green, aqua, rose, and tan.

One of the more unique of these color promotions can be found with the release of *Joan of Arc* (Victor Fleming, 1948), the hagiographic epic starring Ingrid Bergman. Rutgers Neilsen, publicity manager at RKO Pictures, and Lola Woursell, RKO’s fashion coordinator, were behind the promotion which successfully tied-up with Burlington Mills, one of America’s leading textile manufacturers at the time. The promotion involved the development of “a medieval palette” of 12 shades inspired by the Technicolor film, including “castle gray,” “archer brown,” “Orleans tan,” “brocade pink,” “court beige,” “Joan

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blue,” and “Lorraine green.” The colors featured in this line were publicized as being accurate reproductions of those that predominated in the film, with Burlington stylists creating the group of fabric colors after seeing advance rushes. Burlington’s Joan of Arc color palette was used in a reported 165 merchandising tie-ins across the nation that included ready-to-wear items, millinery, felt, jewelry, slippers and hosiery, handbags, gloves, belts, and even a Joan of Arc hairdo publicized through the Seligman and Latz chain of beauty salons inspired by Bergman’s cropped style. Rather than offering reproductions of Bergman’s costumes, a bevy of fashions inspired by the film were available in department stores in the Fall of 1948 (Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6 Window display for the Burlington Mills “Joan of Arc” color promotion at Gerler’s Department Store in Memphis, Tennessee, November 1948. Note that the window emphasizes particular colors in the promotion, including “Court Beige” and “Coronation Green”—two shades inspired by the film. Printed in Motion Picture Herald 173, no. 7 (November 13, 1948): 40.


193 Manufacturers included: John-Frederics (hats); Juilliard (woolen house); Cadwallader (scarves); Phelps Associates (bags and belts); Coro (costume jewelry); Vogue (belts); Daniel Hays (gloves); and Jerro (slippers). See “Joan of Arc Merchandise Tie-Ups Announced by RKO,” Women’s Wear Daily 76, no. 105 (May 28 1948): 27; “Grist for the Showmanship Mill,” Showmen’s Trade Review 49, no. 9 (November 6, 1948): 11.
In July 1948, Look magazine featured a color spread of some of the items tied to the film, including the “mail sweater” which had a “Joan of Arc flavor” inspired by the chainmail worn by Bergman and designed by Dorothy Jeakins who, notably, received the first ever Academy Award for Best Costume Design, in the color category, for her work on the film (Figure 5.7). Made of metallic, elasticized yarn, the sweater allowed women to wear “modern armor that’s comfortable.” To further promote the fashions inspired by the film, upscale department store Saks-Fifth Avenue presented a series of coat and suit windows “in pageantry colors” of styles suggesting the costumes worn in the film, including tunic-like wool suits in mustard with blue accessories, a fitted and belted pale green wool coat with mink trimmed collar and cuffs, and a fitted taupe coat with draped stole trimmed with mink. Each window added color by a group of helmets, banners, swords, and pictures of the movie. In addition to Saks, other New York merchandisers scheduled for “Joan of Arc windows” in November 1948 included Cartier, Charles Scribner’s Sons, Alexander Taylor, Brentano Fabrics, Weber & Heilbroner, TWA, International Silver, and R.H. Macy & Co., thereby involving businesses catering to a wider range of social and economic backgrounds.

Figure 5.7 “Joan of Arc” fashions inspired by the hagiographic epic starring Ingrid Bergman published in Look magazine in July 1948. The spread featured photographs of actors in costumes featured in the film along with John-Frederics’s interpretations of the styles that would influence fall’s fashions. Image from author’s personal collection.

194 The Academy Award for Best Costume Design was first awarded in 1948. Initially, separate award categories were established for black and white and color films, which merged in 1967. See Deborah Nadoolman Landis, Costume Design (Boston: Focal Press, 2003), 72.
197 Ibid.
As demonstrated, beginning in the mid-1930s and lasting throughout the 1940s, color promotions involving the latest Technicolor films became increasingly common occurrences, with the department store—specifically, department store windows—providing a key setting in which such promotions could take place. While some of the tie-ins discussed in the aforementioned examples were made in conjunction with more straightforward fashion pictures, the *Joan of Arc* example demonstrates that this practice could take place with less-obvious productions as well through some creative marketing. These examples serve to demonstrate color’s value as a facet of consumer culture and illustrate the symbiotic potential it offered to the fashion and film industries. Looking outside the realm of the Technicolor feature-length picture, there is one example that directly involved the motion picture industry without promoting a specific title at all. The remainder of Chapter 5 focuses on a color promotion involving Natalie Kalmus and, more indirectly, the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation itself. A thorough examination of this case study points to a carefully crafted promotion between the fashion and film industries and the woman who built a career on audiences seeking a “color consciousness.”

