

The Museum of Modern Art

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THE CAREER OF KATHARINE HEPBURN SUBJECT OF MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBIT

The career of Katharine Hepburn, spanning almost four decades, will be illustrated in a photographic exhibition opening July 9 at The Museum of Modern Art. Sixty-five photographs of Miss Hepburn in 36 films and 10 plays indicate the diversity of characters portrayed by the actress, who won two Academy Awards in the last two years.

Miss Hepburn is the third actress to be so honored by the Museum. The two previous exhibitions were devoted to Sophia Loren and Greta Garbo, both of whom have worked exclusively in film, but Miss Hepburn has had a notable career on the stage as well as on the screen.

The present exhibition, assembled by Gary Carey, Assistant Curator in the Museum's Department of Film, includes scenes from some of the actress's most famous works -- "Philadelphia Story," "Bill of Divorcement," "Little Women," "Alice Adams," "Mary of Scotland," "Stage Door," "Bringing Up Baby," "Adam's Rib," and "The African Queen." Her most recent pictures "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?," "The Lion in Winter," and the forthcoming "The Madwoman of Chaillot" will also be represented.

The French critic, Jean Domarchi, once commented that without Katharine Hepburn the sophisticated comedy, one of Hollywood's famed genres, would not have been what it was.

Miss Hepburn's independent and candid nature has provoked a host of descriptions from "a good fellow" to "a temperamental snob," to which Miss Hepburn has remained equally indifferent. "I'm a personality as well as an actress," she has commented. "Show me an actress who isn't a personality, and I'll show you a woman who isn't a star."

Katharine Hepburn, an alumna of Bryn Mawr College, was one of six children of a well-to-do Hartford, Connecticut, family. She began acting immediately upon graduation

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from college when she entered a Baltimore stock company. And, told that she required further training, she persuaded her father to finance her dramatic and dancing lessons. Her father, a surgeon, and her mother, a crusader for women's rights and birth control, had not at first accepted their daughter's theatrical career.

Insignificant parts on Broadway preceded the 1931 production of "Art and Mrs. Bottle" in which Miss Hepburn first attracted attention. Five other plays followed before her first real hit, "The Warrior's Husband." This led to many Hollywood offers and her appearance in such pictures as "Morning Glory," "Spitfire," "A Woman Rebels," "Quality Street" and others of varying success.

There was one interruption during this period when she appeared on Broadway in the short-lived Jed Harris production, "The Lake," which evoked the oft-quoted remark from Dorothy Parker, "Miss Hepburn ran the gamut of emotions from A to B."

In 1939, after five years of working in Hollywood, the actress made a theatrical comeback in Philip Barry's play, "The Philadelphia Story." She received unanimous acclaim and The New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. Later she starred in the screen version of the play, and the Hepburn legend started. Although her admirers steadily increased, she maintained a private life and reticence in public which was unique for a Hollywood star of that time. This attitude eventually became respected by the press.

In every role Miss Hepburn has manifested "the sharpness and vigor of her personality." Of her performance in "Little Women" Variety reported, "It's as though somebody put Little Lord Fauntleroy on the stage as a real human kid instead of an impossible cherub in tight velvet breeches and a lace collar."

One of Miss Hepburn's major triumphs was ^{"The} /African Queen," in which she co-starred with Humphrey Bogart. The contrast, it was said, added to the force of each other's personality. "She is shrill, where he is lackadaisical, accidulous where he is hesitant, gaunt where he is heavy featured, and nervous where he is deliberate."

Miss Hepburn "labored long in the service of her art, and like many grand actress-personalities," said Lee Rogow in The Saturday Review, "she has now created herself in her own image." Commenting on the film "Summertime," he wrote about "the sad mouth,

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the head-back laugh, the dream of enchantment behind the wistful eyes, the awakened puritan passion of the girl in love, the leggy stride and always the bones--the magnificent, prominent and impossible bones...."

Kenneth Tynan, discussing the play "The Millionairess," declared, "the part is nearly unactable, yet Miss Hepburn took it, acted it and found a triumph in it." This critic, perhaps, pays the most appropriate tribute of all to the actress. "Miss Hepburn is not versatile; she is simply unique."

The film stills, installed by Carl Laanes, the Museum's Senior Designer, will be on view in the auditorium gallery of the Museum.

Additional information and stills available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Lillian Gerard, Film Coordinator, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 956-7501, 7296.