



## ABOUT MICHELLE ROWLEY

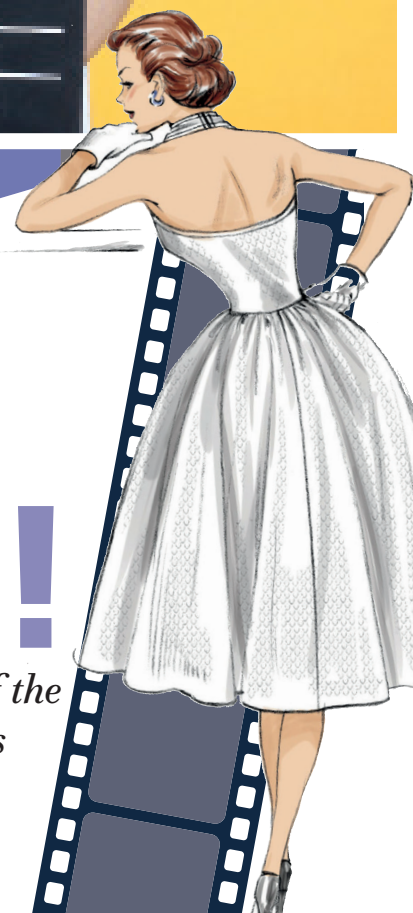
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### A BRIEF HISTORY OF

# *Lights, camera,* **ACTION!**

*Michelle Rowley takes a look back at some of the movies' most memorable fashion moments*





Who hasn't seen the iconic image of Audrey Hepburn in her elegant little black dress from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*? From Marilyn Monroe's white halter neck dress billowing out in all its glory over a subway grating in *The Seven Year Itch* to Emma Stone's canary yellow dress in *La La Land*, the silver screen has gifted us some incredible fashion moments to enjoy long after the final credits of the film roll. Carefully designed to give a sense of character and to create maximum impact on screen, the thoughtful use of colour, fabric and cut means the costumes not only stand out on film, but also in our memories.

When films were shot in black and white, the costume departments knew that they had extra work to do to make a costume shine on screen. With audiences unable to see the sumptuous colours of the fabrics, it was down to careful fabric choice to show differences in character's wealth and social standing. Fabrics that shone and glistened helped to hint at luxury and embellishments aided in sending a message to the

audience. When Theda Bara starred as Cleopatra in the 1917 film *Cleopatra*, her embellished costumes were designed to reflect Bara's mysterious image and to tantalise, with her biographer noting "The Cleopatra costume created quite a stir because it cost \$1,000 a yard and Theda seemed to be wearing only ten cents' worth."

Lace was also an effective fabric choice to denote wealth. A stunning example of this is the Edith Head-designed ivory lace gown worn by Audrey Hepburn in the 1953 box office hit *Roman Holiday*. Playing the role of Princess Ann visiting Rome incognito, the film was Hepburn's first major film role. The dress was worn in the very last scene of the film where she meets and greets her public and resumes her Royal role. It was to be the only role that won Hepburn an Academy Award for Best Actress and she had the dress adapted to wear to the awards ceremony the night she collected her Oscar. This is the only time an Oscar has been collected in a gown worn in the actual film and no doubt this uniqueness added to its value when it sold for

£70,000 at Kerry Taylor Auctions in 2011.

Known for considering the longevity of a garment, Audrey Hepburn always requested to have her Hubert de Givenchy gowns made with a 2" seam allowance so that the spectacular pieces could be let out to be re-worn by those without her tiny measurements. Her childhood friend Tanya Star-Busmann often benefitted from this generosity, receiving many of Hepburn's film garments. A famous example is the Givenchy haute couture white point d'esprit ball gown worn by Hepburn in the opera scene of the 1957 film *Love in the Afternoon*, which sold for £42,000 in 2021, also at Kerry Taylor Auctions.

The long-standing collaboration between Audrey Hepburn and the designer Hubert de Givenchy is legendary, with the looks they created together leaving an impact not only on the world of film, but also of fashion. With carefully crafted designs that suited Hepburn's simple and



# Sewing silver SCREEN LOOKS

Recreate an iconic film dress with our choice of suitable patterns:

## M8211

View C of McCall's 8211, a pretty fit-and-flare dress with a tiered skirt, would make a stunning version of the angel dress worn by Claire Danes in *Romeo & Juliet*



## M7599

Dance around like Emma Stone in *La La Land* using View A of McCall's 7599, which has a similar square neckline and wide shoulder straps



understated look, the two worked together on designs that did not dominate or overpower her, resulting in timeless styles still relevant today, such as that black dress in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Interestingly, a simple black dress and a halter-neck white dress might just be the two most iconic gowns in cinema history, arguably because it's the combination of the two glamorous women that wore them and the elegant simplicity of black and white.

Nevertheless, the use of colour in film dress has also played a key role in shaping characters and leaving lasting impressions, such as Keira Knightley's

exquisite green silk gown in 2007's *Atonement*, which reflected both her character Cecilia's beauty and envy to great effect. Besides portraying character, bold blocks of a single colour also create a visual delight on screen; think Emma Stone's yellow dress in 2016's *La La Land* or Marilyn Monroe's shocking pink gown in the most famous scene of the 1953 film *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

In contrast, the use of pattern has also been used to create striking on-screen presence and character reveals. Would Judy Garland have seemed as innocent and youthful as Dorothy in *The Wizard*

*of Oz* without her now iconic blue and white gingham dress? Would we remember Alicia Silverstone as Cher Horowitz in the 1995 film *Clueless* quite as well without her bold plaid mini-skirt suit? Would Julia Roberts as Vivian Ward at the polo in the 1990 blockbuster *Pretty Woman* have left such a lasting image without her belted brown and cream polka dot dress? It's impossible to say, but the lasting impact of those garments cannot be disputed.

Whilst glorious gowns of the silver screen can leave bold vivid images in our minds, the impact of more everyday garments appearing on the giant screen should



## M8060

Pretend you're Julia Roberts at the polo in *Pretty Woman* using McCall's 8060, a perfect sleeveless dress for an advanced beginner or intermediate sewist, which has a very similar neckline to the belted polka dot version worn in the film



## V1102

See yourself more of an Audrey Hepburn? Vogue 1102 has the perfect straight high neckline and beautiful back detail to recreate her iconic little black dress in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*



not be overlooked.

We can't always dress like

Marilyn Monroe in a shocking pink gown or billowing white halter-neck dress as we go about our daily lives, but we can don a pair of jeans and feel feminine in them thanks in part to the garment's appearance on the legendary actress in the 1950s. We might not have an occasion to recreate Hepburn's black dress, pearls and tiara from the iconic *Breakfast at Tiffany's* scene, but we can feel stylish in a trench coat or Breton top since these garments underwent a cool credentials boost with their appearance on Hepburn on screen. When Dame Barbara Windsor's bikini from the 1969 film *Carry On Camping* sold at Kerry Taylor Auctions for £9,500 in 2021, it proved that even a terry-towelling yellow bikini can become an iconic screen garment when filmed on a star in a memorable movie scene. Yet, there's no doubt the tiny bikini itself was also a key factor in creating the lasting image.

## B6682

Bring out your inner Marilyn Monroe with either **Butterick 6682** or **Butterick 5209** to recreate arguably the most famous dress in film history. Both of these stunning halter-neck dresses are from the Butterick archives and have been re-issued to enable you to sew a striking dress capturing the true vintage style

