Evening

May showcases three very different filmmakers

by Anthony Glassman

Cleveland—May is here, bringing with it a new Cleveland Cinematheque schedule, full of murder, mirth, merriment and mayhem.

The Cinematheque, under the aegis of the Cleveland Institute of Art, screens independent and foreign films, as well as running retrospectives of specific directors or genres. They're also the best outlet for big-screen queerness in the state, and May continues their fine tradition.

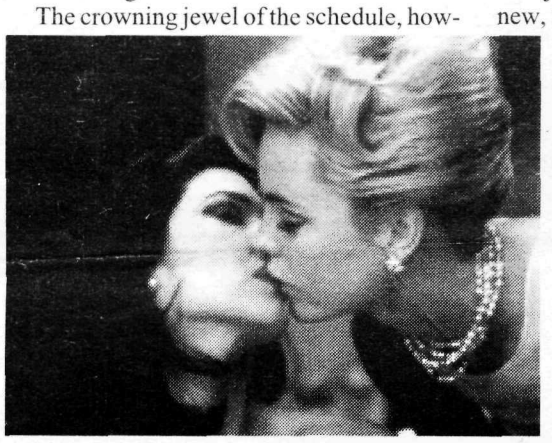
First, on Saturday, May 4 at 9:20 pm, they'll be showing *Mulholland Drive*, the dream-like opus that earned director David Lynch an Academy Award nomination. Lynch is known for his bizarre narratives, and this film fits with his form. A number of seemingly disparate stories intertwine in the movie, most importantly the budding romance between amnesiac accident victim Rita (Laura Harring) and aspiring starlet Betty (Naomi Watts).

Suffice it to say that women have been swooning over the love scene.

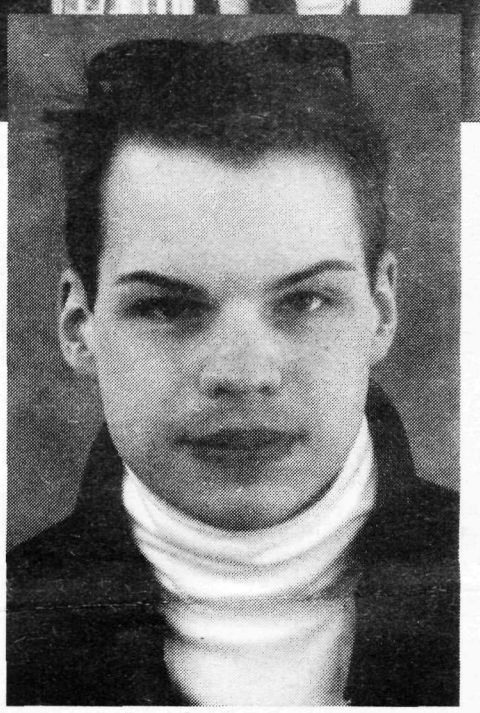
On Saturday, May 18 at 9 pm, the Cinematheque will show Chantal Ackerman's *La Captive*, based on the fifth installment of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. The story tells of a young man in France who cannot stop himself from believing that his bisexual girlfriend is unhappy, that she would rather be with one of her former girlfriends.

The crowning jewel of the schedule, however, is the 9:25 pm screening on May 11 of *A Chronicle of Corpses*, the new film by 22-year-old gay Philadelphia ingénue Andrew Repasky McElhinney, whose 1998 *Magdalen* caused a major stir in the independent film world.

A Chronicle of Corpses



Mullholland Drive



Andrew Repasky McElhinney

McElhinney will be present at the screening to talk with the audience, but took the time to answer some questions before jetting off to Los Angeles for a week.

"*A Chronicle of Corpses* is a darkly comic amorality play," he said, "a lushly detailed, sinister, early 19th-century period piece concerning the last days of a family of once-wealthy aristocrats."

Of course, what he doesn't mention is just how true the term "last days" is, as someone is killing the family members and their few remaining servants.

The film style is very unusual, completely unlike most movies out there today. Every single shot is framed as if it were a painting in a museum; at times, the viewer can almost believe that is what is being seen, a portrait on canvas.

When asked who influenced his work the most, McElhinney gave a diverse list of directors, ranging from Stanley Kubrick, whose *Barry Lyndon* was apparently a strong influence on *Corpses*, to Bob Clark, the director of the teen comedy *Porky's*.

"I really like movies," he explained.

"Making *A Chronicle of Corpses*, I tried to imagine the film [French director] Robert Bresson would have made had he traveled back in time, right after [his] *L'Argant* premiered in the early '80s at Cannes, to RKO in the '40s to make a Val Lewton picture," McElhinney expounded, "and delivered this very odd, austere masterpiece that was misunderstood by the studio brass, who subsequently cut the movie by 40 minutes, destroyed the original footage and had some hack director shoot a few new scenes to 'clarify the narrative.' "

"Of course," he continued, "these 'new improved scenes' do not mesh with the original tone of the film, and finally, to add insult to injury, the producers slap on a new, 'classical,' but vaguely inappropriate, musical score."

"*A Chronicle of Corpses* is that movie," he concluded.

Regarding his success, surprising given his lack of age, he threw almost all of the blame on his crew, crediting them with it.

"All I want from the world is to be allowed to make a feature film every three or four years," he noted. "Directing a movie is a rare, sacred privilege and I try not to abuse that privilege by making uninteresting films."

Consider the preceding a warning, as well as a blatant attempt to get an audience to pack the Cinematheque. A certain writer saw *Corpses* before interviewing McElhinney and thought it was a British horror film from the 1960s. Knowing now what he did not know then, however, he can really appreciate the film on entirely new levels, finally seeing the insouciant tongue-in-cheek quality to the narrative and the sly wink that was the florid musical score.

La Captive

"My third film is titled *Flowers of Evil*," McElhinney said of his next project. "It's a dreamy study of romanticism and decay set among the ruins of a post-industrial city where a boy from the country falls in love with a 16-year-old femme fatale."

The Cleveland Cinematheque is located at 11141 East Boulevard in University Circle; 216-421-7450 or www.cia.edu/cinematheque. For more information on McElhinney and his films, see www.armcinema25.com.