**Le Film d’Art**

Film d’Art was a French production company founded in February 1908 by businessman Paul Lafitte and backed by Pathé. The company united playwright Henri Lavedan with Comédie Française actor Charles Le Bargy in an effort to create artistically sound dramatic features that would legitimize and elevate the cinema through association with the legitimate stage. November, 1908 marked Film d’Art’s launch with the historical film *L’Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, directed by Charles Le Bargy & André Calmettes, accompanied by original music from Camille Saint-Saëns. The concept immediately became a production trend and most European film companies sought to bank on the explicit ties to the world of literature, the theatre or fine arts, producing their own brand of art films or “films d’art” through subsidiaries and series such as Pathé’s *SCAGL*, *Film d’Arte Italiana* and Nordisk’s *Dansk Kunstfilm*. The birth of the art film coincided with a significant increase in more ambitious and complex instances of cinematic storytelling, and was also a turning point in the way film tried to market itself, targeting middle-class audiences. The art films were instrumental in developing the pictorial European tableau aesthetic of the 1910s, adopting late 19th century pictorial and theatrical visual strategies, and were therefore criticized by avant-garde “movements,” such as the French Impressionists and the German Expressionists, for not being cinematic enough.

**References and Further Reading:**

Carou, A. & de Pastre, B., eds. (2008) “Le Film d’Art & les films d’art en Europe, 1908-1911,” *1895* no. 56, Paris: AFRHC.

Carou, A. (2002) *Le Cinéma Français et les Écrivains – Histoire d’une Rencontre 1906-1914*, Paris: AFRHC.

Abel, R. (1998) *The Ciné Goes to Town – French Cinema 1896-1914*, Berkeley & London: University of California Press.

**Paratextual Material**

- *Le Film d’Art* in its original context, through scans of the contemporary Ciné-Journal, via the Media History Digital Library’s Lanter search tool (http://lantern.mediahist.org/catalog?utf8=✓&utf8=✓&q=le+film+d%27art&search\_field=dummy\_range&range%5Byear%5D%5Bbegin%5D=1896&range%5Byear%5D%5Bend%5D=1960&commit=Limit)

- The original poster for the first art film, *L’Assassinat du Duc de Guise* (<http://www.musifilm.org/spip/local/cache-vignettes/L263xH350/afficheguise-bb9ad.jpg>)

- 1895’s full issue on the early European art film in French (<http://1895.revues.org/4046>)

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