

# Emilio Federico Schuberth: Intermediality Practices between Fashion, Cinema and Television

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## Abstract

The essay investigates Emilio Federico Schuberth's work and his relationship with cinema and television. As one of the most important fashion designers of the Made in Italy, protagonist of Roman social life and costume chronicles, Schuberth has been the first to draw the attention of the press and public opinion to the fashion designer, a new protagonist of show business, cinema and culture. During the 1950s Schuberth built a system of "integrated promotion" between fashion, film, press and television: he created his own personal style, he dressed the most famous Italian and international actresses, he opened his atelier to the cinema industry, he played himself in films and participated in television programs. Schuberth understood the communicative importance of the media system and implemented a communication strategy based on intermediality. The essay describes the methodology of the research, the type of archival sources considered and the use of an interdisciplinary approach, which allowed for a greater understanding of one of the most interesting and least studied figures in Italian high fashion.

**Keywords:** Emilio Federico Schuberth; Made in Italy; Cinema; Television; Intermediality.

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## Introduction

After World War II, Italian Fashion again takes on its role as one of the main economic and cultural players in the country and, through several promotional channels, becomes a leader in the international market. The connection with the film industry can be considered one of the winning strategies used to enter the international imaginary and to develop a powerful form of communication. Leaving the atelier, Italian High Fashion became a widespread cultural phenomenon which assigns great importance to a new conception of representation and to a new shape of fashion show business. The *First Italian High Fashion Show*, organized by Giovanni Battista Giorgini<sup>1</sup> in 1951, exemplified this very clearly. As protagonists of this legendary season, we must mention at least Federico Emilio Schuberth, Fernanda Gattinoni, Irene Galitzine, Sorelle Fontana, Noberasco, and Jole Veneziani.

In particular, Emilio Federico Schuberth is one of the most interesting and least studied figures in Italian high fashion. While his name is constantly featured in the literature dedicated to “Made in Italy fashion,”<sup>2</sup> Schuberth has been overshadowed by the names of ateliers that have enjoyed greater resonance and have survived the test of time.<sup>3</sup> As a protagonist of the Italian post-war scene, Schuberth created a constant aura of wonder around himself, not only thanks to his couture creations but also due to his eccentric personality. Film and theatre stars assiduously frequented Schuberth’s atelier, collaborating in the consensus-building and transforming the designer’s life into a kind of stage. In addition to movie stars, Schuberth was the couturier to the aristocracy: his most famous clients included Princess Soraya of Persia, the Duchess of Windsor, Maria Pia of Savoy and Evita Perón. Schuberth was the first fashion creator who wanted to be a star and this starring role was created and developed thanks to a targeted and intensive use of the media system: not only did he dress and personally appear in films and magazines, but in 1954, when television programs began broadcasting in Italy, he decided to go on television. He was already aware of the impact that this new medium would have on society as a whole. Yet his *pioneering intermediality* was also nourished by a sophisticated and original use of advertising. In this essay, I intend to carry out an analysis of the unique relationship that Schuberth established with the media, namely cinema and television.

## Methodology

This paper investigates Schuberth’s life, work and his relationship with cinema and television. Rather than limiting its scope to the field of film studies, it was deemed useful to adopt an interdisciplinary approach, which takes into account the specificities of the case study: if it is true that Schuberth has long been ‘lent’ to the film industry, working in the service of actresses, it is also true that the tailor cannot be equated with professional costume designers, always at the service of production requirements. Instead, his work is strongly linked to the promotion of the atelier, a place where fashion is always a form of spectacle that manifests, each time, in different forms and discourses, while maintaining highly recognizable characters.

