



Art and Celebrity in the Age of Reynolds and Siddons

Heather McPherson

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In this volume, Heather McPherson examines the connections among portraiture, theater, the visual arts, and fame to shed light on the emergence of modern celebrity culture in eighteenth-century England.

Popular actors in Georgian London, such as David Garrick, Sarah Siddons, and John Philip Kemble, gave larger-than-life performances at Drury Lane and Covent Garden; their offstage personalities garnered as much attention through portraits painted by leading artists, sensational stories in the press, and often-vicious caricatures. Likewise, artists such as Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Lawrence figured prominently outside their studios—in polite society and the emerging public sphere. McPherson considers this increasing interest in theatrical and artistic celebrities and explores the ways in which aesthetics, cultural politics, and consumption combined during this period to form a media-driven celebrity culture that is surprisingly similar to celebrity obsessions in the world today.

This richly researched study draws on a wide variety of period sources, from newspaper reviews and satirical pamphlets to caricatures and paintings by Reynolds and Lawrence as well as Thomas Gainsborough, George Romney, and Angelica Kauffman. These transport the reader to eighteenth-century London and the dynamic venues where art and celebrity converged with culture and commerce. Interweaving art history, history of performance, and cultural studies, *Art and Celebrity in the Age of Reynolds and Siddons* offers important insights into the intersecting worlds of artist and actor, studio and stage, high art and popular visual culture.

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