

DRESSING MARILYN

How a Hollywood icon was
styled by William Travilla

Andrew Hansford (with Karen Homer)

*“Billy Dear, please dress me forever.
I love you, Marilyn”*

(Marilyn Monroe to Travilla)

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

- William Travilla created Marilyn Monroe’s best-known and most stunning dresses, including the white dress in *The Seven Year Itch*, the pink dress from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and the gold lamé dress designed for *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* but deemed too scandalous.
- Features previously unseen material, including original sketches, patterns and costume test shots, plus extracts from lost interviews with Travilla, to reveal the fashion secrets of a Hollywood goddess.
- In 2012 London’s Victoria and Albert Museum will host an exhibition of famous dresses in Hollywood, including many of Travilla’s dresses for Marilyn. There are plans for the exhibition to travel afterwards. A 2008 exhibition of Travilla’s costumes was attended by over 200,000 people in just 16 weeks in the US and the UK.
- New and forthcoming films featuring Marilyn include: *My Week With Marilyn* starring Eddie Redmayne, Michelle Williams, Emma Watson and Judi Dench, released in November 2011; a film of Joyce Carol Oates’ bestseller *Blonde* with Naomi Watts is set for 2012, and 2013 sees the release of *The Life and Opinions of Maf the Dog and of His Friend Marilyn Monroe*, rumoured to feature George Clooney and Angelia Jolie.
- 2011 marks 50 years since the release of Monroe’s final film *The Misfits* and in 2012 it will be 50 years since her death. These events will ensure continued publicity.

OUTLINE

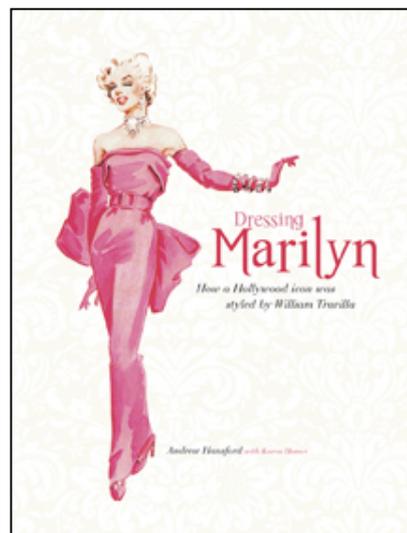
William Travilla is one of the best costume designers of all time and Marilyn Monroe his most famous client. *Dressing Marilyn: How a Hollywood icon was styled by William Travilla* focuses on the striking dresses that Travilla designed for Marilyn, from his early work on the dark thriller *Don’t Bother to Knock* and the gorgeous pink dress in which Marilyn sang “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend” to the legendary white dress from *The Seven Year Itch*, which arguably contributed to the collapse of Marilyn’s marriage to Joe DiMaggio. Featuring Travilla’s original sketches, rare costume test shots, dress patterns, photographs of Marilyn wearing the dresses, plus exclusive and never-before-seen extracts from interviews with Travilla, this book offers a fresh insight into the golden age of Hollywood.

CONTENTS

Introduction; Travilla: A Biography; The Red Dress (*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*); The Pink Dress (*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*); The Gold Dress (*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*); The Purple Dress (*How to Marry a Millionaire*); Tropical Heatwave (*There’s No Business Like Showbusiness*); The White Dress (*The Seven Year Itch*); *The Stripper*; Personal Outfits; Overview.

AUTHORS

Andrew Hansford manages Travilla’s archive and was responsible for the 2008 exhibition. He has lectured to fashion students on Travilla and his work. **Karen Homer** is a fashion writer who has written for *Vogue* and *The Times*. She has authored three books, including *Things a Woman Should Know About Shoes*.



TRIMMED PAGE SIZE

280 x 216 mm (11 x 8 ½ inches) portrait

EXTENT 192 pages

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THE CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

An introduction to Travilla's friend and business partner Bill Saris and his memories of Marilyn Monroe.

TRAVILLA: A BIOGRAPHY

A brief introduction to Travilla and his career.

THE RED DRESS

The opening scene of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* needed to set the tone for the entire movie. It also provided a challenge for Travilla as he had to design an outfit that would complement both Marilyn and her costar Jane Russell. To accomplish this, he chose a vivid red, added jewels, and created the ultimate showgirl costume for both his leading ladies which also had the impact necessary to open the movie.