The study was conducted through the analysis of archival material from the following institutions: Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione, Archivio Storico Luce, Archivio della Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, and Teche RAI. Specifically, periodicals, films in which Schuberth has been involved (as an actor or as a tailor) and TV programs were examined. Using an interdisciplinary approach,

1. On Giovanni Battista Giorgini see: Daniela Calanca and Neri Fadigati, “Giovanni Battista Giorgini. From Artistic Craftsmanship to High Fashion, Italian Soft Power,” *ZoneModa Journal*, 11.1S (2021): V–VII, <https://zmj.unibo.it/issue/view/1001>; Letizia Pagliai, *La Firenze di Giovanni Battista Giorgini. Artigianato e moda fra Italia e Stati Uniti* (Firenze: Edifir, 2011); Giannino Malossi, *La Sala Bianca. Nascita della moda italiana* (Milano: Electa, 1992).
2. There is a vast bibliography on the topic. On Schuberth see especially: Bonizza Giordani Aragno, *Lo spettacolo della moda. Emilio Federico Schuberth* (Napoli: Fondazione Mondragone, 2004); Gloria Bianchino and Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, *Moda. Dalla fiaba al design* (Novara: DeAgostini, 1989); Bianchino, Gloria, ed., *Italian Fashion Designing. 1945–1980* (Parma: University of Parma, 1987).
3. Particularly in recent years, research into these ateliers has begun to receive more scholarly treatment. Nevertheless, Schuberth is less present in academic studies than other protagonists of post-war fashion.

these different sources have been used in order to reconstruct the atelier's activities, from 1940 to 1970, in high fashion, ready-to-wear fashion, cinema, and television, using an array of methodologies.

## Archival Materials and Comparative Approach

The study was carried out by means of the re-organization and cataloguing of the Schubert Fund at Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione (CSAC) of the University of Parma.<sup>4</sup> The fund consists of 2949 fashion sketches donated by Schubert's daughter, Gretel, in 1990. For each sketch I created a catalographic card through SAMIRA Software,<sup>5</sup> which includes information about: the sketch (data, material and technique), reference designer, dress/model description, state of preservation, and analytical and legal data. Sketches have been collected by the author and, for each sketch I created a second Photographic Documentation card with the digitalized sketch (Fig. 1). The analysis of the National Chamber for Italian Fashion (CNMI) documents kept at Luigi Bocconi University (Milan) has made it possible to accurately reconstruct Schubert's role in the promotion and spread of Made in Italy fashion between the 1940s and the end of the 1960s (fashion shows, presentations, *défilés*). As evidence of Schubert's activity and life, I also considered 105 unpublished photographs and 58 negatives, belonging to the Publifoto Roma Archive collection, as well as a series of 8 negatives belonging to the Dessena Archive collection, both collected at CSAC. The inventory was compiled and sorted according to the subject of the photographs. Thanks to these photographs, it has been possible to reconstruct Schubert's relations with foreign markets (United States and Germany) (Fig. 2). Additionally, in the survey I have included audiovisual material preserved by the Archivio Storico Luce<sup>6</sup> (Rome) related to Schubert, produced by the newspapers *La settimana Incom*, *Orizzonte Cinematografico*, *Mondo Libero*, *Caleidoscopio Ciac*, *L'Europeo Ciac*, and *Settimanale Ciac*. The newsreels often showed the designer together with actresses and women of high society during social occasions (e.g. film festivals, parties, receptions), walking around the city or departing for a trip. Comparison between the CSAC's photographic material with newsreels preserved by the Archivio Luce allowed for a detailed reconstruction of Schubert's work and activities within the Roman cinematographic scene during the "golden years" of his atelier (1945–1960). The analysis has demonstrated the centrality of Schubert in Italian society, but it has also been crucial for a deeper understanding of the Italian cinema-television-fashion system of the post-war period.

On the other hand, RAI Teche's materials made it possible to analyse — for the first time — Schubert's participation in popular national television programs, such as *Carosello* (1957), *La via del successo* (1958), and *Il Musicchiere* (1959). This *corpus* of audiovisual material made it possible to precisely date sketches from the CSAC's Schubert Fund and a part of the atelier's collections. The analysis also highlighted the importance of cinema and television in the promotion of Made in Italy fashion. If the relationship between television and Italian fashion, with a few exceptions,<sup>7</sup> has not yet received worthy consideration in fashion studies, it should be pointed out that this shortcoming must also be remedied in the field of television studies.

4. CSAC — Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione, University of Parma, <https://www.csacparma.it>.

5. SAMIRA software is DM Cultura's platform for cataloguing and managing cultural heritage (MIUR).

6. Archivio Luce, Rome, <https://www.archivioluce.com>.

7. See: Fabiana Giacomotti, *La tv alla moda. Stile e star nella storia della Rai* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2014).

