Discovering Georgian Cinema

A COPRESENTATION WITH THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

BAM/PFA AND MOMA COLLABORATE ON THE LARGEST RETROSPECTIVE OF GEORGIAN CINEMA EVER IN THE US; SERIES FEATURES APPROXIMATELY FIFTY FILMS AND SPANS MORE THAN A CENTURY OF FILMMAKING; BERKELEY PRESENTATION OPENS IN LATE SEPTEMBER AND CONTINUES THROUGH SPRING 2015

August 25, 2014, Berkeley, CA – The University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAM/PFA) and The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) are proud to present Discovering Georgian Cinema, the largest retrospective of Georgian film ever mounted in North America. A collaboration between BAM/PFA and MoMA, the series spans more than a century of filmmaking, from 1907 through 2014. The retrospective demonstrates a dazzling range of stylistic approaches and thematic concerns, from antibureaucratic satires of the Soviet system to philosophical studies rooted in a humanist tradition and lyrical depictions of Georgia’s spectacular landscape. BAM/PFA and MoMA will run concurrent programs this fall. The exhibition is organized by BAM/PFA Senior Film Curator Susan Oxtoby and Jytte Jensen, Curator, Department of Film, MoMA.
The BAM/PFA presentation gets underway on September 26 and continues through spring 2015. Including approximately fifty programs, the series showcases the strength of BAM/PFA's own Soviet Georgian collection, as well as rare prints from international archives. Screenings at the PFA Theater will feature special guests, including filmmakers and authorities on Georgian cinema and culture. Silent-era films will be presented with live musical accompaniment by master pianist Judith Rosenberg. A highlight will be two screenings of Eliso (Nikoloz Shengelaia, 1928) featuring a new score by Carl Linich, commissioned by BAM/PFA, performed by the vocal ensemble Trio Kavkasia (Alan Gasser, Stuart Gelzer, and Carl Linich).

**Discovering Georgian Cinema** will travel to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, between January and April, and to TIFF Cinematheque, Toronto, in April and May 2015. The touring series is being organized by BAM/PFA.

The following overview is taken from Susan Oxtoby's introductory essay, published in the Discovering Georgian Cinema brochure which can be downloaded on the BAM/PFA series page: [http://bampfa.berkeley.edu/filmseries/georgian](http://bampfa.berkeley.edu/filmseries/georgian)

**Discovering Georgian Cinema at BAM/PFA**

Spotlighting the talents of individual directors, the programs will move among three key periods: the wonderfully creative films of the silent era; the flowering of narrative filmmaking of the 1950s through the 1980s; and the current Georgian “new wave.”

**The Silent Era**

During the silent era, which began about a decade after the birth of cinema in Europe and continued in Georgia through 1934, Georgian filmmakers produced a number of important and artful documentaries in addition to strong dramatic films. Important works of this
era include Vasil Amashukeli’s *Journey of Akaki Tsereteli to Racha and Lechkhumi* (1912), the Georgian *Kulturfilms* (c. 1930–34), and, especially, Noutsa Gogoberidze’s *Buba* (1930), an accomplished, poetic documentary made in collaboration with the noted avant-garde painter David Kakabadze.

The best Georgian feature films from the silent era demonstrate high production standards as well as distinctive styles developed by leading directors; key early examples include Ivan Perestiani’s spirited, action-packed *Little Red Devils* (1923) and *Three Lives* (1924), with its striking use of location shooting and natural light. Mikheil Chiaureli’s *Saba* (1929) and *Khabarda* (1930) and Mikhail Kalatozov’s *A Nail in the Boot* (1930/1932) all exhibit wonderfully expressive picture editing. Other silent-era films provide us with fascinating, still-relevant geopolitical themes and evidence of Georgia’s links to Western European countries—films like Nikoloz Shengelaia’s *Twenty-Six Commissars* (1928); Lev Push’s *The Doomed: Russian Soldiers in France* (1930); Leo Esakya’s *Amerikanka* (1930); and Kote Mikaberidze’s dadaist workplace sendup, *My Grandmother* (1929).

