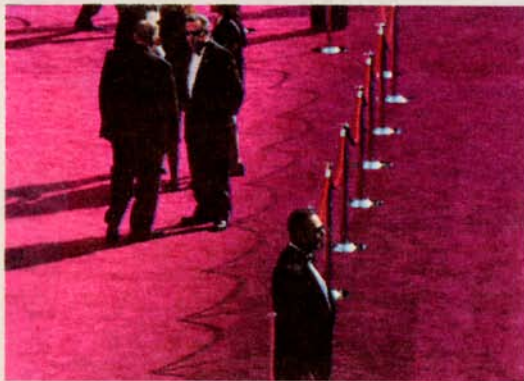


Front Row

Eric Wilson

■ Glamour as a reflection of celluloid glow. ■ A video artist catches Los Angeles putting its best foot forward, or is that into its mouth?



Parallax

Red carpet and velvet rope: Sarah Morris turns her camera on the buildup to the Oscars.

Glamour, Direct From Hollywood

In this, the season of red carpet entrances, admirers of the latest variations of silk satin and beaded gowns may be surprised to discover that what they are seeing in contemporary fashion is more often than not a reflection of Hollywood glamour of the 1930's. Today's prevailing curvaceous silhouette, a de facto uniform of awards galas, was also once a hallmark of the screen wardrobes of Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford and Marlene Dietrich.

"Fashion from the period of the 1930's is essential to our understanding of what glamour is today," said Valerie Steele, the chief curator of the museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Ms. Steele has organized an exhibition of 100 gowns, opening at the institute's Seventh Avenue campus today, that traces the notion of "Glamour: Fashion, Film, Fantasy" throughout the 20th century.

Ms. Steele's show lends particular impor-

tance to the golden age of Hollywood, including hourglass-shape examples like a red evening dress designed by Elsa Schiaparelli for Rita Hayworth, a silk jersey and chiffon gown by Travis Banton for Dietrich, and from Adrian, a leading costume designer of the period, a sequined evening dress for Crawford in "The Bride Wore Red" and Garbo's costumes from "Camille." Making the connection to more recent body-conscious fashion, Ms. Steele pointed to a white bugle-beaded gown and fur stole by Bob Mackie, designed for Madonna to wear to the 1991 Academy Awards, a homage to Marilyn Monroe.

"Nowadays glamour has really disappeared from the silver screen and is more associated with the catwalk and red carpet," said Ms. Steele, adding that the emphasis on evening wear by designers in New York last week could be considered a continuation of the 30's silhouette.

"The glamour of the 30's had a lot to do with escapism as a reaction to the Great Depression," Ms. Steele said. "I don't know whether it would be valid to suggest that designers are reacting to the world around them today, but it is at least a hypothesis that might occur to people as they look at the dresses in this exhibit." It runs through April 16.

Oscar Through a Different Lens

While the subject of glamour on the red carpet may be worthy of a scholarly approach, the annual buildup to the Academy Awards has also caught the attention of a painter and video artist as a revealing window into the personality of Los Angeles and its people, not always in the best light.

A year ago the artist, Sarah Morris, trained her CinemaScope 35-millimeter camera on the city for 10 days before Oscar



Irving Solero

Bob Mackie's 1991 take on Marilyn for Madonna.

night, capturing images of Los Angeles at its most narcissistic. The footage has become a 26-minute film and has served as inspiration for a series of paintings, and both efforts will be on display at the Friedrich Petzel Gallery in New York beginning Saturday.

Ms. Morris filmed celebrities arriving on the enormous red carpets that stretch out before the Kodak Theater and outside Vanity Fair's annual party, catching glimpses of Nicole Kidman, Uma Thurman and Scarlett Johansson posing for photographers.

In her film, titled "Los Angeles," they are interspersed with scenes showing one patient having her teeth whitened by a dentist and another receiving a Botox injection, and a pharmacist filling prescriptions for Xanax, the antianxiety medication. Other scenes show the producer Robert Evans being shaved by a topless woman and the director Brett Ratner talking on a mobile phone while changing his clothes in the back of a limousine with the assistance of a valet, who puts on his socks.

"What a lot of people don't realize is that the Oscars is a planned TV show, not a live event," Ms. Morris said. "The timing of this film was based on catching the city at that moment of its greatest adrenalin.

"Also, it's sort of a big nothing. It's interesting in the sense that nothing really happens on the red carpet. It's just a bunch of people getting dressed up and walking down a sea of red, posing for photographs. It's what people make of it that is interesting."

As actors and actresses are shown talking to television reporters along the red carpet, presumably about what they are wearing, Ms. Morris trains her lens on their eyes, providing a clearer picture than can be seen on television. They are looking for the next camera.