**CD CODICI**

TSK Tipo scheda: OA  
 TKK Categoria: S  
 LIR Livello di ricerca: P  
 NCT CODICE UNIVOCO  
 NCTA ID Museo: CSAC  
 NCTR Codice regione: 08  
 NCTN Numero: D0301805  
 ESC Ente schedatore: CSAC  
 ECP Ente competente: CSAC  
 NCI Identificativo Samira: 97742  
 FON FONDO  
 FONA Codice del Fondo: MODA0024  
 FOND Denominazione del Fondo Archivistico:  
 Schubert, Emilio  
**OG OGGETTO**  
 OGT OGGETTO  
 OGTD Definizione: figurino di moda  
 SGT SOGGETTO  
 SGTT Titolo: Tailleur completo  
**LC LOCALIZZAZIONE GEOGRAFICO-AMMINISTRATIVA**  
 LDC COLLOCAZIONE SPECIFICA  
 LDCM Denominazione raccolta: Sezione  
 Media/Moda - fondo Schubert  
 LDCS Specifiche: Scatola 15  
**DT CRONOLOGIA**  
 DTZ CRONOLOGIA GENERICA  
 DTZG Secolo: XX  
 DTZS Frazione di secolo: anni cinquanta  
 DTS CRONOLOGIA SPECIFICA  
 DTSI Da 1950  
 DTSF A 1955  
 DTM Motivazione cronologia: archivio  
**AU DEFINIZIONE CULTURALE**  
 AUT AUTORE  
 AUTM Motivazione dell'attribuzione: archivio  
 AUTN Nome scelto: Schubert Emilio Federico  
 AUTA Dati anagrafici / estremi cronologici  
 (Napoli, 8 giugno 1904 - Roma, 5 gennaio 1972)  
 AUTH Sigla per citazione: ESCH  
 AUT AUTORE  
 AUTS Riferimento all'autore: disegnatore  
 AUTM Motivazione dell'attribuzione: archivio  
 AUTB Nome scelto (ente collettivo): Ricci Modelli  
 AUTH Sigla per citazione: RMOD  
**MT DATI TECNICI**  
 MTC Materia e tecnica: matita e tempera su carta  
 MTO Indicazione Colore: Colore  
 MIS MISURE DEL MANUFATTO  
 MISU Unit. cm.  
 MISA Altezza 35

MISL Larghezza 25,2

**CO CONSERVAZIONE**

ISR ISCRIZIONI  
 ISRC Classe di appartenenza: numero del modello  
 ISRS Tecnica di scrittura: a penna  
 ISRP Posizione: sul recto in alto a sinistra  
 ISRI Trascrizione: 202  
 STM STEMMI, EMBLEMI, MARCHI  
 STMC Classe di appartenenza: etichetta  
 STMI Identificazione: descrizione modello  
 STMP Posizione: sul verso  
 STMD Descrizione:  
 Modello N. 202 Tailleur di flanella grigia guarnizioni  
 di astracan nero Mt. 3 alta 140  
**TU CONDIZIONE GIURIDICA E VINCOLI**  
 ACQ ACQUISIZIONE  
 ACQT Tipo acquisizione: donazione  
 ACQD Data acquisizione: 1990  
 ACQN Nome donatore: Schubert Gretel in Rapp  
 CDG CONDIZIONE GIURIDICA  
 CDGG Indicazione generica: proprietà ente pubblico  
 CDGS Indicazione specifica: Università di Parma -  
 CSAC  
**DO FONTI E DOCUMENTI DI RIFERIMENTO**  
 FTA DOCUMENTAZIONE FOTOGRAFICA  
 FTAP Formato: jpg.  
 FTAN Numero identificativo: D0301855\_Schubert  
**CM COMPILAZIONE**  
 CMP COMPILAZIONE  
 CMPD Data: 2021  
 CMPN Nome: DBurato  
 RSR Referente: Branchi M.  
 FUR Funzionario responsabile: Branchi M.



Figure 1: Example of SAMIRA catalographic card of CSAC's Schubert Fund.