**The Sixties Through Eighties**

By the sixties, Georgian cinema was gaining an international reputation among knowledgeable critics and programmers. The films of Tengiz Abuladze, Otar Iosseliani, Sergei Paradjanov, Eldar and Giorgi Shengelaia, Irakli Kvirikadze, Lana Gogoberidze, and Rezo Esadze, among others, contributed to the high regard in which Georgian cinema is held. In the period from 1960 through the 1980s, there are wonderful examples of filmmakers critiquing the Soviet system or the status quo at
large (An Unusual Exhibition, Blue Mountains, Repentance, The Nylon Christmas Tree). There is also evidence of filmmakers focusing on literary works and telling stories set in the prerevolutionary period, thereby concentrating on unmistakably Georgian concerns (Pirosmani, The Swimmer, The Day Is Longer Than the Night, The Legend of Suram Fortress)—a tendency that can also be found in a number of Georgian films from the silent era.

A theme that unites much of Georgian cinema is a profound love of the arts—polyphonic music especially, but also traditional dance, literature, theater, painting, and architecture. The arts and textual references to them permeate the mise-en-scène and location shooting of many of the films. Several Georgian filmmakers are noted for their lyrical or poetic technique—here we think of the cinema of Otar Iosseliani, Tengiz Abuladze (Molba and The Wishing Tree, in particular), and Aleksandr Rekhiashvili’s very fine The Way Home (1981), a work that has a kinship with those of Andrei Tarkovsky and Aleksandr Sokurov, and that should be better known.

The New Wave

Discovering Georgian Cinema showcases an impressive selection of recent films, including a number of breakout films that have received critical praise, international awards, and, occasionally, theatrical distribution in the West. The documentary films by the France-based Georgian filmmaker Nino Kirtadze: The Pipeline Next Door (2005), Durakovo: Village of Fools (2008), and Something About Georgia (2010) have received recognition by the European Film Academy as well as at the Sundance Film Festival; Tinatin Gurchiani’s The Machine Which Makes Everything Disappear (2013).
Discovering Georgian Cinema at the PFA Theater

Schedule

September 26, 2014; 7:30 p.m.
Blue Mountains
Eldar Shengelaia (USSR, 1984)
Eldar Shengelaia in person
An inspired satire by one of Georgia's leading directors, Eldar Shengelaia's Blue Mountains is a charming and disarming critique of bureaucracy. Blue Mountains was featured this year in the classic category at the Cannes film festival.

September 27, 2014; 6:30 p.m.
Twenty-Six Commissars
Nikoloz Shengelaia (USSR, 1932)
Eldar Shengelaia in person; Judith Rosenberg on piano
Set against a backdrop of oil derricks and sand dunes, this impressive silent-era feature about the geopolitical struggle for the control of oil fields is still relevant today.

Preceded by:
Work at Oil Derricks and Oil Extraction (Vasil Amashukeli, Georgia, Russian Empire, 1907). Early imagery shot in Baku by the Georgian filmmaker and cinematographer Vasil Amashukeli.

September 27, 2014; 8:30 p.m.
The White Caravan
Eldar Shengelaia, Tamaz Meliava (USSR, 1963)
Eldar Shengelaia in person
A work that certainly deserves to be better known, The White Caravan has a
commonality with the moral codes found in the Western genre. Against a rugged landscape and the forces of nature, a group of shepherds, led by the experienced Martia and his sons, move their flock to winter pastures.

**September 28, 2014; 4 p.m.**

**Repentance**  
Tengiz Abuladze (USSR, 1984/1987)  
Nana Janelidze in person

In the former Soviet Union, *Repentance* was as much an event as a film: one of the most important of the censored films to come off the shelf with the new cultural liberalization of the late 1980s, it was the first to deal with the terrors of the Stalin era. Nana Janelidze, director of the Georgian National Film Center, filmmaker, and the co-screenwriter of *Repentance*, will introduce the film.

**September 29, 2014; 7 p.m.**

**An Unusual Exhibition**  
Eldar Shengelaia (USSR, 1968)  
Eldar Shengelaia in person

Reflective and provocative, Eldar Shengelaia’s *An Unusual Exhibition* is a tragicomedy about a sculptor who, in order to feed his family, develops a niche carving tombstones bearing the likeness of the now departed.

**September 30, 2014; 7 p.m.**

**Will There Be a Theater Up There?!**  
Nana Janelidze (Georgia, 2011)  
Nana Janelidze in person

Starring one of the most popular Georgian actors, Kahki Kavsadze, and based on the true-life experiences of the Kavsadze family, this powerful film is part historical essay and part recreated biography; it uses the tragic circumstances of the twentieth century (World War II and the aftermath of the Soviet regime) as a backdrop for the chronicle of a Georgian family.