**Color Catalysis: Natalie Kalmus, A. Harris & Co., and Cinema Colors**

In November 1943, John H. Hughes, the Merchandizing Manager of A. Harris & Co., an upscale department store in Dallas, Texas, successfully convinced Natalie Kalmus, the head of Technicolor’s Color Control Department, to lend her image and likeness to the store’s Spring 1944 Cinema Colors campaign. The subsequent promotion, which exhibited a collection of women’s garments and accessories available for purchase in a color palette selected and approved by Kalmus, at once exhibits Technicolor’s influence on American culture in the 1940s, as well as Kalmus’s place within it. While this partnership between a store in Texas and a woman working for a color motion picture process company may initially seem unlikely, a closer look reveals a carefully crafted, timely, and effective collaboration between the complementary industries of fashion and film. Furthermore, this case study examines the star persona Natalie Kalmus cultivated for herself, shedding light on her influence both within and outside of the confines of Hollywood.

The tie-in between Kalmus and the A. Harris & Co. department store serves as an exceptional example through which we may further explore the promotional relationship between color films and fashion. Rather than a specific actress or film being the main attraction of the display, Kalmus—and, more implicitly, Technicolor—were the stars of the Cinema Colors campaign. Examining the organization and execution of this promotion provides a glimpse into Kalmus’s place within the Technicolor Corporation at this time, as well as Technicolor’s place within American popular culture in the 1940s. The Cinema Colors promotion at A. Harris & Co. allowed the store to capitalize on
the previously discussed trend of color promotions through a novel promotion effectively linking Natalie Kalmus and, consequently, the Technicolor color process itself with stylish fashions and attractive color combinations. This example reflects the cultural significance of not only the Technicolor process in the 1940s, but of Natalie Kalmus’s increasing recognition as a public figure at the time. This discussion also brings attention to the relationship between Technicolor and promotions in the clothing industry, an area that has fallen by the wayside in previous research about the company. In previous research, Sarah Street has established Natalie Kalmus as a significant figure in the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, both in the United States and abroad. With Technicolor’s launch in Britain in 1936, Kalmus was largely responsible for the promotion and application of the process there. Building on Street’s excellent historical explorations of Kalmus’s work, this chapter focuses on her background as well as the molding of her public persona in the United States and how they allowed her to be a particularly fitting choice in a fashion promotion.

Technicolor lab technician and cinematographer Winton Hoch referred to the Technicolor’s Color Control Department as “the spearhead of the Technicolor photographic activity.” As a reaction to technical issues presented by previous variants of the Technicolor process, the company took great care in maintaining a high standard of quality control upon the release of the three-strip process. A cornerstone in this strategy was the establishment of the Color Advisory Service. During pre-production, Color Consultants advised production crews on developing a color score in accordance with the narrative structure of the film. The company advised on set and costume design, make-up, lighting, and props. Leading this sector of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation was Natalie Kalmus, whose ideas on the use of “color consciousness” impacted the aesthetics of Technicolor films beginning in 1935 and ending with the dissolution of her relationship with the company in 1948. Some critics downplayed her position as a fortunate case of nepotism thanks to her marriage to Herbert Kalmus, but she was touted as being exceptionally quali-
fied for the job. The Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation and, consequently, newspapers, fan magazines, and trade journals, long-purported that Natalie attended various art schools in Europe and North America where she studied painting and drawing, using these skills to sketch fashion designs for periodicals. Natalie was also known for her encyclopedic knowledge of fabrics and penned pieces highlighting the relationship between color and dress. In one unpublished article, titled “The Importance of the Correct Use of Color in Every Day Life,” Kalmus wrote: “To know the language of color is to know how to dress, and to know how to dress is to know how to live.”

Kalmus’s knowledge and passion for textiles and color correctness helped her in her role as the head of the Color Consult Department, as she analyzed each scene, set, and character in the script during pre-production to ascertain which colors best suited the situation. From there, the department would create color charts for the entire production which acted as guidelines for designing sets and costumes. Kalmus voiced caution regarding color charts and samples without photographing them first, warning “it would be a mistake to consider this comparison anything more than an extremely meager guide for the use of color under actual studio conditions, as charts must necessarily be photographed in a single plane, at a single light level, and they are of a single texture, etc.” Kalmus placed an especial emphasis on the department’s ability to assist with areas of production design such as costume and set design. She had her own specific rules for the department’s color charts, which are outlined in her 1935 manifesto, “Color Consciousness.” In this text, she emphasized the importance of adopting what she termed a “color consciousness,” or developing a color sense, particularly when it came to clothing. Her theory of color consciousness focused on color’s ability to enhance composition, character, and emotion. While Kalmus officially became a Technicolor employee in 1928, her role there continued to grow and become more defined throughout the 1930s, particularly with the introduction of three-strip Technicolor in 1932. Between 1934 and 1949, Kalmus received on-screen credit as color consultant on over 350 films, providing her with a boost in audience and industry exposure, and increasing name recognition.

In 1930, the popular fan magazine Photoplay referred to Kalmus as “Technicolor’s first star!”—a not entirely sensational title. In addition to her name steadily flashing on-screen in opening credits, Natalie Kalmus received a considerable amount of publicity off-screen. She acted as an ambassador for Technicolor off the set, doing her part to promote the company while raising her own profile by publishing articles in technical journals and appearing on the radio to discuss her role and background with personalities such as Eleanor

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201 Natalie Kalmus, “The Importance of the Correct Use of Color in Every Day Life,” unpublished; from the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library.