Figure 2: Wiesbaden (Germany). Schubert with his *mannequins* (March 1961). CSAC Archive, Archivio Publifoto Roma Collection. © CSAC — University of Parma.

## Trade Press and Women's Publishing

An analysis of Italian press has been indispensable for research purposes. After World War II the Italian publishing industry became a laboratory for cultural experimentation, able to establish a dialogue between distant fields.<sup>8</sup> While Schubert was able to make the most of the cinema-fashion alliance, a key element of his communicative mechanism was publishing, an important attraction engine for female audiences. Popular journals as well as high fashion magazines<sup>9</sup> dedicated many of their pages to the promotion of Made in Italy fashion and did so thanks to collaborations with movie stars (Fig. 3). The research focuses on the two Italian fashion magazines — *Bellezza* and *Novità*. The choice was dictated both by the very high quality of these periodicals (designed for the upper middle class) and by their historical significance, with *Bellezza* being the official mouthpiece of Italian fashion, and *Novità* an eye for modern national and international trends. Popular weekly magazines were also included in the analysis, such as *Grazia*, *Annabella*, *Oggi*, and *Radiocorriere* (RAI's house organ). Indeed, women's weeklies have made it possible to reconstruct the links between fashion, film and television. The connection arises above all in photo shoots and articles devoted to celebrities and film stars. Given the word limit of this essay, only a few examples will be considered and described.

8. The research took advantage of the collaboration in a project financed by the Ministry at the University of Parma and focused on the pervasiveness of cinema in Italian post-war periodicals: SIR 2014 *Italian Film Criticism in Post-War Cultural and Popular Periodicals (1945-1955): Models and Criteria for an Accessible and Scalable Database* (University of Parma, P.I. Prof. Michele Guerra).

9. Italian fashion magazines enjoyed widespread circulation during those years.



Figure 3: Gina Lollobrigida in a Schubert's dress. From *Oggi* (6th September 1956).

## Schubert's Intermediality: Fashion, Cinema and Television

### The Designer-Star Goes to Cinema and TV

In the middle of the 1950s, the phenomenon of “Hollywood on the Tiber” was born: an economic, commercial, productive, and institutional presence of the major American studios in the context of Italian cinema. As underlined by Paulicelli

Hollywood on the Tiber was a phenomenon of the 1950s and 1960s, during Italy's reconstruction and economic boom, which was fuelled by the marriage of fashion and film. Together, the two industries helped to construct an attractive idea of Italy that turned a nation in ruins at the end of World War II into one of the world's most desirable tourist destinations.<sup>10</sup>

The reopening of Cinecittà enabled Rome to become the central hub of epic film productions within a few years, of which the nascent international fashion industry took full advantage. Hollywood stars and new Italian divas entered the most famous ateliers, such as Sorelle Fontana (its regular clients included Ava Gardner, Linda Christian, Barbara Stanwyck, Deborah Kerr, Audrey Hepburn and Liz Taylor), Gattinoni (frequented by Lucia Bosè, Anna Magnani, Ingrid Bergman, Lana Turner and Audrey Hepburn) and that of Emilio Schubert, already frequented by exponents of Rome's aristocracy for some time.<sup>11</sup> The actresses became loyal clients of the Italian designers, carrying out the important role of spreading international awareness of their product. Indeed, collaborations between cinema and fashion were gradually becoming more and more widespread.

Schubert opened his atelier in Rome in 1938 and became a protagonist of the social scene in very few

10. Eugenia Paulicelli, Drake Stutesman and Luis Wallenberg, eds., *Film, Fashion and the 1960s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