Preceded by:  
**The Family (Ojakhi)** (Nana Janelidze, USSR, 1985). This slice-of-life drama reveals Janelidze’s keen eye for intergenerational family dynamics; it is lovingly made with a near-documentary authenticity.

**October 4, 2014; 6:30 p.m.**

**Little Red Devils**  
Ivan Perestiani (USSR, 1923)  
Judith Rosenberg on piano

Set in the Ukraine during the Civil War, the film adopts the styles of American adventure films à la Douglas Fairbanks (and D. W. Griffith) in narrating the exploits of two daredevil teenagers and a young black acrobat who volunteer as scouts in the Red Cavalry.
October 11, 2014; 5:30 p.m.
Three Lives: Parts 1 & 2
Ivan Perestiani (USSR, 1924)
Live Music  Judith Rosenberg on piano
Perestiani’s Three Lives was improvised, adapted without a script from Giorgi Tsereteli’s classic novel. Distinctive location shooting, inspired compositions, and beautiful use of natural light lend an atmospheric, almost documentary quality to many scenes in this narrative that is set in late nineteenth-century Georgia.

October 12, 2014; 4 p.m.
The Case of Tariel Mklavadze
Ivan Perestiani (USSr, 1925)
Lecture by Peter Rollberg (George Washington University); Judith Rosenberg on piano
Set in the nineteenth century, The Case of Tariel Mklavadze is more than a courtroom drama about social injustice; its innovative use of flashbacks creates a cinematic adaption of this literary classic.

October 17, 2014; 7 p.m.
Magdana’s Donkey
Tengiz Abuladze, Rezo Chkheidze (USSR, 1955)
A debut feature by two young filmmakers, Tengiz Abuladze and Rezo Chkheidze, this charming folk tale was hailed as the start of a “new wave” in Soviet cinema; it won the Grand Prix at Cannes.

October 17, 2014; 8:30 p.m.
Molba
Tengiz Abuladze (USSR, 1967)
“Quite surely a masterpiece and one of the most strikingly original and beautiful films ever made. . . . Abuladze has managed to convey the ‘epic’ quality of the piece [based on two poems by Vaza Psavela] by superb use of the harsh landscapes and the integration of the characters within the surroundings.”—Brian Baxter, London Film Festival.

October 19, 2014; 4 p.m.
Georgian Kulturfilms
Introduction by Nino Dzandzava (National Archives of Georgia); Judith Rosenberg on piano
This special program showcases recent efforts to digitally restore examples of the Kulturfilm boom that occurred in the late 1920s and early 1930s, films made by young cinephile directors in Soviet Georgia.

Call of the Land, Siko Dolidze, (USSR, 1928)
You Must Reap as You Have Sown, Kote Mikaberidze, Vasil Dolenko, (USSR, 1930)
Ten Minutes in the Morning, Aleqsandre Jaliashvili, (USSR, 1930)
Collective Farmers’ Hygiene, Vakhtang Shvelidze, (USSR, 1934)

October 25, 2014; 6:30 p.m.
October 26, 2014; 4 p.m.
Special Event! West Coast Premiere!
Eliso
Nikoloz Shengelaia (USSR, 1928)
Live music by Trio Kavkasia (Alan Gasser, Stuart Gelzer, Carl Linich), performing a
new score commissioned by BAM/PFA and adapted from traditional folk songs by
Georgian music expert Carl Linich.

This historical epic evokes the tragic fate of a nation pacified in 1864 by the Tsarist
Russian Empire. When authorities begin to appropriate arable lands, the peasants
are forced to evacuate under terrible conditions. Special ticket prices apply

Saturday, November 1, 2014; 6 p.m.
The Wishing Tree
Tengiz Abuladze (USSR, 1977)
Over twenty stories make up this episodic Georgian pastorale, set in the pre-
Revolutionary birthplace of the famous painter Pirosmani.

Sunday, November 2, 2014; 4 p.m.
Pirosmani
Giorgi Shengelaia (USSR, 1969)
This poetic, visually stunning biography of the great Georgian primitive artist Nikoloz
(Niko) Pirosmanishvili won the Grand Prize at the Chicago Film Festival.

Saturday, November 8, 2014; 6 p.m.
Buba
Noutsa Gogoberidze (USSR, 1930)
Imported Print! Judith Rosenberg on piano.
Long suppressed and nearly written out of film history, this exceptional documentary
was an artistic collaboration between Georgia’s first female director and the noted
avant-garde painter David Kakabadze.

