

POLA NEGRI, FAMOUS SILENT FILM STAR,
WILL MAKE GUEST APPEARANCE AT MUSEUM

The Museum of Modern Art will honor the silent film star Pola Negri, Thursday evening, April 30, 8:00 P.M., when the actress will make a guest appearance and one of her rare early films will be presented. "A Woman of the World," a 1925 adaptation of a Carl Van Vechten novel, will be shown in its entirety, in addition to excerpts from her other films. Charles Hofmann, Musical Director of the Department of Film, will provide piano accompaniment for the pictures.

Miss Negri will be introduced to the Museum audience by Eileen Bowser, Associate Curator of the Department of Film. Mrs. Bowser, who is in charge of the Museum film archives, recalled that Miss Negri's advent in America in the twenties had the impact of an earthquake. The actress who gave rise to such a landslide of publicity and rumor has just written her autobiography, "Memoirs of a Star," to be published this month by Doubleday.

Miss Negri's first picture to be seen in America was aptly titled "Passion." It was directed by Ernst Lubitsch, but his name was omitted from the credits and the German origin of the film, in the days following World War I, was kept secret. Miss Negri, because of her name, was considered to be Italian, though she was Polish born.

The actress, according to Mrs. Bowser, preceded her director Ernst Lubitsch to this country. She immediately became a sensational success here, although she had already achieved renown in Germany, having been trained in the Warsaw Theatre, and in the company of Max Reinhardt in Berlin. In this country, Mrs. Bowser points out, her style was "a revelation. The fire that Pola brought to her roles astounded American audiences. She made his-

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torical characters like Madame DuBarry appear to have real emotions and come alive as human beings."

Mrs. Bowser admits that once Hollywood had Pola it didn't know quite what to do with her. On the whole her American films never used her talents as well as the German ones had, the curator commented. "Nonetheless, she was for a while the greatest movie star in Hollywood. Legends were built around her, and she became the symbol of artistic temperament, the worldly woman, the passion-tossed sex figure, and above all, the prima donna, the diva."

The picture selected by Mrs. Bowser, "A Woman of the World," has Miss Negri playing with Chester Conklin, a Mack Sennett-trained comedian. The story, directed by Mal St. Clair, who also came from the Sennett school, is a romantic and satiric comedy, loosely based on Van Vechten's "The Tattooed Countess," with the obvious intent of demonstrating "the flamboyant talents" of the actress as a sophisticated European lost in a provincial American town.

Pola Negri was born Barbara Apolonia Chalupex, December 31, 1899, in Janowa, a Polish province of the Russian Empire. Her father, a violinist, was deported to Siberia. Her mother moved to Warsaw, where the child was to become the protege of the Countess Planten, who had her trained at the Imperial Royal Ballet School. Poor health caused her to abandon ballet, though she was able to enter the dramatic conservatory, making her theatrical debut in 1913 under the pseudonym Pola Negri, after an Italian poetess Ada Negri, in a drama by Gerhardt Hauptmann.

During World War I, Pola Negri was a nurse. Her interest in the films led her to write scenarios for herself and play the leading roles. Between 1915 and 1916 she made six films under the direction of Alexander Hertz.

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In 1916, however, when the Germans occupied Warsaw, she came to the attention of the celebrated Max Reinhardt, and moved to Berlin where she began a career in the theater. She was soon to become a star in the famous German U.F.A. studios. Even at this time her temperament became noted before Ernst Lubitsch had cast her first as "Carmen," then in "Madame DuBarry," and in "The Eyes of the Mummy Ma."

In America Pola Negri was put under contract by Paramount Pictures which had engaged her for ten films. The scandals which surrounded her private life were notorious in an era when movie stars were considered public property. Her career, however, was climaxed by her collaboration with her former director Lubitsch in her favorite film "Forbidden Paradise," made in 1924. In 1927, Miss Negri also made a film with another famous director Mauritz Stiller titled "Hotel Imperial," and while she later returned to Europe to make more films abroad, she eventually came back to this country. Her last American film, opposite Adolphe Menjou, was made in 1943.

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