11. Among the most famous brands we should also mention Carosa, Simonetta, Antonelli and Cappucci.

years. He was the first fashion designer, together with the Fontana sisters, to understand the enormous communicative importance of the world of cinema, especially for promotional purposes. It was important for an atelier to dress the nobility, but they certainly spent less than the Hollywood stars and were very tied to the Parisian tradition. American actresses, on the other hand, saw Cinecittà as the most glamorous place at that time.<sup>12</sup> Long before Sorelle Fontana,<sup>13</sup> Schubert opened his atelier to films, including *Margherita fra i tre* (Ivo Perilli, 1942), *Femmina incatenata* (Giuseppe Di Martino, 1949) and *Il principe fusto* (Maurizio Arena, 1960), and to newsreels. Among them, *La pagina della donna una lezione di buon gusto*, produced by La settimana Incom, shows the idea and self-image that Schubert, wants to propose to the public. The film does not advertise the designer's models, but tells a story, in which the "magician" of Italian fashion combines clothes with headgear by arranging the look of some models. The film shows the qualities of Schubert, the "arbiter of elegance": the tailor is a star, playing himself. If we consider this film by applying the difference between actor and star,<sup>14</sup> we could say that Schubert was a star, in the sense of a "modern myth", of his time. The tailor built his star image by drawing on cinema and film stardom. According to Morin, the star, at least until the end of the 1950s, "is made from a substance compounded of life and dream ... incarnates herself in the archetypes of the universe of fiction ... is a syncretic personality in which the real person cannot be distinguished from the person fabricated."<sup>15</sup> For Schubert the coincidence between being and appearing is not only fundamental in order to acquire and maintain recognizability among the public, but leads to the increasingly difficult distinction between private life and life on screen. Schubert's own clothing is fundamental: for him, clothing is not merely an extension of the body but a form of being, a manifestation, a certificate of identity. Schubert's identity is anything but concealed, especially the one shown in public and 'embraced' by the media of the time:

Leggero, veloce, incredibile — blusa aperta su cui spiccano gioielli che sono grandi decorazioni francesi, calzoni scuri, scarpa piatta, da ginnasta — il sarto di moda trascorre con un passo estremamente elastico — pieghevole il collo, sottile la vita, arpeggiato il gesto — da uno de' suoi saloni all'altro dando l'impressione d'una genialità che, organizzandosi non ha perduto nulla della sua leggerezza.<sup>16</sup>

Among the three films mentioned above, the most significant for the purposes of our analysis is *Femmina incatenata*, a sentimental melodrama that follows the tragic events of the aspiring sculptor Idla (Lori Randi) and her teacher Manuel (Manuel Roero). In the film, a long sequence shows us not only the interior of the Roman atelier, where Idla works, but also Schubert himself (decorated as always with brooches and precious jewels). The most significant moment is that of the show inside the atelier, where the story is interrupted to give space to fashion. Schubert's actual models followed one after the other, demonstrating the collection to some ladies: it starts with four elegant but practical morning suits, then moves on to afternoon dresses and ends with evening dresses (which have sonorous Schubertian names, such as *Summer dream* and *Enchantment*). The designer is omnipresent (Fig. 4): when he does not appear playing himself, we can see his portrait on the wall,<sup>17</sup> the last image presented by the director before the fade-out at the end of the sequence. Everything in the atelier is Schubert. Certainly not within the narrative discourse, but in what concerns the relationship between the two media, fashion and cinema. Thanks to the film, the fame of Schubert's atelier extended to a much wider audience,

12. Bianchino, Gloria, ed., *Italian Fashion Designing. 1945-1980* (Parma: University of Parma, 1987), 99.

13. Luciano Emmer's film, *Le ragazze di Piazza di Spagna*, which sees their direct involvement in the screenplay, is from 1952.

14. Edgar Morin, *The stars* (New York: Evergreen profile books, 1961).

15. Morin, *The stars*, 105.

16. Gianna Manzini, "Il vestito e l'auto," *La fiera letteraria*, 31 maggio 1953. In *La moda di Vanessa* (Palermo: Sellerio Editore, 2003), 93.

17. Schubert's atelier was based on the French model, similarly to many of the other brands in the capital. It was furnished with large mirrors which offered the opportunity to play on the double and the reflected image of the dress, with velvet armchairs and sofas, precious lamps (often in Murano glass) and curtains. The space expressed the owner's eccentric and irrepressible personality: a large portrait of Schubert by the painter, Aldo Severi, dominated the luxurious atelier called, not surprisingly, the "Fifth Basilica of Rome".

that of the cinema and the numerous magazines dedicated to films and worldliness which, in those years, underwent a period of unprecedented expansion.



Figure 4: Emilio Federico Schubert in *Femmina Incatenata* (Giuseppe di Martino, 1949).



