



International Center of Photography

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media release



G.W. Pabst
Pandora's Box, 1929
George Eastman House Motion Picture Department
Louise Brooks Collection

Louise Brooks and the “New Woman” in Weimar Cinema

On view from
January 19 through
April 29, 2007

Media Preview
January 18, 2007
9:30 - 11am

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The American silent-film actress Louise Brooks (1906-1985) is one of the great female icons in the history of cinema. Although she starred in over thirty films, Brooks is best known for the role of Lulu in the classic German film *Pandora's Box* (1929), directed by G.W. Pabst. Over twenty-five film stills and photographs of Brooks and other powerful women of early German cinema are included in the exhibition *Louise Brooks and the “New Woman” in Weimar Cinema*, on view at the International Center of Photography (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) from January 19 through April 29, 2007.

As played by Brooks, Lulu—the heroine of *Pandora's Box*—was a jazz-age beauty wearing high-fashion clothes and a severe black bob. She embodied the ideal of the “New Woman” in Weimar Germany (1918-33), a social role that connoted political equality, free-spiritedness, and gender ambiguity. Drawing on the vast Louise Brooks archive at the George Eastman House in Rochester, this exhibition will celebrate the hundredth anniversary of her birth.

The choice of Brooks, a Kansas farm girl, for *Pandora's Box* was controversial as Lulu was considered a quintessential German heroine. But Brooks brought a freedom and freshness to the role that captured the character's spirit perfectly. *Pandora's Box*, and G.W. Pabst's follow-up film of the same year, *Diary of a Lost Girl*, cemented Brooks as Pabst's muse and emblematic of the New Woman, an image widely disseminated in the popular press and much argued about during the Weimar era as a threat to traditional roles of womanhood.

Upon her return to the United States, Brooks' film career faltered, and she eventually retired to Rochester to become a respected author of essays and journal articles about the cinema. James Card, the first curator of the George Eastman House Motion Picture Collection, is credited with the re-examination of her career, partially through the restoration of her film collaborations with Pabst.

In addition to original film stills from *Pandora's Box* and *Diary of a Lost Girl*, and unpublished photographs from Brooks' personal collection, the exhibition will include a selection of stills that represent variations on the theme of the New Woman from the George Eastman House's unparalleled trove of material from the Weimar period, including those from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) and of Marlene Dietrich in Josef von Sternberg's *Blue Angel* (1930). Also featured in the exhibition will be the newly remastered DVD version of *Pandora's Box*, to be issued by Criterion Collection in November.

The exhibition is organized by International Center of Photography Assistant Curator Vanessa Rocco, and is the eleventh in "New Histories of Photography," a project of the GEH/ICP Alliance. It is the first exhibition in this series drawn from the George Eastman House Motion Picture Collection, which holds over 25,000 film titles and three million artifacts, including stills, posters, and papers. The series is made possible by the generous support of The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation.

PUBLIC PROGRAM

"Exhibiting the 'New Woman': Louise Brooks, Amelia Earhart, and Marianne Brandt"

Moderator: Linda Nochlin

Participants: Vanessa Rocco, Kristen Lubben, Elizabeth Otto

School of the International Center of Photography

1114 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street

Friday, January 19, 2007, 6:30 pm

For more information, call 212-857-0001

Flappers and sports stars, embodiments of the dashing "New Woman" of the 1920s, symbolized an expanded role for women in the post-suffragette era. The New Woman was depicted in magazines and films as sexually liberated, politically astute, and socially fearless. This panel considers the myriad media representations of Amelia Earhart and Louise Brooks and the critical photomontages of Marianne Brandt as ways of exploring the contemporary relevance of this feminist phenomenon.

Participants include Vanessa Rocco, ICP Assistant Curator and organizer of *Louise Brooks and the 'New Woman' in Weimar Cinema*; Kristen Lubben, ICP Associate Curator and organizer of *Amelia Earhart: From Image to Icon*; and Elizabeth Otto, professor of art history at SUNY Buffalo and guest curator of *Tempo! Tempo! The Bauhaus Photomontages of Marianne Brandt*. The moderator will be Linda Nochlin, Lila Acheson Wallace Professor of Modern Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.