

Max Beerbohm: The Price of Celebrity

**The New York Public Library
Stephen A. Schwarzman Building
Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III Gallery
Fifth Avenue at 42nd Street, New York, NY**

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Today we live in a world of celebrity culture. Celebrity became an international industry in the late-nineteenth century, and the English artist and author Max Beerbohm (1872–1956) was at the center of it. From the 1890s through the 1920s, to be a celebrity meant the hope—and fear—of turning up in a drawing or a parody by “Max,” as he was known in both Britain and the U.S. His brilliant skewering of famous people in his visual caricatures and of their writing styles in his satirical works made him a celebrity himself. This was an identity he enjoyed, but later shrank from. In essays and fiction, he explored the price in human terms of achieving and maintaining celebrity status in ways that still resonate with us now.

This exhibition maps the career of Sir Max Beerbohm (knighted in 1939) in relation to the idea of celebrity, following him from his early days in the Decadent circles of Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley through his late career as a radio performer on BBC broadcasts during World War II. Along the way, he knew, drew, and wrote about many other celebrities, from Henry James to Virginia Woolf and George Bernard Shaw to members of the Royal Family.

The New York Public Library is the perfect place for this show. A wit and a dandy, renowned for always being impeccably dressed, “Max” was as popular in New York City as in London. He has continued to live on, too, as a subject of interest and also of caricatures in the *New York Review of Books*, the *New Yorker*, and other New York-based publications. Drawn from the extensive holdings of the Library, along with loans from private and institutional collections, *Max Beerbohm: The Price of Celebrity* includes rare original caricature drawings, manuscripts, photographs, books from Beerbohm’s library, and personal items, most on public display for the first time.

The exhibition is curated by:

Margaret D. Stetz, Mae and Robert Carter Professor of Women's Studies and Professor of Humanities at the University of Delaware and Mark Samuels Lasner, Senior Research Fellow, University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press.

For more information, please contact the exhibition's coordinating curator, Julie Carlsen, Assistant Curator, The Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library:

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