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29TH ANNUAL
MOLLY SCHLICH
INDEPENDENT-INTERNATIONAL

FILM SERIES

BENEFITING
THE MICHAEL
VICTOR II
ART LIBRARY

JANUARY 12-MARCH 3, 2020

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by Susan Day

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WELCOME

to the 29th annual Molly Schlich Independent/International Film Series. The series began in the fall of 1990, and is named for Molly Schlich, who has devoted over a quarter century to sharing great films through this series. It was motivated by Molly's passion for international films and the fact that they were not being shown in the theaters in Springfield. This was long before the development of services like Netflix or Amazon Prime, so travel to another city was necessary in order to see these films.

Soon after its inception, the series came to be defined by its focus on contemporary foreign, experimental, and independent film making—films that would not usually be presented by the local theaters. These are films that many of us read about and long to see on the big screen; but often cannot travel to fulfill that desire. For eight weeks each year we fill that gap and offer up eight critically acclaimed films from around the world. We hope that our audience will be engaged by this larger view of the art, craft and challenge of moviemaking by filmmakers from countries and cultures all around our planet. We know that all the films will not be to everyone's taste or liking. We try to present a variety of topics and styles from the best productions of the last couple of years.

Thank you to Jim Huston and Steve Meyer for all their dedication to this series. They have been behind the series for years reviewing and selecting films and editing and producing this publication. We truly couldn't do it without them. We also couldn't do this without all of you, our patrons. Whether you are new to this series or have been attending the films over the years, we appreciate your dedication to world cinema. We hope that you enjoy our selections this year. They are all thought provoking in their own way, you will always have something to discuss after seeing these films, so bring a friend.

LAUNCH PARTY!

WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 8 | 7PM AT THE SAA

We will be showing the trailers for the films in the series and serving popcorn and beverages.

Our feature this year is a 15 minute short film: **EMILY**, 2018.

After the unexpected death of her mother, a young woman struggles to cope with grief and guilt.

Starring Stella Cole and Mary Young.

Directed by Dave Heinzel and filmed on location in Springfield.

THIS EVENT IS FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.



WHERE

AMC Classic Parkway 8
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Springfield

WHEN

January 12–March 3, 2020
All films begin at 1:00pm
and 4:00pm on Sunday,
and 7:00pm on Tuesday

TICKETS

\$8 adults

\$4 students with ID

Available at the door

PASSES

\$50 Series pass for all 8 films

\$45 for SAA members through
January 11, 2020

*Available online at
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Visual Art Center

The Springfield Art Association (SAA), a community based, non-profit organization, promotes and supports the visual arts, provides art education opportunities for the greater Springfield area and preserves and interprets historic Edwards Place and the collections of the SAA.

JANUARY 12 & 14



THE BIGGEST LITTLE FARM

Two dreamers, John and Molly Chester, and their dog, Todd, embark on an odyssey to find harmony in their lives and the land. And it all began when they are evicted from their apartment in Los Angeles.

It's quite an undertaking, moving from an L.A. apartment to a 200 acre farm north of the city. These protagonists age before our eyes in their determination to create a sustainable farm on barren land. (The filming covers eight years.) They dream of organic food production, ecological restoration, environmental diversity and balance. What were they thinking? He's a cinematographer. She's a chef. They are both inexperienced and these idealists are soon having to reckon with predators, wildfires, rainstorms and drought. It's California, afterall. That reality sets in as the film progresses from cute back-to-the-land fantasies to hardship and heartbreaking challenges: livestock killed by coyotes, birds spoiling the orchard fruit, gophers gnawing at new tree roots. How do you put trust in biodiversity? With an assist from deep-pocketed investors, student volunteers, migrant labor—and belief in their mission—they persevere.

Mention must be made of environmental guru Alan York who was an early recruit for this project. York was a pioneer in biodynamic growing, an integrated system that builds soil fertility through composting, animals, cover crops, and crop rotation. He convinced the Chesters of the importance of this rich diversity of crops and animals. With such a system in place, it was then up to the farmers to become more creative and self-reliant in the challenges they faced.

The beauty of the results is often breathtaking. They set the model: the way we think, act and perceive the world is a reflection of the world we wish to inhabit.

"Even at its most calculating and sentimental, this engaging, illuminating, and sometimes painfully moving film possesses enormous value."