Figure 5: Schubert making the dress directly on Marilù Tolo. From: *Made in Italy. Alta moda*, Teche Rai, 1959.

Yet, Emilio Schubert was also the first fashion designer to understand the mass media role of television<sup>18</sup> (Fig. 5). Toward the end of the 1950s, entering people's homes from the very birth of television, he participated as guest in *La via del successo*, a program hosted by Walter Chiari,<sup>19</sup> in which Schubert showcased his 1958/59 dress collection. But it was the following year, in 1959, that Schubert fully exploited the potential of television with his participation in *Il Musichiere*, one of the most popular programs in the history of Italian television. Built on the model of NBC's *Name that Tune* game show, *Il Musichiere* was a musical game (hosted by Mario Riva) in which two competitors competed to guess a song after Gorni Kramer's orchestra played just a few notes. However, the public's most anticipated segment was "Nintepodimenoché!", in which the host introduced the special guest of the episode and invited him or her to sing. Among these guests, there were some of the most famous Italian actors of the time, such as Totò, Vittorio Gassman, Marcello Mastroianni, as well as international stars such

18. He played himself in the program *Album personale di Elena Giusti* (Vito Molinari), February 8th, 1954.

19. Based on sketches, comic gags, music and imitations, the program had illustrious guests, including Ugo Tognazzi and Domenico Modugno.



as Gary Cooper, Anita Ekberg and Jayne Mansfield.<sup>20</sup> On *Il Musichiere*,<sup>21</sup> Mario Riva introduced the designer as “the tailor to queens and stars”, and after entering the stage with his usual glamorous style, Schubert was interviewed about his work. Riva asked his guest if he preferred to dress Hollywood stars or aristocrats, as well as who was the most demanding between the two. Totally at ease in front of the cameras, Schubert answered the questions by smiling, gesticulating and showing off his large shining ring, dazzling the viewers. On this occasion, he had the opportunity to reveal the secrets and the ‘behind-the-scenes’ of his work to the audience in the room and to the Italians watching at home. Thus, thousands of Italian women who would never enter his very famous atelier were also able to daydream, at least for one evening, and imagine a world that was inaccessible to them. Schubert openly divulged the habits of Martine Carol, who spent entire days, and sometimes nights, in the atelier, of Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida, and of the husbands of the divas who “were interested in the models”. After this introduction, the host passed the microphone to Schubert, who dedicated his song to “all the women in Italy and the world”. When the notes of the chorus played, model-choristers entered the scene, parading around the tailor like *mannequins* dressed in sparkling and highly elegant dresses. At the end of the number, the designer handed out sketches of a dress that could be made at home to members of the audience. Totally aware of the potential of the medium, he chose simplicity and modesty to attract the audience watching at home.

### “The Couturier is a Builder, Not a Decorator”

As a key innovator in Italian fashion, particularly in the 1950’s, Schubert has been the preferred couturier of several movie stars who frequented his atelier requesting not only dresses for special occasions (such as film festivals and galas), but also for films. Glossy fashion magazines as well as popular journals are yet another example of Schubert’s self-promotion, similar to that used by models and movie stars, such as Alida Valli and Valentina Cortese, who left for Hollywood in 1948 with a set of Schubertian dresses,<sup>22</sup> Anna Magnani, Milly Vitale (Fig. 6), and Martine Carol (Fig. 7). However, Schubert’s brand is most synonymous with Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida.



Figure 6: Rome. Milly Vitale in the atelier of Emilio Schubert (17th February 1956). CSAC Archive, Archivio Publifoto Roma Collection. © CSAC — University of Parma.

20. For a further analysis see: Aldo Grasso, *Storia critica della televisione italiana (1954-1979)* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2019).

21. “E. Schubert e Mario Riva — Il Musichiere,” YouTube, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BqedkMYvow&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BqedkMYvow&feature=emb_title).

22. Pia Soli, *Il genio antipatico. Creatività e tecnologia nella moda italiana 1951-1983* (Milano: Mondadori, 1984).



Figure 7: Rome. Martine Carol in the atelier of Emilio Schubert (1st May 1956). CSAC Archive, Archivio Publifoto Roma Collection. © CSAC — University of Parma.

