

The Museum of Modern Art

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

No. 13

Friday, February 4, 1966
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Silent films by Ernst Lubitsch from The Museum of Modern Art archives will be presented at the Museum from February 7 through February 18. The seven films to be screened by the Film Library illustrate the famed director's remarkable versatility, his skillful adaptation of new techniques, and unusual wit in a wide range of subjects.

Lubitsch's successful career encompassed both the German and the American motion picture industries and both the silent and sound films. All of his German films, which established his reputation as a leading director, were made while he was still in his twenties. The films of this period to be shown at the Museum include an excerpt from GYPSY BLOOD (1918), PASSION (1919), and DIE PUPPE (THE DOLL) (1919). His subsequent Hollywood films to be included in the program will be THE MARRIAGE CIRCLE (1924), LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN (1925), SO THIS IS PARIS (1926), and THE STUDENT PRINCE (1927). (Program attached)

CARMEN, known as GYPSY BLOOD in the United States, the second film made by Lubitsch directing the Polish actress Pola Negri, established their reputation throughout Europe. Despite war-time difficulties, GYPSY BLOOD was an elaborate production with spacious sets and crowds of extras, following the example of the popular pre-war Italian spectacles. In this brief excerpt, which deals with Carmen's attempt to free Don José from prison, the camera remains in one position within each scene, except for an occasional brief close-up, and the actors move about in front of the camera as they might on a stage. Although it seemed old-fashioned by the time it reached the United States three years later, due to the rapid pace of technical progress, Lubitsch was greatly admired for his talent in arranging crowd scenes and Pola Negri was hailed as a great dramatic actress for her vivid portrayal of Carmen.

PASSION (MADAME DU BARRY) is of particular importance as it marked the beginning of the "foreign invasion" of Hollywood after World War I. Lubitsch in PASSION used the crowd as a dramatic unit and an impersonal force, a mass of people acting

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as one and expre. in mass emotions. A New York Times reviewer praised it as a "human document" for Lubitsch had created believable characters -- people not often seen in the American film. And it is startling even today to see the earthy, good-humored gusto of Emil Jannings and Pola Negri in their love scenes.

THE MARRIAGE CIRCLE was a great turning point for Lubitsch. From elaborate architectural constructions he turned to simple, quiet decor, from casts of thousands to a close look at three or four people, from a world of violent passions to a sophisticated satire on love affairs. He had been influenced by the American studio techniques and from this time his films bore, and contributed to, the polish which Hollywood has perfected.

Lubitsch was born in Berlin and entered the movies by way of the acting profession. In 1911, when he was playing roles in the brilliant theatre productions of Max Reinhardt, he gained his first movie experience as a technical apprentice for the German production company Bioscop. In 1918 he directed his first feature-length film DIE AUGEN DER MUMIE MA (THE EYES OF THE MUMMY). Lubitsch visited the United States in 1922 to study the American motion picture industry. He returned to Berlin but was brought back at the end of the year by Mary Pickford, and remained in Hollywood active in the movies up until his death at the age of 55 in 1947, at which time he was in the midst of still another production.

The Museum Film Library will present Lubitsch's sound films at a later date.

PROGRAM:

Daily 2 and 5:30, again Thursdays at 8; Saturdays at 11:30, 3 and 5:30, except where noted. Schedule subject to change without notice.

FILMS FROM THE MUSEUM ARCHIVE - ERNST LUBITSCH: SILENT FILMS

- Feb. 7-8 : PASSION (MADAME DU BARRY) (1919), with Pola Negri, Emil Jannings.
- 9-10 : GYPSY BLOOD (CARMEN) (1918), excerpt, with Pola Negri.
DIE PUPPE (THE DOLL) (1919), with Ossi Oswalda, Viktor Janson.
- 11-12:: THE MARRIAGE CIRCLE (1924), with Florence Vidor, Monte Blue.
- 13-14 : LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN (1925), with Ronald Colman, Irene Rich.
- 15-16 : SO THIS IS PARIS (1926), with Monte Blue, Myrna Loy.
- 17-18 : THE STUDENT PRINCE (1927), with Norma Shearer, Ramon Novarro.

Silent films with music arranged and played by Arthur Kleiner.

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