202 Correspondence from Natalie Kalmus to Kay Harrison, September 24, 1935. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library.

Barnes, Knox Manning, and Fred Jones. Furthermore, Natalie’s name regularly appeared in the gossip columns, detailing the Hollywood luncheons she attended, her vacations, and dinners she hosted at her Bel Air home. The abundance of fan mail Kalmus received from moviegoers throughout her employment at Technicolor evidences not only a growing familiarity with her name, but also the audience’s curiosity about her. Men and women from all walks of life wrote to Kalmus to send praise regarding certain films, unsolicited advice regarding the color in others, obtain autographs, request color stills of Technicolor releases, or to simply learn more about what exactly her job entailed. Natalie’s increasing exposure in the public eye and her well-documented expertise in color combinations for clothing made her a unique yet logical choice for the tie-in with A. Harris & Co. in the spring of 1944.

Like other department stores in the United States in the 1940s, A. Harris & Co. created elaborate, conceptual window displays, with color often acting as the prominent feature. In the year preceding the Cinema Colors campaign, the department store tied up with iris growers to promote the purple tones the store had selected as its 1943 spring colors. Encouraged by the success of that campaign, Merchandizing Manager John H. Hughes contacted Kalmus with the proposition of tying up with Technicolor, requesting her assistance in selecting A. Harris & Co.’s official colors for its spring 1944 campaign. After receiving a positive response from Kalmus—and a complimentary copy of her manifesto “Color Consciousness” in the mail—Hughes sent a preliminary color chart to her office based on the hues Natalie featured in her booklet. Similar to the charts Kalmus herself used when preparing for a film, the chart distributed by A. Harris & Co. listed each spring color and its meaning, including which personality type should don what shade. Colors listed in “Color Consciousness,” including Perfection Pink, Foil Grey, Devotion Red, and Patrician Violet served as inspiration for the Cinema Colors campaign.

In his initial letter to Kalmus, Hughes expressed interest in tying up specifically with Technicolor. As a company, however, Technicolor was highly protective of its trademark, forbidding its use outside of references to products filmed in the Technicolor process. While Technicolor later recognized they were “over-zealous” in their defense of the trademark, they were justified in their response. Advertisements published throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s increasingly attached the word “Technicolor” to more colorful products, capitalizing on the public’s association with Technicolor motion pictures and attractive colors. In 1941, for example, Fruit of the Loom published advertisements in local newspapers promoting “Technicolors,” the clothing company’s new line of men’s dress shirts available in colors including green,
blue, wine, champagne, and copper. According to the ad’s copy, the “Technicolor” were “pleasing to the eye…handsome as a Technicolor movie!” Such unauthorized usage of the company name resulted in Technicolor becoming more protective of its brand, including how the name was used. In the mid-1940s, Technicolor would be protected under the provision of the 1946 Lanham Act, the federal statute protecting “the owner of a federally registered mark against the use of similar marks if such use is likely to result in consumer confusion, or if the dilution of a famous mark is likely to occur.” Prior to this law’s passage, however, the company had to be proactive when possible. In response to Hughes’s request to tie-in with the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation its spring advertising campaign, Kalmus informed the department store manager that while the word “Technicolor” itself was banned for use outside of promoting films, it was possible to include her name in an accompanying brochure, proposing the store identify the selected hues as “Natalie Kalmus Colors.” She also encouraged Hughes to make copies of her manifesto “Color Consciousness” available to customers, either in part or whole, explaining: “In distributing ‘Color Consciousness’ your customers will see that Natalie Kalmus is the color director for color pictures without using the word ‘Technicolor.’” In his analysis of “Color Consciousness,” Richard Neupert asserts that Kalmus’s text was significant in its role of promoting Technicolor to the Hollywood film industry, outlining not only the company’s approach to color but also underscored the notion that color was natural and dramatic and thus essential to the classical fiction film. Distributing “Color Consciousness” in booklet form to A. Harris & Co.’s shoppers in conjunction with the window display pushed these ideas to an important group beyond producers, studios, and critics—the paying customers—thereby widening Technicolor’s reach in promoting its ideals regarding color.

Much has been written about the “gendering” of color, particularly in regards to the relationship between women, color, and film. Sarah Street, for example, has discussed the “suitable” positioning of Natalie Kalmus as the head of Technicolor’s Color Control Department based on the discourse that

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207 See Fruit of the Loom advertisement in The Cincinnati Enquirer, April 6, 1941: 11.
209 Correspondence from Natalie Kalmus to JH Hughes, Dec. 16, 1943. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library.
women had a particular aptitude for color and color harmony. As an unofficial spokesperson for Technicolor, interviews with or articles about Natalie Kalmus took care to mention the importance of the Color Control Department, not only explaining the work of the department in a pedagogical manner, but also justifying the need for one. Part of this was drawing attention to the skills that made Natalie Kalmus an exceptional individual to lead this department. One article, for example, pointed out that Natalie possessed acute color sensitivity in her eyes, which, they maintained, made her especially suited to select colors for the screen. John H. Hughes placed confidence in his clientele’s trust Kalmus’s widely publicized skills could be applied to off-screen selections as well.

