

LA FOLLE ENTREPRISE (A MAD VENTURE)

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JEANNE MANCE

Director's Note

Jeanne Mance? Her name can be found all over Quebec, while in France and the rest of the world, she is practically unknown to all but a few scholars. I decided to make this film during a conference by historian Jacques Lacoursière in Montreal in April 2006. Jeanne Mance was far more than just a member of the group that established a French colony in North America. She was a co-founder of Montreal, in the same right as Maisonneuve, a major fact that has remained in oblivion for centuries. Until now, Maisonneuve has been incorrectly recognized as the city's sole official founder. The film's goal is to re-establish certain facts, with supporting evidence.

My quest began in Montreal, her future, my present. Little remains from her time. Only the result of her actions is omnipresent: the modern city of Montreal. And yet, the film reveals that her memory remains alive and well in the eyes of some. In the course of my encounters, I rediscovered Jeanne Mance the woman. I got rid of her bronze gown and lifted the veil obscuring the life she led before embarking on "the mad venture". Returning to the source of her journey, I revisited my own origins, as I, like Jeanne Mance, am a native of Langres. I retraced her route, so hauntingly familiar, to find the breaking point and the events that led her to leave everything behind and follow her passion.

Through my research into the life of Jeanne Mance I got back in touch with my Langres heritage and became aware of the reasons that led me, in turn, to cross the ocean. I realized that in spite of the four hundred years that separate us, we are united by something universal: a desire to surpass our limits.

The film's Montreal launching took place on March 8th, 2011, International Women's Day, coinciding with an announcement by Montreal Mayor Gérald Tremblay who, after watching the film, set in motion a historic process to officially recognize Jeanne Mance as co-founder of Montreal along with Maisonneuve. On May 17th, 2012, Jeanne Mance was proclaimed founder of Montreal just like Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve. This honour is perhaps the greatest reward that the film could receive.

Annabel LOYOLA

He who loses himself in his passion is less lost than he who loses his passion.
- St-Augustin