

1. Record Nr.	UNINA990000834050403321
Autore	Weil, André <1906-1998>
Titolo	Oeuvres scientifiques : collected papers / A. Weil
Pubbl/distr/stampa	New York : Springer, 1979
Descrizione fisica	3 v. : ritr. ; 25 cm
Locazione	FINBN
Collocazione	02 49 F 15 02 49 F 16 02 49 F 17
Lingua di pubblicazione	Francese Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Nota di contenuto	1 : Table des matières [1926-1951] XVIII, 574 p. 2 : Table des matières [1951-1964] XII, 561 p. 3 : Table des matières [19741978] XII, 465 p.

2. Record Nr.	UNINA9910824396403321
Autore	Pullen Kirsten
Titolo	Like a natural woman : spectacular female performance in classical hollywood / / Kirsten Pullen
Pubbl/distr/stampa	New Brunswick, New Jersey : , : Rutgers University Press, , 2014 ©2014
ISBN	0-8135-6266-X
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource
Classificazione	AP 50300
Disciplina	791.4302/809252
Soggetti	Women in motion pictures Motion picture actors and actresses - California - Los Angeles
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Includes index.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- CONTENTS -- PREFACE -- Introduction: Playing Herself: The Naturalist Paradigm and the Spectacle of Female Sexuality -- 1. Engineered for Stardom: Publicity, Performance, and Jane Russell -- 2. More than a Mermaid: Esther Williams, Performance, and the Body -- 3. Light Egyptian: Lena Horne and the Representation of Black Femininity -- 4. Carnival!: Carmen Miranda and the Spectacle of Authenticity -- 5. Famous for Being Famous: Persona, Performance, and the Case for Zsa Zsa Gabor -- NOTES -- INDEX -- ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Sommario/riassunto	Bathing beauty Esther Williams, bombshell Jane Russell, exotic Carmen Miranda, chanteuse Lena Horne, and talk-show fixture Zsa Zsa Gabor are rarely hailed as great actors or as naturalistic performers. Those terms of praise are given to male stars like Marlon Brando and James Dean, whose gritty dramas are seen as a departure from the glossy spectacles in which these stars appeared. Like a Natural Woman challenges those assumptions, revealing the skill and training that went into the work of these five actresses, who employed naturalistic performance techniques, both onscreen and off. Bringing a fresh perspective to film history through the lens of performance studies, Kirsten Pullen explores the ways in which these actresses, who always appeared to be "playing themselves," responded to the naturalist notion

that actors should create authentic characters by drawing from their own lives. At the same time, she examines how Hollywood presented these female stars as sex objects, focusing on their spectacular bodies at the expense of believable characterization or narratives. Pullen not only helps us appreciate what talented actresses these five women actually were, but also reveals how they sought to express themselves and maintain agency, even while meeting the demands of their directors, studios, families, and fans to perform certain feminine roles. Drawing from a rich collection of classic films, publicity materials, and studio archives, *Like a Natural Woman* lets us take a new look at both Hollywood acting techniques and the performance of femininity itself.

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