These unique traits Natalie possessed were crucial in publicity related to Technicolor’s Color Advisory Service but were also central to promoting the Cinema Colors display. The windows at A. Harris & Co. essentially functioned as an extension of a Technicolor set, with Kalmus choosing colors that aligned with a palette worthy of a three-strip feature. One WWD writer reporting on the promotion informed readers the colors had been chosen “since restraint must constantly be practiced in the making of colored films.” To acknowledge the woman who inspired the set display, an oversized Kodachrome photograph of Kalmus was placed in the background, signed, “Best wishes to A. Harris & Co.” In an effort to further enhance the promotion’s ties to the film industry, one of the larger windows was made to resemble a set, complete with a camera, floodlights, director’s chairs, with film spanning the length of each window printed with the words “Harris Presents Cinema Colors.” As Shelley Stamp has compellingly demonstrated, the newcomer theaters built in the 1910s were “often outfitted to look like better retail emporiums,” borrowing accouterments like uniformed attendants and mirrored common areas seen in American department stores. Three decades later, the Cinema Colors display reversed the practice, with the store window designed to approximate a film set, reflecting a more glamorous status attained by the film industry by the mid-1940s.

212 Sarah Street, “A Suitable Job for a Woman: Color and the Work of Natalie Kalmus,” in Doing Women’s Film History: Reframing Cinemas, Past and Future, eds. Christine Gledhill, Julia Knight (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015).
213 “Importance of Color Control Service Growing,” Technicolor News & Views (February 1941).
215 Ibid.
216 Correspondence from J.H. Hughes to Louise Wagner Corkran, February 21, 1944. From the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library; “‘Cinema Colors’ Promotion at A. Harris Backed by Window Display,” Women’s Wear Daily 68, 44 (March 3, 1944), 18.
In order to promote the window display, A. Harris & Co. engaged with local media to promote the campaign days before the campaign opened to the public. The *Dallas Morning News*, the city’s largest daily, published an article about Natalie Kalmus, referring to her as an expert in matters of color who “harnessed the rainbow to the screen.” This piece acquainted readers with her background and duties at Technicolor while taking them through her preparation process for a film, taking care to mention her expertise in correct color combinations in clothing.\(^{218}\) While the article did not directly mention Kalmus’s involvement with the A. Harris & Co. tie-in, the paper printed the article and a half-page advertisement for the store’s display on the same day, allowing readers to better understand the connection between Kalmus and the Cinema Colors promotion (Figure 5.8).

The department store also placed advertisements in various Dallas papers throughout the last week of February, just before the display opened to the public. Advertisements in the *Dallas Morning News* featured sketches of items which would be available for purchase, emphasizing the significance of the colors and what they represented.

In addition to features in the local newspaper, A. Harris & Co. also publicized a weekly fashion show to be held in the Century Room at Hotel Adolphus, Dallas’s grandest hotel, in which women modeled the same colorful suits, dresses, coats, shoes, and handbags available for purchase through the Cinema Colors promotion.219 Aware of the economic hardships facing individuals during wartime, journalist Irene Boyce wrote that the preview “proved that women may dress colorfully and becomingly this spring without an elaborate wardrobe.” 220 The fashion show held at the Adolphus afforded local women the opportunity to purchase pieces from the Cinema Colors collection before they became available at A. Harris & Co. a few days later. In this instance, the media coverage given to the fashion shows also generated publicity for the campaign, not least of all emphasizing Natalie Kalmus’s involvement.

Following the launch of the campaign, Kalmus praised Hughes for the store’s display, which she found to be “indeed interesting, as both the layout and newspaper articles were so intelligently and attractively presented.” 221 While sales figures for the Cinema Colors campaign were not readily available, a follow-up letter from Hughes to Kalmus two months after the spring display premiered offers some idea of the success of the promotion. In his letter, Hughes excitedly proposed a fall series of Cinema Colors but received a response from Kalmus’s secretary, explaining that her plans for the fall were too uncertain to give a definitive response at the time.

The Cinema Colors promotion serves as a rich case study through which we may explore the multifarious relationship between the fashion and film industries during this time period. By the 1940s, department stores in the United States regularly sought out ways to promote upcoming color trends via novel, oftentimes-elaborate campaigns. And with the steady increase of films being made in Technicolor, the Cinema Colors tie-in allowed A. Harris & Co. to boost its Spring color line while capitalizing on the strong promotional ties—particularly color promotions—between the fashion and film industries already firmly in place by the mid-1940s. Furthermore, this particular promotion from the Spring of 1944 offers a unique glimpse into Natalie Kalmus’s role not only as Color Director for Technicolor, but as a woman in the public

221 Correspondence from Natalie Kalmus to J.H. Hughes, March 2, 1944; from the Natalie Kalmus Papers, Margaret Herrick Library
eye. The Cinema Colors promotion provides insight into Kalmus’s methods for exerting her influence on American culture off the film set.

