

The Powder & the Glory

Screening and Discussion Programs

The Powder & the Glory is an 86-minute documentary film, produced for PBS by Ann Carol Grossman and Arnie Reisman, and recently awarded a Silver Plaque by the Hugo Television Awards for 2009. It tells the fascinating story of Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein—rival, pioneering entrepreneurs who invented the business of beauty. The filmmakers take the film on the road to school, college, business, and community groups, for a screening and lively presentation highlighting one or more of the themes of the film. *The Powder & the Glory* was nearly five years in the making, and the filmmakers have a wealth of material not included in the film, which further delights and engages audiences. Programs can focus on one or more of:

- Business/Entrepreneurship—Arden and Rubinstein created an industry, and they did it starting with nothing. They were instinctive entrepreneurs, and they blazed a trail that many have since followed.
- Art & Style—how Arden and Rubinstein both influenced, and were influenced by, the trends of their times in art, style, and fashion
- Women’s Studies—how Arden and Rubinstein at the same time embraced, exploited and exploded traditional women’s roles
- American Studies—American history and culture in the first two-thirds of the 20th century through the lens of Arden’s and Rubinstein’s careers
- The Filmmaking Process—the trials, tribulations, and exhilarations of producing this documentary for national PBS broadcast
- The program includes a lecture/discussion/Q&A along with a screening of the full 86-minute documentary, or a selection of clips chosen to highlight themes, depending on the preference of the host group.

Programs have been presented at colleges including Wellesley College, Brandeis University, Framingham State College, Bunker Hill Community College, Tufts University, Salem State College; at the Fashion Center Business Improvement District Arts Festival in New York; at Saatchi and Saatchi New York; at temple, church, and community groups; and at numerous film festivals in the U.S. and abroad.

Comments from previous hosts of the screening/discussion program include:

“Our students loved this film! They’ve been studying elements of business enterprise—marketing, strategy, finance, and so on—and they recognized the pieces coming together in the work of Arden and Rubinstein...*The Powder and the Glory* helped them approach their studies with fresh eyes, and the film served as a wonderful case study to integrate so many important ideas in our course.”

Robert H. Carver
Brandeis University International Business School

“In a sophisticated and entertaining manner, the film provides a nuanced understanding of the rise of two major women cosmetic entrepreneurs and focuses on the complex meanings of

"powder and paint" for women and feminism. This is a must see for any women's studies classroom."

Susan M. Reverby

Marion Butler McLean Professor in the History of Ideas and Professor of Women's Studies, Wellesley College

"One of the most enjoyable films! I loved the way the stories of the two women were interwoven with history, immigrant cultures, the fashion business, and personal life. Thank you so much for making a film that empowers women of all cultures."

Irene M. Foster

Consumer Sciences Department, Framingham State College

"My students and I were very fortunate to have Arnie Reisman and Ann Carol Grossman as guest speakers. Their film generated much interest among students and faculty alike. In addition to the rich content of the film, students were fascinated with the filmmakers' passion, determination, tenacity, curiosity, and creativity. The presentation offered a high degree of educational value for my students."

Jayanti Bandyopadhyay

Bertolon School of Business, Salem State College

"Thank you so much for coming and sharing these inspirational stories with us. The group was very inspired and there is a lot to learn from the past."

Marcia Roosevelt

Saatchi & Saatchi New York

The Film:

*Yes, they were in the cosmetic industry, but they were more than that. They were giants of industry. They **created** an industry. It was in its infancy, a cottage industry—they made it a giant industry. It just so happened it was in the world of powder and paint.*

— Shirley Lord, Senior Editor, *Vogue*

The Powder & the Glory is the story of Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein, two pioneering, visionary entrepreneurs who, starting with next to nothing, created what is today the \$150 billion international health and beauty industry. One hundred years ago these women immigrated to America with the same idea — to build an empire by giving women what they wanted: youth and beauty. They quickly shook off their humble beginnings to become household names, pillars of society and cultural icons. They transformed the idea of cosmetics from a mark of easy virtue into a necessity for all women, in all strata of society. Yet, although they lived and worked just blocks apart, they refused to meet. For fifty years they were fierce rivals.

Narrated by Jane Alexander, *The Powder & the Glory* is based on Lindy Woodhead's *War Paint: Madame Helena Rubinstein & Miss Elizabeth Arden—Their Lives, Their Times, Their Rivalry*. The film, which had its national broadcast premiere on PBS on Monday, March 23, 2009, shows how their competing companies defined the business of beauty, making cosmetics first respectable and, finally, indispensable. Along the way they developed advertising and merchandising techniques that revolutionized marketing forever, selling not just lipstick but the luxurious lifestyle. Theirs is an inspiring story of perseverance, genuine creativity, and continual reinvention, always ready to meet the changing needs and demands of consumers and society.

They changed the way women perceived themselves, built enduring brands, and became two of the world's wealthiest women by turning pots of face cream into pots of gold.