As shown in several scholarly works, Schubert was the “creator” of the glamorous looks of Loren and Lollobrigida as they were becoming famous actresses. The journalist Michele Quiriglio, writing in the periodical *Cinema*, confirms Schubert’s role as follows: “When Lollobrigida visited Schubert for the first time, she was not yet *la Lollo*. She had beautiful eyes and a sweet smile, she was a typical Italian beauty, but she didn’t know what her look should be nor how she should dress herself.”<sup>23</sup> Schubert was responsible for urging Lollobrigida to cut her hair, thus ultimately refining her persona. The new “Lollo haircut” required a new overall look, which the designer accomplished by altering the construction of her dresses. A similar strategy was used to re-orient Loren’s image as a star. In every social occasion, both Lollobrigida and Loren wore Schubert; his designs were capable of enhancing their Mediterranean beauty, and the two divas were keen on associating themselves to his haute couture atelier (Fig. 8). In the autumn of 1954, Loren and Lollobrigida flew to London to represent Italy before Queen Elizabeth: for this important occasion, Schubert created a pale pink organza dress with a floral embroidered bodice and shell skirt for Loren, while Lollobrigida donned a white silk and chiffon dress with black velvet ribbons. This event reverberated in Italian women’s magazines which, in some cases, lingered on the meticulous description of every detail.

I want to draw attention here to one last and interesting example. The article *Ten models for Sophia Loren* describes a number of dresses that Schubert dresses made for the star. An analysis of the graphic and stylistic choices made by the journal offers key insights on the mechanism of double promotion. Following the same order used in fashion shows, *Grazia* published ten pieces designed by Schubert for Loren (Fig. 9). All of these dresses are basic designed, simple, discrete (*tailleur* and everyday suits), especially if we compare these models with the evening ones, but the objective of the article is the following: to choose clothes designed by the tailor ‘of queens and divas’, but used by them in everyday life, in this way establishing a mechanism of identification with an audience familiar with the actress and also interested in fashion trends. The article gives the reader a double advantage. Firstly, she gets a scoop on the latest trends of a major Italian film star and, on the other hand, she can learn to dress like her. In turn, the diva legitimizes the work of the atelier which has contributed to her *glamourization*; indeed, the text emphasizes that the pieces “were all created by Schubert, who was also the tailor of Gina Lollobrigida.”<sup>24</sup>

23. Michele Quiriglio, “Schubert veste le dive,” *Cinema*, IX, 168 (16 giugno 1956): 286.

24. Anonimo, “Dieci modelli per Sophia Loren,” *Grazia*, XXIX, 780 (29 gennaio 1956): 17.



Figure 8: Gina Lollobrigida and Emilio Schubert in the atelier. From: *Cinema* (16th June 1956).



Figure 9: Sophia Loren in Schubert's *tailleurs*. From: *Grazia* (29th January 1956).

During the 1950s, Schubert also started to design costumes for films. Retracing the steps of this secondary but important activity of the atelier allows us to shed light on almost completely unexplored aspects of its output, not only in terms of a designers' central role in enhancing the divine image of an actress, but also to understand to what extent, through the work of an 'exceptional costume designer', the cinema welcomes, filters and conveys international fashion trends. Schubert 'lent himself' to the cinema, but cannot be considered as a professional film costume designer: he did not adapt his costumes to the story being told, shaping the character's exterior on screen. Instead, he enhanced the body and image of the diva, the film's protagonist. Indeed, Schubert had a key role in the glamourisation process of the stars also *on set*: pieces created for films always drew inspiration from the atelier's collections and were fashioned according to contemporary trends, even in historical films. There was strong system of commissioning in the film industry, with the most famous actresses demanding clothes made by their own couturier. This assumption is supported by the analysis of several films (not only Italian but also Hollywood productions) starring Lollobrigida, Loren, Bette Davis, Brigitte Bardot and Abbe Lane. We can see, for example, how a contemporary gold dress, advertised on fashion magazines by Loren and Martine Carol, is adjusted for Lollobrigida in King Vidor's *Solomon and Sheba* (1959), as well for Loren in Melville Shavelson's *Houseboat* (1958) (Fig. 10). Whereas the vast majority of fashion designers did not showcase their creations through the film industry until the establishment of ready-to-wear, Schubert was far ahead of the times, promoting his atelier through the world of cinema.