Conclusion

The introduction of the three-strip Technicolor process and the overall improvement of color film technology the process provided signaled a wider adoption of color film within Hollywood and beyond. Consequently, the mid-1930s welcomed an influx of feature-length Technicolor films that continued throughout the 1940s and beyond. While previous chapters have focused on formats like the newsreel, short subject, and industrial films, this chapter has considered the burgeoning relationship between the fashion and film industries as a result of an increased number of feature-length Technicolor films made between 1935 and 1948. While the aforementioned film formats share a number of commonalities, feature-length films warrant their own discussion not only for their popularity amongst American audiences, but also for their wider cultural and economic impact.

While Scott Higgins and Richard Neupert are among the researchers who have focused on the aesthetics introduced by the three-strip Technicolor process, the technology’s impact on costume design within feature-length films has heretofore been largely neglected. To this end, the Technicolor Color Advisory Service’s role in offering guidance and recommendations for set design and make-up, but particularly wardrobe design, cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, an in-depth look at Natalie Kalmus’s place within Technicolor between 1935 and 1948 allows us to ascertain not only her wider impact on American culture at the time, but also the power Technicolor carried outside of the film industry.

The case studies of *Vogues of 1938* and *Cover Girl* allow us to view different aspects of the adoption of Technicolor into Hollywood feature productions. As the “first big color fashion film,” *Vogues* warrants our attention from a production and promotional standpoint. The manner in which rayon was incorporated into both of these areas was unique to promoting feature-length films as well as the Technicolor process itself. The media’s narrative surrounding the incorporation of rayon highlighted not only the merits of the fabric, but also the technical challenges Technicolor presented to the film industry in terms of design. *Cover Girl* demonstrates a wider adoption of the Technicolor process in the film industry as a whole, as well as the industry’s long-range thinking in regards to effective promotions.

The abundance of color promotions tied-in with Technicolor films offers further insight into the relationship between the fashion and film industries during this time period. While the promotional relationship between these two industries was firmly in place by the late 1930s, the popularization of Technicolor films offered a new conduit through which that relationship could be reinterpreted, with color as the driving force. The element of spectacle offered
by department store windows, as well as the level of prominence they pro-
vided made these spaces fitting and lucrative hosts for collaborations with
Technicolor films.
The critical and popular reaction to the particular quality of the blues in *Becky Sharp* ushered in a period of change within the fashion and film industries. For the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, the three-strip process allowed for a truer representation of blue, signaling the company overcoming the technological hurdle of accurately depicting the color on-screen, thus bringing them closer to capturing the full color spectrum—the company’s goal since its inception in 1915. “*Becky Sharp* blue,” as it was initially publicized, proved to be a multi-purpose marketing tool, drawing attention to the new technology while extending tie-up opportunities to several American industries, with the fashion industry proving to be particularly receptive to such promotional practices. Beginning in the 1920s, collaborations between the American fashion and film industries depended upon the participation of the department store, with store windows providing a fertile setting for cross-industrial promotions. The proliferation of Technicolor films in the 1930s and the increased interest from all parties for cross-industrial promotions provided a natural pathway for color to become a necessary ingredient in these business dealings. This dissertation has demonstrated that collaborations between the film and fashion industries were diverse, not only in their ability to tie-in specific colors in clothing with Technicolor titles, but also in embracing the demonstrative and educational properties of color film.

The ability of fashion and film to simultaneously engage elements of spectacle and reality via color has been a leitmotif throughout this dissertation. One of my main aims has been to highlight color’s role in mutually beneficial collaborations between the fashion and film industries, but the following discourse has also been key to this project: that the portrayal of fashions in Technicolor had the potential to be more appealing, more convincing on the screen than those viewed in person. This ambitious message was key to successfully publicizing fashions and color as represented in each of the films discussed throughout this dissertation. Furthermore, this project has recognized that discourses regarding Technicolor’s ability to depict realistic, “natural” colors were also distributed in marketing material and critical responses to earlier color motion picture processes, thereby establishing the three-strip process within a continuum.

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The practice of creating enthusiasm for the most realistic depiction of color possible was one of the more fascinating tactics maintained by Technicolor throughout the period on which this dissertation focuses. Three-strip Technicolor’s intentional portrayal of familiar products like food, household items, and clothing allowed the company and its laboratory to make great strides towards convincing audiences and studios not only of the accuracy of the improved process, but also of its commercial appeal. The overarching theme presented here is that everyday items had the potential to become spectacular in their lifelike representations on-screen. This approach is a departure from previous research on “natural color” and “applied color” film processes, which has tended to focus more on the spectacular uses of color on the screen, as well as a genre-motivated employment of color motion picture processes. Technicolor’s conscious effort to partner with specific American industries and fashion labels played an important role in the success of the three-strip process from a critical and technological perspective.