THE PINK DRESS

Originally the costume for "Diamond's Are A Girl's Best Friend" was to be a fishnet body stocking in nude fabric with an ornate necklace of diamonds. Marilyn's hips would be encased in a girdle with four strands of huge stones travelling around her body, flowing into a tail that cascaded to the floor. The outfit would be completed by a jewelled headdress. In the end this design never made it to the screen, as the studio felt the costume was too revealing and "unacceptable by reason of being overly sexually suggestive" so Travilla hastily created a baby pink floor-length dress as a replacement. Thanks to the advent of global technicolour and its use in films, the dress actually became known for being a much deeper pink than it was in reality and has gone on to become synonymous with Marilyn.

THE GOLD DRESS

The gold lamé dress that Travilla made for Marilyn for another scene in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* was one of Marilyn's favourite outfits. However, following the uproar of the pink dress, Marilyn was forbidden from wearing the gold dress and the only surviving trace of it on film is a shot of Marilyn's back. When Marilyn announced her intention to wear the dress to collect her award as Fastest Rising Star of 1952 at the *Photoplay* awards ceremony, Travilla was against it but Marilyn prevailed and the dress helped her to gain as much press attention as the award did and bolstered her reputation in Hollywood.

THE PURPLE DRESS

How to Marry a Millionaire brought fresh challenges in terms of costume and design as it was the first picture to be filmed in CinemaScope. This new technique meant that the actors on screen could sometimes appear wider than they were in reality so although full skirts were the fashion when the film was made, Marilyn, Betty Grable and Lauren Bacall initially refused to wear them. Grable and Bacall eventually relented, but Marilyn insisted on only wearing tight skirts. Travilla worked within these constraints, however, to create some iconic dresses for Marilyn and her costars (most notably the stunning purple evening gown that was almost architectural in its construction) and was rewarded with an Academy Award nomination.

TROPICAL HEATWAVE

Although Marilyn's character of Vicky was only added to *There's No Business Like Showbusiness*, a film tribute to Irving Berlin, at the last minute, Travilla was determined to make her costume memorable. Joe DiMaggio was particularly disturbed by the suggestive outfit Marilyn wore for the song "Heat Wave" and caused such a commotion over it that he was banned from the set.

THE WHITE DRESS

The story of one of the most famous dresses in cinema history, the white dress Marilyn wore in *The Seven Year Itch*, including how it was created in a weekend, its construction, how it arguably led to the collapse of Marilyn's marriage to Joe DiMaggio and how it has continued to inspire designers for decades.

THE STRIPPER

Shortly before her death Marilyn signed on to make a film entitled *The Stripper* and Travilla agreed to do the costumes. After Marilyn's death, the role went to Joanne Woodward. This chapter features the sketches Travilla created for Marilyn's role, the majority of which have never been seen until now, and considers how they were designed to show a more mature and refined version of Marilyn.

PERSONAL OUTFITS

During their friendship Travilla also created a number of personal outfits for Marilyn. This section reveals some of Marilyn's personal favourites, how they were made, and the impact they had.

FURTHER CLASSICS

An overview of the other outfits Travilla designed for Marilyn's films.

Additional sales information:

- Travilla also designed for Jane Russell, Paul Newman, Errol Fynn, Joan Crawford, Sidney Poitier, Judy Garland and Lauren Bacall, as well as for television shows such as *The Thorn Birds*, *Knots Landing*, and *Dallas*.
- In 2011 Debbie Reynolds sold the original white dress from *The Seven Year Itch*, plus several other dresses Travilla designed for Marilyn. The white dress was expected to sell for \$2.5 million, but the final price reached was \$4.6 million. This book features exclusive pictures of the dresses worn by Marilyn that were owned by Debbie Reynolds, including the white dress, the red dress, the yellow showgirl dress and the “Heat Wave” dress.

Marilyn Monroe wore a shocking pink dress in the 1953 film *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, directed by Howard Hawks. The dress was created by costume designer William "Billy" Travilla and was used in one of the most famous scenes of the film, which subsequently became the subject of numerous imitations, significantly from Madonna in the music video for her 1985 song "Material Girl".