Hollywood and History: Costume Design in Film

Edward Maeder, Alicia Annas, Satch Lavalley, Elois Jenssen

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Since their earliest days, the movies have been concerned with historical and Biblical subjects. The first cinematic genius, D.W. Griffith, turned for his greatest themes to the Civil War, the French Revolution and ancient Babylon. Then came the era of Cecil B. De Mille's extravaganzas, drawing on the Bible, the 'wickedness' of ancient Rome, and early America.

The L.A. County Museum of Art possesses by far the most important collection of costumes made for Hollywood films. In addition, its archives hold an enormous assortment of designers' costume sketches from all the movie studios, as well as a treasure-house of stills.

In this absorbing volume, Edward Maeder, Curator of Costumes and Textiles at the Museum, examines the social and economic conditions reflected in the changing tastes of the cinema. Alicia Annas contributes a section on make-up and hairstyles; and Satch LaValley writes about the historical film and retail fashion.

With an extensive filmography which describes the costumes in hundreds of period films, and with nearly 300 illustrations, this book offers an unparalleled record of this endlessly fascinating phenomenon. It will prove invaluable not only to film buffs but also to costume designers, social historians and anyone interested in the history of film.

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