The fashion short, for example, was crucial to these demonstrations, allowing the company to exhibit the strengths of the developing technology while simultaneously improving upon it in the laboratory for regular use in feature-length films. With the feature being the coveted vehicle for three-strip Technicolor, the company’s various collaborations with the fashion industry assisted in the discourse that color motion picture technology could provide a boost in promoting fashions, and vice versa. With improvements in rayon occurring alongside those made with three-strip Technicolor, the fabric became central to collaborations between the fashion and film industries in the 1940s, with both utilizing productive promotional discourses which revolved around technology, education, and beauty. In industrial and advertising films, three-strip Technicolor had the potential to act as a surrogate for swatch books, not to mention the added educational properties motivated by the use of color, as well as sound, technologies. The research presented in the previous chapters asserts that the three-strip process was advertised as being ideal for demonstrating rayon’s extensive color range, and Technicolor broached the act of demonstration via a few avenues: the fashion short, the industrial and advertising film, and the feature film, each type of film ultimately offering financial or scientific benefits to the color motion picture process company.

The relationship between color, fashion, and film was firmly in place by the 1930s, but with shifting degrees of importance placed on the spectacular nature of color. In the “trick films” of the late 1800s and early 1900s, color played a much different role than it did from the late 1920s onwards. While two-color and, subsequently, three-strip Technicolor were often relegated to dream sequences, musicals, or fashion show sequences throughout the 1950s, such uses of the technology were not reflective of the company’s ultimate goal for color on the screen. Each case study presented in this dissertation has aimed to highlight Technicolor’s attempts at presenting color in a more accurate manner, demonstrating that the realistic nature of the three-strip process
could be spectacular in itself and that color had a place beyond genre-motivated uses.

By examining the promotion of the three-strip process through fashion, we can learn more about the extent of color in the contemporary market and its cultural importance. This dissertation has aimed to shed light on this facet of American history, deepening an understanding of the distribution and exhibition of color in the United States by focusing on the film industry’s creative and promotional relationship with the American fashion industry. New technologies expanded the industrial production of colored consumer goods and this dissertation’s focus on the relationship between the three-strip process and modernist consumer culture sheds new light on the rich cross-industrial opportunities afforded by color. Furthermore, feature-length films made in three-strip Technicolor have received the bulk of previous academic attention in terms of their use of color and the manner in which they contributed to the development of the “Technicolor look.” While cultivating the commercial exhibition market was essential to the development of Technicolor, examining the extent to which three-strip Technicolor was used in lesser-explored types of films like the short subject and industrial films reveals the extent to which Technicolor reached audiences in non-traditional viewing environments, including public spaces such as the department store or the World’s Fair.

In my explorations of these three different types of films—the fashion short, the industrial and advertising film, and the feature—my aim has been to demonstrate the ways in which color, fashion, and film intersected and informed each other in terms of their aesthetic and commercial properties. The feature film has often been the subject of research into Technicolor’s history and aesthetics, and for good reason. As the most popular form of entertainment for Americans in the twentieth century, feature-length films were not only powerful from an economic perspective, but also as a means of artistic expression. Indeed, regular productions of feature-length films were a long-standing goal for the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation but there were many hurdles, both economic and technical, that the company had to overcome before this could be a reality. With its focus on lesser-explored genres such as the fashion short and industrial and advertising films, this dissertation has aimed to draw attention to the importance of these films in Technicolor’s history, reflecting the complex factors at play while deepening scholarly research concerning Technicolor’s far-reaching impact on American culture in the 1930s and beyond.

The popularity of film spectatorship made it a particularly crucial activity not only for the recruitment of female fashion consumers, but also for the uptake of a range of motivations for consumption. The discourse that color was a notable contributor to one’s fashionable appearance—and, perhaps more importantly, that the development of a “color consciousness” was an asset—was a key motivation behind collaborations between the fashion and film industries during the years covered in this dissertation. With their investigations
into cross-industrial promotions from general and more specific positions, respectively. Chapters 2 and 5 assert that tie-ins have been one of the most successful demonstrations of the economic symbiosis between the fashion and film industries. Scholarship concerned with film and fashion history has, however, generally regarded Hollywood’s promotion of consumer fashion as evidence of how, in Charles Eckert’s words, “[t]ens of thousands of American provided the captive audience for…unique experiments in consumer manipulation.” Examining color’s place as a motivator behind these “experiments” evidences the more complex nature of film spectatorship and its relationship to the consumption of American fashion. In her research on the development of the distinct fashion style established in New York in the 1930s and 1940s, Rebecca Arnold has emphasized how the Great Depression contributed to the American fashion industry’s eagerness to collaborate with related industries to increase merchandising opportunities. As Arnold has also argued, this period witnessed the American fashion industry looking to strengthen its position in the international market, seeking initiatives to stimulate growth. The introduction of three-strip Technicolor, then, presented a unique moment for collaboration between the American fashion and film industries. Furthermore, this dissertation has positioned color as a rich unifier between the two trades, expanding the potential for further interdisciplinary research, particularly within fashion studies. Promotion has largely been the main focus in research surrounding the relationship between the fashion and film industries and focusing on color has been productive in terms of exploring the more complex relationship between the two. One of the key aims of this dissertation has been to demonstrate that fashion played an essential role in the American film industry that went beyond promotion, and vice versa.

