FRENCH WOMEN IN THE ARTS
SPRING 2012

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS
AND
LA MAISON FRANÇAISE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

PRESENT FOUR FILMS AND A LECTURE
LOLA MONTÈS by Max Ophüls
France / Germany (1955), 110 minutes
Screened in 35mm with English subtitles
Starring Martine Carol, Peter Ustinov, and Anton Walbrook

Lola Montès (1955) — the last film directed by Max Ophüls before his death of a heart attack in March 1957 — tells the tragic and historical story of its namesake. Lola Montès was a great adventurer who — after being the lover of important European figures such as Franz Liszt and Ludwig I of Bavaria — became the main attraction of a circus.

As originally shown in France in 1955, the audience witnesses the events of Lola Montès’ life through the use of flashbacks. This now standard technique was criticized upon its release, resulting in poor box office returns. In response, the producers — against the director’s wishes — re-cut the film and shortened it in favor of a more chronological storyline. Defended by La Nouvelle Vague, Lola Montès has been long considered “a cursed masterpiece” until its 2008 restoration.

According to film critic Roger Ebert, a "savagely butchered version was in circulation for a few years" following Ophuls' death. Another film critic, Andrew Sarris, and others, eventually showed improved versions — progressively closer to the original — at the 1963 and 1968 New York Film Festival.

Certain elements remained missing and were believed lost — but the recent discovery of the missing footage allowed a new version to be edited according to Ophül's original intentions. It was shown at the New York Film Festival in the restored version on Sept. 26 – Oct. 12, 2008.

Lola Montès was re-released by Rialto Pictures in November 2008, with the full Cinemascope aspect ratio restored and with five minutes of additional footage never before shown in any U.S. release.
MONDAY, MAY 21 AT 7:00 PM  
*at La Maison Française*

**FAREWELL, MY QUEEN by Benoît Jacquot**

France (2012), 100 minutes  
Screened in 35mm with English subtitles  
Starring Léa Seydoux, Diane Kruger, Virginie Ledoyen, and Noémie Lvovsky

France, 1789, on the eve of the Revolution: The occupants of Versailles still live in bliss, unconcerned by the increasing turmoil in nearby Paris. When news of the storming of the Bastille reaches the Court, aristocrats and servants alike desert the Palace, leaving the Royal Family alone. But Sidonie Laborde, a young reader for the Queen, refuses to flee. Under protection of Marie-Antoinette — to whom she reads books aloud — she is certain she is secure. Yet these will be the last three days she will spend by the side of her monarch. *Farewell My Queen*, inspired by a novel by Chantal Thomas, opened the 62nd Berlin International Film Festival in February.
THE CHILDREN OF THE CENTURY by Diane Kurys
France (2012), 135 minutes
Screened in 35mm, in French with English subtitles
Starring Juliette Binoche and Benoît Magimel

*The Children of the Century* is a 1999 French film based on the true tale of the tumultuous love affair between two 19th century French literary icons: novelist George Sand (Juliette Binoche) and poet Alfred de Musset (Benoît Magimel).

Perhaps the only thing more outrageous than novelist George Sand’s torrid romance with the decadent Alfred de Musset — and her affinity for wearing men’s clothing — was the content of her writing.

Though Sand — otherwise known as the Baroness Dudevant — smoked cigars and cross-dressed, it was the boldness of her writing on issues such as abstinence from marriage and women’s frigidity that most contributed to the scandalous reputation she earned in French literary circles. When she met Alfred de Musset, the most gifted poet of his generation, the two quickly became a public cause célèbre, while their work would earn the reputation as some of the finest examples of 19th century romanticism.

*The Children of the Century* made its world premiere out of competition at the 1999 Cannes Film Festival, before being released in France on September 22, 1999. Its North American debut was at the 1999 Toronto International Film Festival.
SERAPHINE by Martin Provost
France (2008), 125 minutes
Screened in 35mm, in French with English subtitles
Starring Yolande Moreau, Ulrich Tukur, and Anne Bennent

In 1912, the German collector Wilhelm Uhde — the first buyer of Picasso’s work and the discoverer of ‘le douanier’ Rousseau — rents an apartment in Senlis, in order to write and rest from the exertions of his Parisian life.

Uhde hires Séraphine, a 48-year-old housekeeper. During a visit with some notable locals, he admires a little wood painted canvas — and is stunned to learn that the artist is his maid, Séraphine. The relationship between the avant-garde art dealer and the visionary cleaning lady is by turns poignant and unexpected.

A true story based upon the life of French painter Séraphine de Senlis, Séraphine won the 2009 César Award for Best Film.
“The Challenge of Being a Learned Woman During the Enlightenment” — A lecture by Dr. Catherine Volpilhac-Augé

Does a woman have the right to be both creative and educated — a “woman of letters”? To modern ears, this is both a provocative and rhetorical question, but for women during the era of the Enlightenment, it was a living paradox in which true equality was meant for some, not for all. In this fascinating glimpse into history, you’ll meet dynamic figures like Claudine Guérin de Tencin, who hosted a thriving literary salon, but had to write her novels in disguise. These respected and admired women of the Enlightenment were keen arbiters of taste who masterfully played the socially ordained role of deferential females, while carving out their own impressive intellectual niche.

About the Presenter:
Catherine Volpilhac-Augé, professor of French literature at the École normale supérieure de Lyon, was trained in the classics. Following the 1992 publication of a thesis concerning the presence and the function of Antiquity in the Enlightenment — an area in which she continues to work — she has since 1999 devoted herself to the compilation of a critical edition of the works of Montesquieu, a project which she co-directs. Dr. Volpilhac-Augé notably edited the working manuscript of L’Esprit des lois. She has devoted several books to the historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as to the essential tenets of Enlightenment thought. Dr. Volpilhac-Augé is interested in major as well as minor figures in the first half of the eighteenth century, at the time when the philosophy of the Enlightenment was being formed.