Figure 10: Lollobrigida in King Vidor's *Solomon and Sheba* (1959) and Loren in Melville Shavelson's *Houseboat* (1958).

## Conclusion: Results and New Research Perspectives

In the field of film studies, the cataloguing of the Schubert Fund, combined with an analysis of the designer's work for the silver screen, has shed new light on some aspects concerning the influence of Made in Italy on post-war cinema, opening up new lines of research. Furthermore, this paper underlines the importance, in archival research, of the "speaking gap". With the exception of a few figurines bearing the name of an actress (Anna Magnani, Abbe Lane), no drawings or sketches made specifically for film productions could be identified within the Schubert Fund. This "lacuna", which at first glance might suggest that Schubert's work as costume designer was marginal and limited, shows that a vast array of

creative output was interwoven within his atelier: from haute couture to the cinema, from boutique collections to the dresses of divas, the couturier's designs maintained a *fil rouge* throughout. This *modus operandi* did not lead to a uniformity of style but, on the contrary, it gave rise to a series of mutually beneficial exchanges between the world of fashion and cinema, and vice versa.

The defining feature of the wide range of Schubert's legacy, as shown previously, is his key role in *glamourising* the stars: the pieces he created for films always drew inspiration from the atelier's collections and were shaped according to contemporary trends. A comparison between CSAC's sketches (made almost entirely for haute couture) and dresses created for the movies reveals a strong commissioning system within the film industry. This aspect, fairly unexplored in film studies, opens up new lines of research both in terms of the relationship between the figure of the tailor and that of the costume designer and the relationship between fashion and the film industry.

In the field of fashion studies, this cataloguing enabled a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the creative output carried out by the designers operating in Italy after the Second World War. Antonio Pascali, Lino Pelizzoni, Renato Balestra, Chino Bert, and Tito, in the middle of the twentieth century, travelled the country, from atelier to atelier, contributing to the circulation of designs, writing in sector magazines and, frequently, collaborating with the designers in the creative process. With a few exceptions,<sup>25</sup> designer is a virtually unknown figure, often considered a mere executor and not worthy of attention. What emerges from the present research, however, is the need to fill this gap, not only in order to re-evaluate this key figure in the world of fashion, but also to understand it from a historical perspective. In addition, there is a need for an in-depth study of the circulation mechanisms of the sketch designers themselves which, in the context of studies of post-war Italian design, may lead to a re-evaluation of the practices of creating and producing collections and the circulation of sketches.

The analysis and reorganization of the Schubert Fund also provide a prototype of storytelling through archival collections using audiovisual media and new forms of communication. The *Making Schubert* project<sup>26</sup> investigates and explores the fashion designer through the analysis of CSAC's archive material and the creation of a video essay, which can be extended and applied to other archive collections, and serve the key aim of reaching a broader audience (not limited to specialists or academics).

In conclusion, Schubert's communicative vision, as attentive to self-presentation as to the promotion of his creations, was ahead of the times. While the self-promotion of the fashion designer through various media became a widespread practice for securing brand success in the following decades, Schubert operated in a context that was not yet mature. Nevertheless, he can be identified as the first celebrity designer to self-consciously fabricate a mass-media persona relayed through his public image<sup>27</sup> and one of the most important forerunners in constructing an intermedial narrative where fashion, film, photography, television, radio and the press evolved into an ecosystem driven both by economics and culture.

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25. See Bonizza Giordani Aragno and Gloria Bianchino's works.

26. Project's title: *Making Schubert. A pilot video-essay project that tells the story of an archive* (Dorothea Burato, Sara Martin, University of Parma, 2019, P.I. prof. Sara Martin).

27. Yves Saint Laurent is considered the first. See: Nick Rees-Roberts, "The Master Narrative: Authorship, Fame, and Failure in the Designer Fashion Film," in *The Routledge Companion to Fashion Studies*, eds. Eugenia Paulicelli et al. (New York–Oxon: Routledge, 2022), 371–81.

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