The fan magazine, with its lengthy past of being an arbiter of star style and star personalities, also proved to be an ally to Technicolor in their goal of establishing the three-strip process. Photoplay in particular spoke to fans in terms of the importance of becoming more color conscious in matters of fashion; it promoted individuals within the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, particularly Natalie Kalmus, the company’s most public proponent of color consciousness; and it discussed the technical aspects of three-strip Technicolor in an accessible way to readers. With a strong readership and high circulation numbers, the fan magazines were one cog—albeit a significant one—in the Technicolor promotion machine, simultaneously developing an awareness of the three-strip process and increasing anticipation for new films, all the while keeping devoted fans abreast of changes within the industry. As a longtime conduit of the message that the screen had the ability to strongly influence American fashion and style, the fan magazine took on an educational

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3 Arnold, The American Look, 206.
role that more mainstream fashion magazines were slower to adopt, instructing readers on proper ways of dressing via stylish stars. Color, according to the fan magazine, could be considered an educational property, with Photoplay and other popular publications recognizing three-strip Technicolor’s potential to guide viewers towards a more refined color consciousness. Furthermore, the fan magazine provided a space in which significant players within the film industry—particularly those with more artistic sensibilities, like costume designers, set designers, and make-up artists—could reach out to audiences and explain the more practical importance of color, not only in films but also in fashion, accessories, make-up, and the home.

In addition to approaching color from a consumption-driven perspective, this dissertation has considered the value of color as an element of mise-en-scène, particularly in terms of the technological and aesthetic hurdles presented by the three-strip Technicolor process. To this end, the Color Control Department led by Natalie Kalmus was key in efforts made towards maintaining a prescribed, more restrained aesthetic, training cameramen and designers on that palette, and making recommendations concerning a film’s color design. Previous discussions concerning the Color Control Department have tended to focus less on the specific roles of the department’s technicians and more about Kalmus’s theories of “Color Consciousness,” often relying on publicity material generated by the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation or Kalmus herself to lay out the department’s goals and its work. While “Color Consciousness” serves as a document providing insight into the aesthetic goals of Technicolor in the 1930s and beyond, there has been little research conducted on the specific activities carried out by members of the department. Examining the production of Vyvyan Donner’s Fashion Forecast series provides an in-depth account of the role of the Color Control Department, offering specifics regarding the work performed by the department and to what extent its members participated in contributing to the overall “look” of Technicolor films. Through this case study, the oft-cited friction between the Color Control Department and the film industry at large begins to take form, moving away from largely anecdotal evidence and towards a more concrete understanding of the technical work performed by a department integral to Technicolor’s history.

While the Fashion Forecast series demonstrates the screen’s ability to showcase fashions while introducing viewers to forthcoming trends, their production offers important insight into the way color film technology impacted productions from a design perspective; that is, considerations made in terms of wardrobe and set design—the central contributors to a film’s overall aesthetic. This dissertation recognizes color as an important design element through which we can approach these essential areas of filmmaking, consequently allowing for an examination of how the overall aesthetic of a film is achieved while considering the demands of three-strip Technicolor. While costume and fashion are significantly different in terms of their purpose, role, and function, this dissertation considers both, weighing their impact on-screen.
and off. Instances of overlap presented in this project—including the “second life” given to costumes through reproductions—demonstrate a certain elasticity between costume and fashion, particularly where profit-making is concerned. These instances of overlap also present rich areas of interdisciplinary exploration between fashion studies and film studies. Considering color’s complex role in these complementary research areas has demonstrated that studies in these areas are far from exhausted.

The versatility of color is one of its most valuable factors in its relation to consumer culture, allowing for the production of new associations to a variety of products, and it was this versatility which proved so crucial to collaborations between the fashion and film industries in the 1930s and beyond. Referring to the introduction chapter of this dissertation, “Becky Sharp blue” took on a multi-functional promotional role, advertising both the film and one of the key improvements offered by the new three-strip Technicolor process: its ability to represent blue more accurately than previous color motion picture film processes. Capitalizing on Technicolor’s latest development, the appeal of the shade, and the bond between women, fashion, and the screen, “Becky Sharp blue” was designated as the appropriate color for fashion tie-ins. As Chapter 5 demonstrates, colors were regularly tied in with popular culture through a variety of products, including clothing, cosmetics, magazines, household goods, and films. As extensions of the films, color tie-ins with the American fashion industry functioned to promote films through a desirable product while drawing attention to the increasingly colorful nature of a popular form of entertainment. The way in which certain colors were mediated positioned them as fashionable and desirable, consequently increasing interest in the films with which they were associated. Furthermore, color’s ability to boost various products mutually benefitted the fashion and film industries upon the release of three-strip Technicolor in the mid-1930s.