God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another. – William Shakespeare

Elizabeth Arden was born Florence Nightingale Graham in 1881, and raised in poverty on a farm in rural Ontario. Enthralled with the high society life she saw at the nickelodeons and read about in dime novels, she came to New York in 1907, and began work as a clerk in a beauty shop. By 1910 she had changed her name to the more glamorous “Elizabeth Arden” and opened her own salon. In 1912 she joined a women’s suffrage march on Fifth Avenue, and later capitalized on the women’s movement by claiming that, in addition to the vote, “every woman has a right to be beautiful.”

Helena Rubinstein was born Chaya Rubinstein into a lower middle-class Jewish family in Krakow, Poland in 1872. She was the eldest of eight daughters, all thought to have beautiful skin, which Helena credited to the daily applications of her mother’s moisturizing cream. It was made of oils, water, and pine bark, a powerful antioxidant upon which Helena began her career. As a young woman, she fled to Australia where, in 1906, she opened a shop and began selling her cream. Business boomed and, in 1914, having already opened salons in London and Paris, she arrived in New York and began a lifelong competition with Elizabeth Arden.

Women are cheered by makeup. When the moneyed spend less on clothes, they spend more on lipstick. – Elizabeth Arden

The beauty business was tailor-made for young women entrepreneurs of limited means; products were cheap to produce and could be made at the kitchen table. Profits were high because, as both Arden and Rubinstein were quick to learn, women were willing to pay premium prices for a taste of luxury. Catering to the wealthy, they also sold their dream to the growing immigrant population and the swelling ranks of shop girls. Miss Arden and Madame Rubinstein, as they preferred to be called, were very different, even beyond their Anglo-Episcopalian and Polish Jewish roots. The “world of Elizabeth Arden” was more feminine than femme fatale. Her style suggested wealth and status, country leisure and refined city pleasure. Helena Rubinstein’s woman was urban, edgy, glamorous, a woman of dramatic personality rather than glorious beauty. But they shared the habit of reinventing themselves, and their competition drove them both to great creativity and success. Whenever one launched a successful product, the other sought to outdo her rival with a bigger success, and as soon as possible.

Both Arden and Rubinstein influenced, and were influenced by, the major movements of the day in art, style, design and cinema. Helena Rubinstein filled her salon with priceless pieces of avant-garde art; Elizabeth Arden’s sleek salon was George Cukor’s model for the 1939 film *The Women*. Their salons were showcases of modernist design, elegant temples to beauty that sold dreams as much as rouge. They were avatars of the fashion world throughout the 1920s and 30s, and Elizabeth Arden had her own clothing label even into the 1950s.

Told through rare archival footage, modern-day interviews, models and animation, *The Powder & The Glory* traces the amazing careers of these two women, from their rise in the 1910’s through the Depression, World War II, to their deaths in the 1960’s. They were true pioneers,

who not only built empires but helped usher in the “new woman” of the 20th century – free-spirited, independent, and in every way equal to men.

With her packaging and my product, we could have ruled the world.

– Helena Rubinstein on Elizabeth Arden

Interviews include: Kitty Carlisle Hart; Twiggy; former Arden makeup artist Pablo Manzoni and hair stylist Stephen Glass; biographer Lindy Woodhead; *Vogue* Senior Editor Shirley Lord; journalist and author Suzanne Slesin; art expert David Nash; advertising critic Jean Kilbourne; scholars Kathy Peiss, Virginia Drachman, Nancy Koehn, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Lawrence Fuchs, Neil Harris, Marie Clifford.

Excerpts from published reviews of the film:

- *...wrapped around the story of these two lives is the fascinating record of evolving social mores and tastes, of the impact of war and other adversity, as reflected in the ups and downs of the beauty business...[a] highly seductive film... (Dorothy Rabinowitz, *Lipstick, Powder and Steel*, *The Wall Street Journal*)*
- *This is why we love PBS. Because it brings us smart documentaries like *The Powder & the Glory*. (Alyssa Giacobbe, *Our Makeup, Ourselves*, *The Moment NYT Style Blog*)*
- *...a smart new PBS documentary...(Matthew Gilbert, *Two Rivals in the Business of Beauty*, *The Boston Globe*)*
- *...a fascinating tale of two women and the cultural age their vision helped shape... (David Hinckley, *Two Women Who Changed the Face of America*, *The New York Daily News*,)*
- *...especially timely...told with wit and charm...(Sylvia Rubin, *First Ladies of Lipstick*, *San Francisco Chronicle*)*
- *...uses all kinds of fun little tricks to tell the story...(Joan Juliet Buck, *Lipstick Wars*, *Vogue*)*
- *...paints a vivid portrait... (Michelle Archer, *What's On Tap This Month That Executives Won't Want to Miss*, *USA Today*)*

The Filmmakers:

Filmmakers Ann Carol Grossman and Arnie Reisman have worked together frequently since 1996. They began developing *The Powder & the Glory* in 2003. Both producers have been making films for more than thirty years, with many award-winning productions to their credit. Ms. Grossman and Mr. Reisman are also experienced speakers. Both are former college professors, Grossman at Emerson College, where she headed the Film Section, Reisman at Boston College and Brandeis University. Reisman has been a regular panelist on National Public Radio's *Says You!* since its inception in 1996. The weekly comedy quiz show now airs in more than 120 markets. In March 2009 the filmmakers appeared on the television program *Greater Boston*, where they were interviewed by host Emily Rooney.

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