With Salomé Alexi’s Felicità (2009), a deadpan, hilarious short that takes a regular
societal occurrence—women who support their families by working abroad—and
mines it for dramatic effect.

Sunday, November 9, 2014; 4 p.m.
Our Courtyard
Rezo Chkhheidze (USSR, 1956)
The picaresque village comedy is updated for Georgia’s postwar urban realities in
Rezo Chkhheidze’s lyrical tale of life, love, and collective labor inside a chaotic Tbilisi
apartment block.

Monday, November 17, 2014; 7:30 p.m.
Women from Georgia
Levan Koguashvili (Georgia/US, 2009)
Levan Koguashvili in person
This eye-opening, compelling documentary sheds light on the hardships experienced by Georgian women in America.

Followed by Street Days (2010), an award-winning debut feature that presents a powerful character study of a drug addict struggling to survive in Tbilisi with remarkable touches of humor and pathos.

Tuesday, November 18, 2014; 7 p.m.
Blind Dates
Levan Koguashvili (Georgia, 2013)
Levan Koguashvili in person
A forty-something bachelor seeks true love, even if he is still living at home with his parents, in this whimsical Georgian love story.

Thursday, November 20, 2014; 7 p.m.
Amerikanka
Leo Esakya (USSR, 1930)
Nikolay Mikhailovich Borodachev in person; Judith Rosenberg on piano
A rediscovered archival treasure from famed Russian archive Gosfilmofond, this Potemkin on Park Row is a stylistically original piece of revolutionary propaganda, which tracks the radical activities of an underground print shop.

Thursday, November 20, 2014; 8:45 p.m.
Khabarda
Mikheil Chiaureli (USSR, 1931)
Nikolay Mikhailovich Borodachev in person; Judith Rosenberg on piano
Set in Tbilisi, Khabarda is a satire that plays on the tension between petit bourgeois values and the incoming sweep of Communist ideology.

Saturday, November 22, 2014; 6:30 p.m.
Salt for Svanetia
Mikhail Kalatozov (USSR, 1930)
Judith Rosenberg on piano
A snowbound, rock-hewn village in the harsh Caucasus is the setting for his bracing, rhythmically cut early masterpiece from the director of I Am Cuba. Nature, politics, and cinema combine in this salute to “the dynamic sublime.”

Saturday, November 22, 2014; 8 p.m.
A Nail in the Boot
Mikhail Kalatozov (USSR, 1930/1932)
Judith Rosenberg on piano
The saying “For want of a nail, a war was lost” is brought to dynamic, stirring life in this rapid-fire look at the Red Army. Followed by Patrick Cazal’s documentary on the director, Hurricane Kalatozov (2010).

Saturday, December 6, 2014; 6 p.m.
Flight of the Sparrows
Teimur Babluani (USSR, 1980)
A fistfight on a crowded train triggers something far larger in this intriguing Georgian allegory, one of Georgian cinema’s standout works of the eighties.

Sunday, December 7, 2014; 4 p.m.
The Swimmer
Irakli Kvirikadze (USSR, 1984)
An amusing and artfully crafted tale of three generations of long-distance swimmers, and the several decades of Georgian history their lives represent.

Preceded by Kirikadze’s Kvevri (The Jar, 1971), which transposes Pirandello’s “The Jar” to rural Georgia.

Saturday, December 13, 2014; 6:30 p.m.
Saba
Mikheil Chiaureli (USSR, 1929). Judith Rosenberg on piano.
This silent comic melodrama on the evils of alcohol was filmed on location in Tbilisi, and serves as a rare glimpse of that city circa 1929. (100 mins)

Sunday, December 14, 2014; 4 p.m.
Paradise Lost
Davit Rondeli (USSR, 1938)
This hilarious satire on the follies and parasitic lifestyles of the fallen nobility was termed the best Georgian comedy of the 1930s. A rare chance to see Soviet Georgian silent film comedy.

