

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Circle 5-8900 Cable: Modernart

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Five films by the pioneer French director, ABEL GANCE, almost unknown in this country, will be shown at The Museum of Modern Art from November 19 through December 5. The program also includes a recent film study of Gance's work photographed and directed by Nelly Kaplan, who has assisted Gance on many of his films. Screenings are daily except Wednesdays, when the Museum's regular programs of shorts at noon and films from the archive are shown.

Although only a small selection of Gance's work will be shown, dating from 1922 to 1938, it is hoped, according to Gary Carey, Curatorial Writer for the Museum's Department of Film, who selected the films, that the screenings "will correct the portrait of Gance presented in too many film histories." Mr. Carey points out in the program notes that "Gance's fate in the hands of these writers is not unlike what Griffith has suffered from those who have dispassionately anthologized his innovations but who have failed to come to grips with the power and peculiar limitations of the director's genius."

Gance, who was born in 1889, resides in his native France. Since 1915, he has produced about 50 films; the most recent, CYRANO ET D'ARTAGNAN (c.1963), was introduced at the Second New York Film Festival. Those to be shown at the Museum are LA ROUE (1922), NAPOLEON (1925-26), LUCRECE BORGIA (1935), LOUISE (1938) and J'ACCUSE! (1938).

"Gance's career has embraced the roles of poet, writer, actor and film director -- and sometimes all four at once," Mr. Carry states. "From the very beginning of his career, he set awesome goals for himself, particularly in his role of film director. Gance entered the film at a time when the French cinema was still under the crippling influence of the Film d'Art, photographing reproductions of the French theater of the period. He immediately understood that the medium was not being used to a tenth of its potential, particularly its extraordinary subjective powers...."

(more)

"The passing of time has added an even greater handicap to Gance's films. When he began his career, the spectacle film was coming into popularity. Gance, like Griffith, saw it as a perfect form for his ambitions and ambitious themes. The spectacle has long been out of favor and, though it is still often granted that the form is inherently cinematic, few serious directors in recent years have undertaken the challenge of the genre. Gance's talents are precisely those demanded by the spectacle: an ability to concretize a large, often abstract, theme with emotional urgency and intimate detail; a sure hand in guiding the sweep and surge of crowds; a superb sense of composition, particularly in long shot; finally, a talent for vividly recreating the atmosphere of an historical period."

PROGRAM:

- Sat. Nov. 19 (11:30,3,5:30) *LA ROUE (1922), directed by Abel Gance. Photographed by L. H. Burel-Bujard and Duverger. With Severin Mars, Gabriel de Gravonne, Pierre Magnier, Terof, Ivy Close.
- Sun. Nov. 20 (2 & 5:30) *NAPOLEON (1925-6), directed by Abel Gance. With Albert Dieudonne, Antonin Artaud, Edmond van Daele, Alexandre Koubitzky, Maxudian, Abel Gance, Gina Manes, Suzanne Bianchetti. Print courtesy of the National Film Archive of the British Film Institute.
- Mon. Nov. 21 & Tues. Nov. 22 (2 & 5:30) LUCRECE BORGIA (1935), directed by Abel Gance. Script by Leopold Marchand and Henri Vendresse. Photography by R. Hubert and B. Kauffman. Music by Marcel Lattes. With Edwige Feuillere, Gabriel Gabrio, Josette Day. 80 minutes.
- Thurs. Nov. 24 & Fri. Nov. 25 (2 & 5:30) LOUISE (1938), directed by Abel Gance. Script adapted from the opera by Gustave Charpentier with additional dialogue by Steve Passeur. Sets by George Wakhevitch. Photography by Kurt Carrant. With Grace Moore, Suzanne Despre, Ginette Leclerc, George Thil, Andre Pernet. 60 minutes.
- Sat. Nov. 26 (11:30,3,5:30) See November 20.
- Sun. Nov. 27 (2 & 5:30) See November 19.
- Mon. Nov. 28 & Tues. Nov. 29 (2 & 5:30) J'ACCUSE! (1938), directed by Abel Gance. Photographed by R. Hubert. Music by Henri Verdun. With Victor Francen, Jean Max, Marcel Delaitre. 60 minutes.
- ABEL GANCE, YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW (1965), directed by Nelly Kaplan. Photographed by Nelly Kaplan, G. Ciarlo, D. Harispe. A study of Gance's work, using his own writings and clips from his films. 20 minutes.

(more)

Thurs. Dec. 1 See November 21.
(2, 5:30, 8)

Fri. Dec. 2 See November 28.
(2 & 5:30)

Sat. Dec. 3 See November 20.
(11:30, 3 & 5:30)

&
Sun. Dec. 4
(2 & 5:30)

Mon. Dec. 5 See November 19.
(2 & 5:30)

*Silent films with music arranged and played by Arthur Kleiner.

Program subject to change without notice.

Information on press screenings, stills and additional information available from
Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Linda Gordon, Assistant, Department of Public
Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019.
Circle 5-8900.