

and elaborating on older uses of queer camp performance, the film contains a much greater degree of sentimentality about, and admiration for, the many things it stages and indeed dresses. Much more extensively developed as a form of live theatre, camp performance in the late '60s and early '70s was very much about bringing participants into the fold of new kinds of social, cultural and political spaces, where the values assigned to things in everyday life could be inventively challenged and given new life and meaning through their re-configuration.

Camp in *Pink Narcissus* is also an integral part of what might be described as the film's world-making ethos. The film repeatedly uses camp to garner a feeling for the pleasure of gay male experiences of socialising, if not collectivising, at this critical historical juncture. Characterised by groups and organisations such as the Effeminists, Gay Flames and, later and on a much larger scale, the Radical Fairies, playing with iconographies of gender and sex also functioned as a sort of rallying point, bringing scores of people together as they enjoyed and found camaraderie in the pleasure of transgressing traditional gender dictates at a time when their upholding was literally being policed. To reject these norms meant, and often still means, taking on a good deal of risk, and while to do so may have prompted feelings of threat and discomfort, it also promoted feelings of mutual appreciation amongst those who did so.

As an underground project propelled by the persistence of Bidgood's desire to fuse elements of romance, porn and camp-reflexivity into a new and distinct kind of cinematic experience, *Pink Narcissus* is very much the product of the filmmaker's very personal vision. At the same time, one of the things that is most striking about *Pink Narcissus* is how this vision manifested in a film that, far from being slight, solitary or exclusive in its treatment of the social world, is so fantastically accommodating, finding in anything and everything rich possibilities for homoerotic expression; re-dressing the 'world out there' to meet the grand aesthetic criteria set by Bidgood's source material. This expression does far more, however, than simply communicate feeling and desire. Like the many people who came in and out of the 'bedroom' world of Bidgood's studio over the greater part of a decade, it bespeaks the kind of merging of public and private, social and

personal, and political and cultural arenas that came to underscore the very phenomenon of gay liberation. Evoking a spirit of 'stranger sociability', to borrow a term from Michael Warner, the film advances the construction of new kinds of social formation, by elaborating on experiences and feelings that many male-desiring men had in common, though could not always easily share in a collective context due to the prohibitions and anxieties of a repressive society.<sup>17</sup>

Just as the film potently and provocatively addresses the audience through its complex combination of the sexually direct and the politically sharp, it also, more simply, offers audiences the sheer pleasure of viewing, for its own sake, a glistening, endlessly unfolding display of light, colour, texture and movement. In every sense of the word, *Pink Narcissus* was an experimental endeavour and Bidgood's devotion to using a trial-and-error approach to filmmaking resulted in a film unlike any other – it is a film that has continued to inspire generations of cultural practitioners.<sup>18</sup> While *Pink Narcissus* is too expansive and inclusive to be reduced to any single feature, it would be a mistake to overlook its capacity to inspire in the viewer an almost overwhelming feeling of wonder. Re-working the alibi-ridden constraints of physique film and photography, through which standard-issue 'veiling' apparel plays on the viewer's desire to see more, Bidgood turned dressing itself into a new kind of spectacle.

17 Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, Zone Books, 2002: 121–2.

18 While a number of films, photographs and paintings appear to be informed by Bidgood's work, two notable examples include the work of the French photography team Pierre et Gilles and the hyperbolic set design and costuming that comprises the *mise en scène* of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1982 film *Querelle*.

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From Charles Baudelaire to Walter Benjamin to Jack Smith, fashion made the dream world of modernity visible – just like the movies. In this volume, the role of fashion in film goes beyond the talented studio designers and glamorous stars to reveal a fantasia of new media, reinvented identities and refashioned genders. Colour, light, movement, screens and veils make up a world as powerful as it is ephemeral. In this book, fashion takes full flight into a new critical spotlight.

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This richly illustrated volume brings together popular and experimental cinema and theatre to highlight the role of costume within and, in so doing, shed new light on the iconographic elements of the films discussed. With an international cast of skirt dancers, vamps, show-girls and actors of queer underground films revealed in a wonderful collection of stills, frame enlargements and photographs, the contributors reanimate the cinema of fifty and a hundred years ago. Given the book's particular focus on fabrics which decorate bodies or are manipulated by them, the reader becomes fascinated by the significant contribution made by costumes to performance on screen.

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*Reader in the History of Art and Design,  
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