Other films to be shown at BAM/PFA from mid-January through late spring 2015, will include:

Akaki Tsereteli’s Trip to Racha and Lechkhumi (Vasil Amashukeli, 1912)

My Grandmother (Kote Mikaberidze, 1929)

The Doomed: Russian Soldiers in France (Lev Push, 1930)
Mzago and Gela (Shalva Khuskivadze & Lev Push, 1930/34)
The Last Crusaders (Siko Dolidze, 1934)
Akvareli (Otar Iosseliani, 1958)
Sapovnela (Otar Iosseliani, 1959)
April (Otar Iosseliani, 1962)
Tudzhi (Otar Iosseliani, 1964)
The Wedding (Mikhail Kobakhidze, 1965)
Falling Leaves (Otar Iosseliani, 1967)
The Musicians (Mikhail Kobakhidze, 1969)
Once Upon a Time There Was a Singing Blackbird (Otar Iosseliani, 1971)
Pastorale (Otar Iosseliani, 1975)
The Way Home (Aleksandr Rekhiashvili, 1981)
The Day is Longer than the Night (Lana Gogoberidze, 1984)
The Legend of Suram Fortress (Sergei Paradjanov, 1985)
The Nylon Christmas Tree (Rezo Esadze, 1986)
Ashik Kerib (Sergei Paradjanov, 1988)
Alone, Georgia (Otar Iosseliani, 1994)
Tell My Friends That I’m Dead (Nino Kirtadze, 2004)
The Pipeline Next Door (Nino Kirtadze, 2005)
Durakovo: Village of Fools (Nino Kirtadze, 2008)
Something About Georgia (Nino Kirtadze, 2009)
Susa (Rusudan Pirveli, 2010)
Chantrapas (Otar Iosseliani, 2010)
**Bakhmaro** (Salome Jashi, 2011)

**Waiting for Mum** (Nana Ekvitimishvili, 2011)

**The Machine Which Makes Everything Disappear** (Tinatin Gurchiani, 2012)

**Tangerines** (Zaza Urushadze, 2013)

**In Bloom** (Nana Ekvitimishvili & Simon Gross, 2013)

**Spotlight on Georgian Cinema: Film Course**

**Mondays from 1:10-3:40 p.m, September 29 through October 27**

This fall, BAM/PFA joins forces with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) to host a five-week course on Georgian Cinema.

Offered in conjunction with *Discovering Georgian Cinema*, the course is moderated by BAM/PFA Senior Film Curator Susan Oxtoby and features screenings of rare archival 35mm prints paired with presentations by experts in Georgian cinema and culture.

BAM/PFA Members may register on the BAM/PFA website. The registration fee is $145 for members.

**Support**

*Discovering Georgian Cinema* is a collaboration between the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive and The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Organized by Susan Oxtoby, senior film curator, BAM/PFA, and Jytte Jensen, curator, Department of Film, MoMA.

The retrospective at BAM/PFA is supported in part by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Curatorial Fellowship program, which allowed for extensive research, and the National Endowment for the Arts, which helped underwrite the touring series organized by BAM/PFA.

We are grateful to the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, the Georgian National Film Center, and the National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi; Gosfilmofond, Moscow; Arsenal—Institute for Film and Video Art, Berlin; Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam; La Cinémathèque de Toulouse; La Cinémathèque Française, Paris; British Film Institute, London; and the Pordenone Silent Film Festival for assisting with research materials as well as archival print loans.
About BAM/PFA
Founded in 1963, the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAM/PFA) is UC Berkeley’s primary visual arts venue and among the largest university art museums in terms of size and audience in the United States. Internationally recognized for its art and film programming, BAM/PFA is a platform for cultural experiences that transform individuals, engage communities, and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and ideas. BAM/PFA’s mission is “to inspire the imagination and ignite critical dialogue through art and film.”

BAM/PFA presents approximately twenty art exhibitions and 380 film programs each year. The museum’s collection of over 19,000 works of art includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, Abstract Expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and video art. Its film archive contains over 16,000 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema outside of Japan, Hollywood classics, and silent film, as well hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film, many of which are digitally scanned and accessible online.

PFA Theater
2575 Bancroft Way, Berkeley
bampfa.berkeley.edu/film

Theater Admission
$9.50 general admission; $6.50 UC Berkeley faculty/staff, non-UC Berkeley students, seniors (65+), disabled persons, 17 & under; $5.50 BAM/PFA Members, UC Berkeley students

*Special admission prices apply to the Eliso screenings: $20 general admission; $18 UC Berkeley staff/faculty, non-UC Berkeley students, disabled persons, seniors (65+), and 17 & under; $15 BAM/PFA members and UC Berkeley students

Ticket Sales
Online: bampfa.berkeley.edu/film
By phone: (510) 642-5249
In person: Tickets available daily 11 a.m.–5 p.m. at the BAM/PFA admissions desk, 2626 Bancroft Way, and one hour before showtime at the PFA Theater box office, 2575 Bancroft Way