

Hollywood: Her Story December 2020 ENewsletter Costume Designers

Debbie Reynolds collected costumes from the film industry and advocated for preserving and exhibiting costumes from the Golden Age of Cinema for many decades. Although it took many years, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has finally decided that costumes are important and will be opening the Debbie Reynolds Conservation Studio in April of 2021. The woman with the most Oscar nominations (35) and a household name for decades, costume designer Edith Head was featured in our June 2019 newsletter. We recognize and celebrate some of the other costume designers featured in our book across the film industry's history.



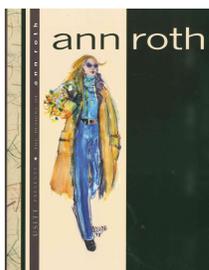
During her forty-year Hollywood career, costume designer **Mary Wills** became known as “the fabulous Miss Wills” due to her clothing designs. She was the first woman admitted to the Yale Art and Drama school from which she earned her master's degree. She then moved to Los Angeles where her first job was as a sketch artist for *Gone with the Wind*. Wills began her costume designing career in 1944 with the movie *Belle of the Yukon*. She won the Best Costume Design, Color Oscar in 1963 for *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm*. The first of her six other Oscar nominations was in 1953 and the last was in 1977. Wills designed costumes for both historical and contemporary films.



Costume designer **Irene Sharaff** performed her style miracles across the entire field of the performing arts – theatre, opera, dance, and film. Her work in film was recognized through fifteen Oscars nominations from which she took home five Oscar statuettes. Her first win was in 1952 for Best Costume Design, Color (shared) for *An American in Paris*. Her subsequent Oscars were for *The King and I* (1957), *West Side Story* (1962), *Cleopatra* (1964 – shared) and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1967). The Theatre Development Fund Irene Sharaff Awards were established in 1993 to honor a member of the costume design community and she received the inaugural award! Subsequent award recipients were expected to embody the qualities of excellence that Sharaff demonstrated: a keen sense of color, a feeling for material and texture, an eye for shape and form, and a sure command of the craft. Sharaff said, “. . . you can acquire chic and elegance, but style itself is a rare thing.”



Italian costume designer **Milena Canonero** designed costumes for film, stage and television. Her first major film work was for *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). She won her first of four Oscars in 1976 for *Barry Lyndon*. Her other Oscar wins were for *Chariots of Fire* (1982), *Marie Antoinette* (2007) and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2015). She had five additional nominations. Canonero has received Italy's highest honor for her achievements and is referred to as the Dame of the Grand Cross.



A costume designer with more than one hundred film credits, **Ann Roth** won the 1997 Best Costume Design Oscar for *The English Patient*. She had been nominated three other times, the first being in 1985 for *Places in the Heart*. Roth started in production design, but Irene Sharaff took her under her wing. Roth apprenticed with Sharaff for five movies and five Broadway productions before becoming an independent costume designer. Her niece Amy Roth is now also a costume designer for movies and television.



Costume designer **Ruth E. Carter** won her first Oscar in 2019 for *Black Panther* after receiving nominations for *Malcolm X* in 1993 and *Amistad* in 1998. She has worked in the business for more than thirty years, has more than forty film credits, and has done costume design for both television and movies. Her television work garnered her an Emmy nomination for the reboot of *Roots*. Carter is particularly known for her costuming work on period ensemble films. After she won her Oscar, Carter said, “. . . it is about sticking with it, keeping a faith and growing as an artist. This award is for resilience and I have to say that feels wonderful!”



British costume designer **Sandy Powell** has won three Oscars and has been nominated an additional nine times. Her Oscar wins are for *Shakespeare in Love* (1999), *The Aviator* (2005) and *The Young Victoria* (2010). Powell said, “The clothes are always made for characters. The job is not making actors look nice in clothes. It’s about making actors believable as their characters, about making the story work.”



Costume designer **Colleen Atwood** has been nominated twelve times for a Best Costume Design Oscar and has won four of those times. Her wins were for *Chicago* (2003), *Memoirs of a Geisha* (2006), *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2017). Her career as a costume designer started by accident when the mother of someone she met was designing sets for a movie and Atwood got a job as production assistant. She later moved to costume design working on films, more than fifty to date, and television.

Women in front of and behind the camera make the movies that we all welcome into our hearts and homes. Women across all the areas of moviemaking from actress to animator, editor to stuntwoman, costume designer to screenwriter, producer to director have contributed to the success of the movie industry since its founding in the 1890s. Help us celebrate these women who are written into movie history in *Hollywood: Her Story*.

Jill S. Tietjen and Barbara Bridges

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