

## READ



***The Erotic Cloth: Seduction and Fetishism in Textiles***, Lesley Millar and Alice Kettle's provocative collection of essays promises, as the editors write, to 'excite and disturb'. The book aims to examine how 'the qualities of cloth that seduce, conceal, and reveal have been explored and exploited in art, design, cinema, politics, and dance.' That's a lot to cover; but Millar and Kettle succeed by assembling a diverse array of perspectives on works ranging from a 19th century marble statue of a girl in a shoulder-baring chemise to the 2007 final cut of the science-fiction film *Blade Runner*, from the 18th century taffeta sack-back dress to early Punk designs. With an approach that interweaves the personal, theoretical and technical, this book is a winning dialogue among eroticism, text, and textile.

Millar, a professor of textile culture, curator, and weaver, and Kettle, a professor of textile arts and an embroiderer, bring their academic and creative sensibilities to this volume. Indeed, both scholars and visual artists contribute to the book, resulting in a blend of textile-as-text analysis and personal narrative. It is divided into four parts: Part I, *The Representation of Cloth*, includes essays on the representation of cloth in painting, marble sculpture, and film, and the eroticism that emerges when those images are 'reworked' into fabric. Part II, *Making and Remaking the Cloth*, focusses on the construction of clothing via silhouette, and embroidered embellishment. Part III, *The Alternative Cloth*, engages the relationship between clothing, cloth and skin, and Part IV, *The Performing Cloth*, details the relationship between cloth and movement, as expressed by dance, drawing, and film.

Throughout the book, authors interpret their intellectual and emotional relationships with 'erotic cloth'. Angela Maddock, for instance, uses a 16th century portrait of a tailor holding a pair of shears to engage in a discussion of Lacanian edges and of cutting fabric. Ruth Hingston writes about finding the feminine via embroidery while living and working in the masculine mining town of Kalgoorlie, Australia. Catherine Harper writes about the connections between mens' shirts, intimacy, and mourning, using the film *Brokeback Mountain* and the blood-stained shirt worn by Irish nationalist James Connolly, to reference the absent bodies beneath shirts. Georgina Williams uses William Hogarth's drawing *Serpentine Curve* to explore dancer Loïe Fuller's *Serpentine Dance*, the undulating silhouette rendered via cloth. The book's generous trim permits luminous images on nearly all of its glossy pages: silver embroidery scissors bound by red yarn; a detail from 18th century taffeta sleeves separated from their bodice for alteration; rows of mussel shells with red velvet peeking out. And with such a combination of word and image, this collection fulfills its promise and more: it excites, disturbs, and satisfies. ♦♦♦ **Kate Cavendish**  
***The Erotic Cloth: Seduction and Fetishism in Textiles* edited by Lesley Millar and Alice Kettle, Bloomsbury, 2018, £22.50, ISBN: 9781474286800**

