

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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#44

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MoMA TO PAY TRIBUTE TO L'ULTIMA DIVA, FRANCESCA BERTINI,
WITH SCREENINGS ON OCTOBER 7 AND 8

The first and unquestionably the most indelible of the star actresses of the Italian silent screen, Francesca Bertini brought an emotional intensity and grandiloquence of gesture to whatever character she played, from peasant to femme du monde. In her honor, the Department of Film will screen her most notable film, the 1915 Assunta Spina, and a remarkable documentary, L'Ultima Diva: Francesca Bertini, on October 7 and 8 in the Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2.

Assunta Spina is a film that astonishingly prefigures the Italian school of neo-realism of more than three decades later. (Indeed, it was remade with Anna Magnani in the title role at the height of neo-realism's vogue.) Filmed in natural light in the crowded streets of Naples, Assunta Spina is galvanized by the raw vitality of Bertini's portrayal of a laundress whose tragic love affair leads to murder and imprisonment.

Although Bertini reached the peak of her fame during World War I, she has returned to film acting on several occasions, most recently to play Burt Lancaster's elder sister in Bernardo Bertolucci's 1900. At over ninety years of age, Bertini participated in the filming of Gianfranco Mingozzi's documentary portrait L'Ultima Diva: Francesca Bertini, produced by RAI-TV. The film intermingles excerpts from her performances with an extensive interview with the diva herself--including her comments on Assunta Spina as it is screened for her.

A TRIBUTE TO FRANCESCA BERTINI has been organized by Stephen Harvey, Assistant Curator in the Department of Film. For further information, the public may call (212) 708-9500.

SCHEDULE

Sun. 10/7	2:30	<u>L'Ultima Diva: Francesca Bertini</u> . 1983. Gianfranco Mingozzi. In Italian, English subtitles. RAI-TV. 81 min.
	5:00	<u>Assunta Spina</u> . 1915. Gustavo Serena. With Francesca Bertini, Gustavo Serena. Live piano accompaniment. 66 min.
Mon. 10/8	2:30	<u>Assunta Spina</u> . No piano accompaniment.
	6:00	<u>L'Ultima Diva: Francesca Bertini</u> .

For further PRESS information, please contact Stuart Klawans, Film Press Representative, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019 (212) 708-9752.