

**Cathy Leff: What came first, your interest in fashion, art or film?**

**Marketa Uhlirova:** I always loved fashion and film. They both promise a sense of transformation into something else and transport you somewhere else. I studied art history, focusing on modern and contemporary art. My master's thesis examined video art in the turbulent social and political times of then-Czechoslovakia from the 1970s to the 1990s. Later, while studying contemporary art curation at Bard College, I assisted Andrew Bolton, who is now head curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. At that time, he was working at the V&A Museum, finishing his book, *The Supermodern Wardrobe*, and starting to work on the exhibition, "Bravehearts: Men in Skirts." He taught me a lot about structuring my ideas. In 2006, I co-founded the Fashion in Film Festival in London with costume designer Roger K. Burton and the art curator Christel Tsilibaris. None of us had a formal background in film studies. We approached the subject through the lens of artists' moving-image works and early avant-garde cinema.

**What are the current debates around fashion and cinema?**

Fashion cinema is a growing academic field. Scholars primarily have been interested in how cinema popularized and democratized fashion by bringing it to the masses, and how costume, in the broadest sense (accessories and make-up) has been vital to cinema's constructions of race, gender, class and national identity. But there also are those who are less interested in what cinematic costume means, looking instead into the affective and performative powers of dress in film and how the two marry. Fashion cinema cannot be easily reduced to language and ideological constructs.

**Has your curatorial approach changed since the festival launched?**

Yes and no. I always try to introduce new ways of framing the relationship between fashion and film. We've had festivals spanning the entire history of film. We also have focused on a single director. One festival consisted only of debates. I gravitate more to chunky ideas, such as spectacle or movement, that are fleshed out through an array of films that include fiction features, documentaries, newsreels, commercials, artists' shorts, fashion films, process films, among others.

**What do you have in mind for the upcoming Miami festival?**

When you invited us to curate a festival this winter for and on behalf of the Miami Design District, cinema historian Tom Gunning and I were in the middle of working on the 10th anniversary celebration of the London Fashion in Film Festival. We were inspired by a project we first tested with you in Miami in 2016, "Wearing Time: Past, Present, Future, Dream." I also was finishing my PhD on fashion in cinema, which grew from a decade of curating and publishing. Both events put me in a reflective mode. Certain ideas started to come into sharper relief, ideas that may have been implicit in my programs but never were fully articulated—such as my penchant for juxtaposing commercial cinema, including features, commercials and various promotional films, with artist and avant-garde moving-image works. I was not thinking of it as an end goal but more as a method through which to arrive at something fresh and unexpected. Needless to say, there have been real ties between avant-garde productions and moving image commercials. In Miami, I want to talk about these links more openly, if only to ask again what tensions they represent for image-makers today. I am thrilled about the collaboration between the Miami Design District and Miami International Film Festival, which enables us to have this conversation there. Vitoria de Mello Franco, whose work we are showing in the Miami festival, represents a younger and new generation of fashion filmmakers. I can't wait to present her feisty ideas.

# THROUGH THE LENS OF FASHION

Marketa Uhlirova is the co-founder and director of the Fashion in Film Festival and a co-producer and co-editor of *The Inferno Unseen* (2017), a new cut of the unfinished 1964 film by Henri-Georges Clouzot, which screens in March during the Miami edition of the festival. Cathy Leff, who has known Uhlirova since 2015, checks in with the curator in advance of the screening.

**PORTRAIT BY MARION SAUREL**



COURTESY OF NOWNESS (MINE); CINTECADI BOLOGNA (RAPSDIA SATANICA)

"I always try to introduce new ways of framing the relationship between fashion and film."  
—Marketa Uhlirova



Clockwise: In *Mine*, a short film from production duo Tell No One, contemporary dancers gracefully chase after each other in Louis Vuitton, La Perla and Bottega Veneta in a ballet that ignores the gendering of fashion; a still from Nino Oxilia's 1915 silent film *Rapsodia Satanica* takes the story of Faust and replaces the male character with a woman; Uhlirova combines her backgrounds in art history and fashion to explore and engage new notions of fashion in film.