

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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GREAT ACTRESSES OF THE PAST, FILM PROGRAM AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Great actresses of the Past, a special program of film excerpts, will be shown at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, April 23 - 29, daily at 3 and 5:30. The program includes scenes of Gabrielle Réjane in Madame Sans-Gêne (1911), Sarah Bernhardt in La Dame Aux Camélias (1912), Minnie Maddern Fiske in Vanity Fair (1915), and Eleanora Duse in Cenere (1916).

According to Iris Barry, first Curator of the Museum's Film Library, "Especial admiration was earned by the scene in which Madame Sans-Gêne, now the Duchess of Danzig, confronts Napoleon with unpaid laundry bills dating from the time when he had been an impecunious soldier and she his washerwoman....The bravura of Bernhardt's death scene still holds the power to impress. This is the Camille of an idolized actress who had been interpreting the role successfully for more than thirty years.... Of the four actresses represented, Mrs. Fiske undoubtedly shows to least advantage; her gestures seem nervous and abrupt, while the versatility and naturalness for which this intelligent actress was admired are quite lost....Duse understood very completely the necessity for a new technique unlike that of the theatre and, although one senses her fear of the camera and its penetrating vision, she responded to its demands more imaginatively than did her contemporaries. There are nobly eloquent gestures here as well as classical beauty....Since this is all that remains to be studied of these great actresses of the past, affection and curiosity unite to demand the preservation of their films. At least the screen keeps a partial record of the physical appearance, stature, gait and gestures of the illustrious dead. And wherever the films sought piously to recreate famous theatrical performances, they furnish instructive glimpses of extinct theatrical styles and traditions."

Piano accompaniment for the films is arranged and played by Arthur Kleiner.

Further information available from Herbert Bronstein, Associate Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City. CI 5-8900.