

Forte Marghera
16.07 – 01.11 2020

divine

Ritratto d'attrici
dalla Mostra Internazionale
d'Arte Cinematografica
1932–2018



La Biennale di Venezia

Archivio Storico
della Biennale
di Venezia

125



Opening hour:

from 16.07.2020 to 21.09.2020: 1pm – 9pm
from 22.09.2020 to 01.11.2020: 10am – 6pm
Closed on Monday. **Free entrance**

#BiennaleCinema2020 #BiennaleArchivio #Divine
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The activities of the Biennale 2020 open with the photography exhibit *Divine. Portraits of actresses from the Venice International Film Festival 1932 - 2018*.

An important signal for a special year: after spending the months of the lockdown putting much of its heritage online for public viewing, the Historical Archives of La Biennale – ASAC organizes this exhibition and on August 29th will inaugurate, in the Giardini della Biennale, an Exhibition curated by the Directors of all six Departments (Art, Architecture, Cinema, Theatre, Music, Dance) which will allow visitors to relive the key moments of the 125 years since the foundation of La Biennale di Venezia.

DIVINE opens in the name of women and illustrates their fundamental role in the history of the Seventh Art. DIVINE evokes the beauty, the glamour, the allure and emotion of the red carpet. Today, thanks to the talent and the histories of these women (not only the actresses but also the protagonists in all the “film professions”), many more women and men have learned to take on responsibilities that had been ignored for centuries. Through their work, says the Director Alberto Barbera in his introduction, we have achieved a greater and better understanding of the changes in our society. It is wonderful that this exhibition is on display at Forte Marghera, a venue that La Biennale has chosen for several of its important events in the past. This year has forced us to revolutionize many things, and unfortunately to postpone others. But it has also taught us that La Biennale is unique in terms of its Exhibitions and its international standing. Its position would not be so central, and not for such a long time, had it not been underpinned by its firm intention and its capacity to pursue a dialogue at every level between the contemporary arts and society to understand, appreciate and critically evaluate the models it inspired around the world.

I would like to thank the City of Venice, the Fondazione Forte Marghera and the Superintendence for Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape in the City of Venice and the Lagoon.

Roberto Cicutto
Presidente de La Biennale di Venezia



MONICA BELLUCCI in *The Brothers Grimm*
(I fratelli Grimm e l'incantevole strega)
by Terry Gilliam, USA, 2005
Photography: Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia
– ASAC



GRETA GARBO
in *Grand Hotel* by Edmund Goulding
with John Barrymore, USA, 1932
Photography: Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia
– ASAC



LAUREN BACALL
sitting in the terrace of the Hotel Excelsior, 1952
Photography: Laboratorio Ferruzzi
Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia – ASAC



NATALIE PORTMAN in *Black Swan* (*Il cigno nero*)
by Darren Aronofsky, USA, 2010
Photography: Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia – ASAC

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Future Eva on the Red Carpet

The 'minor' history of La Biennale di Venezia's Venice Film Festival has often crossed paths with the greater History of the Twentieth Century, blending into it or reflecting its events – like in a reverse mirror – necessarily leaving some trace on its apparently bright and immaculate surface. The complicated interactions with the Nazi-Fascist regime in the 1930s, the reconstruction period following World War II (consisting in exciting artistic results and less glorious low-grade bureaucratic incidents), the phantoms of the Cold War that rippled the still waters of the lagoon, the lasting reverberations of the protest that began with the May '68 demonstrations and continued for an entire decade, the political diatribe caused by the *Biennale of Dissent* in the second half of the 1970s. And naturally, the profound, though perhaps less obvious, reflections of the change in customs, morals, habits and social behaviour that characterized the various phases in the growth of the country, which was neither linear nor progressive, but distinguished by rapid leaps forward and sudden stops and steps back, which the Venice Film Festival duly recorded, like a sensitive seismograph.

There are other ways to review the eighty-eight years that separate us from the first edition of the Venice Film Festival, back in the year 1932 of what is known as the Short Twentieth Century, which would have infinite reasons to pray to be forgotten. But in this case, we are pleased to remember because one of the many beautiful things it brought with it is the invention of film festivals, those great collective events of which the Festival in Venice was the prototype and sole paradigm, to be copied and imitated, to compete with and rival in a contest fortunately regulated by *fair play* and *bon ton*. Of the many threads running through this history of success, downfall and resurrection, we have chosen one for this temporary exhibition at Forte Marghera, the title of which allows no uncertain interpretations. It is evident that the history of cinema, from the moment that it ceased to be just a curious sideshow to become the most florid industry of mass communication and entertainment, its history, as I was saying, appears inextricably intertwined with the history of the leading men and divas who were one of the major attractions for audiences around the

world. It is no coincidence, furthermore, that the first big stars were mostly women: the process of transforming actors into stars seems to have been closely linked to femininity and to the image of a future Eve, arising from a synthesis between the *prima donna* of opera fame and the representation of women offered by nineteenth-century European culture (primarily in painting, literature and poetry). Scholars sustain that women could be made into divas more easily than men, because they were the embodiment of some of the fundamental themes of mass culture, such as the aspiration to beauty, youth and the search for love. It was easier and more profitable, by virtue of their natural fascination, to idealise them, to shape them as desired depending on need, to make them less real and more abstract, easier to venerate and be venerated. Not coincidentally, in the liturgy of the festivals-collective rituals which have long replaced other celebrations once delegated to places with a long history of socialization such as church parishes and political parties – the *red carpet* is a central and essential moment, and has become a touchstone even for those who cannot afford it.

So let's allow ourselves the pleasure to review, along this short itinerary of 92 images from the Historic Archives of La Biennale di Venezia – ASAC, the history of the Biennale Cinema through the filter of glamour and allure offered by the portraits of some of the many Divas who, for ten days every year, transformed the section of street leading from the Hotel Excelsior to the Palazzo del Cinema into a Venetian version of the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Los Angeles. Until the spotlights shine on the 77. Venice International Film Festival, the first festival to take place following the long and painful lockdown that brought the world to its knees. The reopening starts in Venice, where (almost) everything began. The rebirth of cinema, which too many had prematurely given up on, too.

Alberto Barbera
*Artistic Director Venice International
Film Festival*



BRIGITTE BARDOT
in *En cas de malheur (La ragazza del peccato)*
by Claude Autant-Lara, Francia, 1958
Photography: Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia
– ASAC



MICHELLE PFEIFFER
in *The Age of Innocence (L'età dell'innocenza)*
by Martin Scorsese, USA, 1993
Photography: © Columbia Pictures
Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia
– ASAC



SCARLETT JOHANSSON
in *Lost in Translation (L'amore tradotto)*
by Sofia Coppola, USA, 2003
Photography: Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia
– ASAC