Each chapter presented in this dissertation has demonstrated different methods in which the fashion and film industries collaborated to promote specific, industry-related products. As previous research has shown, the period of time covered in these chapters was one of integration and assimilation for the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, but this reached beyond the scope of the feature-length film. The fashion short, the industrial and advertising film, and the feature-length film were all contributors to Technicolor’s success in the late 1930s and beyond. While these films functioned differently in terms of budget, function, and purpose, this dissertation has strived to make clear that they overlap despite those differences. One way to draw the ideas of the previous chapters together is to consider these films in terms of the strategies employed to integrate color as a multi-functional promotional device, largely accomplished through collaborations with the American fashion industry. Furthermore, color played an important demonstrative role, drawing attention to the accuracy and range of the three-strip process via displays of those fashions.

In 1929, Loyd Jones of the Kodak Research Laboratories posed the following question to the Society of Motion Picture Engineers:
If there is in the human mind, or, more specifically, in the collective mind of the motion picture public, a color consciousness, even though it be at present latent or but slightly developed, is it not worth considerable effort in thought and experimentation to develop a technic such that color can be applied to the screen in such a way as to enhance the emotional and dramatic values of the motion picture of the future?4

Three-strip Technicolor was, in effect, an answer to Jones’s query. The work performed by the Color Control Department, led by Natalie Kalmus, asked the public to cultivate a “color consciousness,” which was spread not only through the work of Kalmus, but also via popular and industry discourse. As Jones argued, one of the cinema’s main educational functions was to develop the public’s “color consciousness.” With its ability to demonstrate the full color spectrum emphasized in advertising, and with the guidance of Natalie Kalmus and the Color Control Department’s understanding of color, the three-strip process positioned Technicolor to be capable of producing “the motion picture of the future.”

This dissertation has argued for a continuum in discourses and practices surrounding color motion picture technology. Looking forward to the age of television, a familiar trend reappears. In early August 1941, NBC signed a contract with Norman D. Waters and Associates, a New York City-based advertising agency, to air the first sponsored televised fashion show. In October 1941, Waters penned an article in the trade magazine Broadcasting in which he claimed that television was “a practical advertising tool…only if it’s properly used.”5 Waters argued that there were “too few advertising people who [knew] how to use it, and too many who [were] afraid to learn by experimenting for fear of risking their prestige in the event that the shows are poor.”6 Fashion Discoveries of Television, as it was called, was one such experiment devised by Norman D. Waters and Associates. The advertising firm presented a half-hour weekly program for three weeks beginning September 18th under joint sponsorship by department stores Bloomingdale’s and Abraham & Strauss (Figure 6.1). The program featured merchandise from five or six makers of non-competitive women’s wear, including dresses, hats, shoes, and accessories—all “medium price” rather than the Fifth Avenue styles.7 The New York Times reported that the program would “show the products of various Waters clients,” the names of which would appear on-screen along with the name of participating manufacturers. The premiere episode opened with

6 Ibid.
7 “Fashion Show Signed,” Motion Picture Herald 144, no. 6 (August 9, 1941): 28.
an introduction by Waters himself, who declared to the audience that television would "exert a greater influence on fashion than any factor yet known."8

Figure 6.1 Advertisement for Fashion Discoveries of Television, printed in the New York Times the day of its premiere on NBC, New York Times (September 18, 1941): 9.

In their write-up of the program, the Times reported that at one point in the program, commentator Peggy Read, "a well-known authority on women's styles," remarked, "I wish you could see that color!"—the lack thereof, according to the Times reviewer, being the "main handicap" of the show.9 Similar to captions accompanying black-and-white photographs in magazines, Read took it upon herself to describe the color and cut of the ensemble, remarking that while the "deep purple of the evening frock was not visible... its sequined bodice with V-neckline and slightly flaring skirt were clearly in evidence."10 The review printed in the Times concluded by stating that while "fabric and shade are not for the television audience, silhouette, pattern and

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
decorative motive can be sent successfully through the ether.” While television was not yet able to capture desired colors, there was indeed an anticipation among the fashion industry for the technology’s ability to do so. Four years after *Fashion Discoveries of Television* premiered, Worthington Miner, a manager for CBS, was invited to a luncheon organized by the Fashion Group in September 1945. At the luncheon, Miner gave a lecture which predicted that improved “taste and variety in fashion will reach top visual distribution simultaneously all over the country when color television plans are perfected and television sets are available.”

Color has long provided historians with the opportunity to explore the complex relationships between technology and art, marketing and innovation, commerce and culture. While the case studies presented in this dissertation are significant to the realms of film studies and fashion studies, the way they intersected in consumer culture have been largely unexplored. The 1930s and 1940s were years in which Technicolor embedded itself more deeply in Hollywood and, in turn, in American popular culture. Focusing on this time period while emphasizing fashion allows for an improved understanding of the aims of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation at that time, revealing a more complex network of strategies and functions. One of the main goals of this project has been to enable a more precise understanding of developments in color’s significance in the fashion and film industries, as well collaborations that took place between them. Ultimately, I hope this dissertation has contributed to widening the understanding of the complexities in the relationship between these two industries in the classical Hollywood cinema, and that it may inspire further investigations.

11 Ibid.
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