—Ann Hornaday, *Washington Post*

DIRECTOR: JOHN CHESTER
PERFORMERS: JOHN CHESTER, MOLLY CHESTER, MATTHEW PILACHOWSKI
USA 2018 | 92 MINUTES | PG

JANUARY 19 & 21



NON-FICTION *DOUBLES VIES*

The French title for this movie is *Doubles vies* (*Double Lives*). Both work well for what follows. The story is set among the bohemian intelligentsia of the Parisian publishing world. It traces the romantic and emotional fallout among friends when a controversial writer blurs the line between fact and fiction. He shamelessly uses his real life love affairs as fodder for a new novel. Underlying the controversy are the filmmaker's (Olivier Assayas) keen observations on the tensions between art, commerce, and technology. What's the future of publishing? Who reads print in this digital age? What is fact and what is fiction anyway? Sound familiar? While *Non-Fiction* is a comic-romantic roundelay, it's also a sharp critique of the technological challenges facing the present day.

And it is so very French: attractive people chatting away over wine and good food in bistros and home. Bed hopping too. But that richly layered dialogue serves its purpose. It gives the story its edge.

The cast is a terrific ensemble. Guillaume Canet is the editor with Juliette Binoche as his actress-wife. The novelist is played by Vincent Macaigne whose girlfriend, Nora Hamzawi, a political operative, is the most practical of them all.

The father of Olivier Assayas was a screenwriter who worked under the alias of Jacques Rémy (1911-1981). And Olivier, the son, is often compared to the young Turks of the French New Wave. He also began his career writing film criticism with the ambition of a future in film direction. And like his notable predecessors, he works with a recurring circle of collaborators, among them the actors who reappear from film to film.

"Olivier Assayas crafts films of marvelous depths, simultaneously cinematic and literary in the richness of their pleasures where the words people speak—and they can speak a lot—are only a part of the picture. As much as Assayas enjoys verbal tangos, he demands that his audiences pay attention to the footwork, to the foundations generating the words."

—Jay Weissberg, *Variety*

"— a bonbon spiked with delicious wit and malice."

—Peter Travers, *Rolling Stone*

DIRECTOR: OLIVIER ASSAYAS
PERFORMERS: GUILLAUME CANET, JULIETTE BINOCHÉ, VINCENT MACAIGNE
FRANCE 2018 | 108 MINUTES | R
IN FRENCH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

JANUARY 26 & 28



CAPERNAUM *CAPHARNAÛM*

Although *Capernaum* is set in the depths of society's systematic inhumanity, it emerges as a hopeful film.

Capernaum may be interpreted as “chaos,” the chaos of crowded streets, makeshift dwellings, and endless desperation. All of it is viewed and experienced by Zain (the charismatic Zain al Rafeen, a Syrian refugee). He's a young boy of undocumented age, a skinny urchin with big eyes and a worried determination. Zain lives with his family in squalor. His siblings are used to sell drugs. And then the family business turns to human trafficking when the parents sell their young daughter to their landlord. Zain goes out into the world on his own, seeking shelter and kindness wherever it can be found. It's a tough, tough road—depicted in documentary-style realism—that might be unbearable except for the flashes of humor and humanity and the astonishing work of a mostly nonprofessional cast.

The director and co-writer of the film is Nadine Labaki, a Lebanese activist, director, and actress (she plays Zain's lawyer here.) She is known for depicting everyday life in Lebanon. *Capernaum*, only her third feature, won the Jury Prize at Cannes and received a fifteen minute standing ovation. In January, 2019, it was named as one of the five nominees for the Foreign Film Academy Award®.

Remarkably, for a film of such serious nature, according to Wikipedia, “*Capernaum* is the highest grossing Arabic film and the highest grossing Middle Eastern film of all time after becoming a sleeper hit at the international box office with over \$68 million worldwide against a production budget of \$4 million.”

“At the end of the day... children are really paying a very high price for our conflicts, and our wars, and our systems, and our stupid decisions, and governments. I felt the need to talk about the problem, and I was thinking, if those children could talk, or could express themselves, what would they say? What would they tell us, this society that ignores them?”

—Nadine Labaki, director of *Capernaum*

DIRECTOR: NADINE LABAKI

PERFORMERS: ZAIN AL RAFFEA, YORDANOS SHIFERAW, BOLUWATIFE TREASURE BANKOLE
LEBANON 2018 | 126 MINUTES | R
IN LEBANESE ARABIC WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

FEBRUARY 2 & 4



MAIDEN

This is the story of how Tracy Edwards, a 24-year-old cook on a charter boat, dreams of becoming the skipper on the first-ever-all-women crew to compete in the Whitbread Round the World Race. The year was 1989, and you can only imagine the male chauvinism to greet their ambition.

First, a boat has to be found and it's a scrappy one already in an advanced state of disrepair. It's chosen for obvious budgetary reasons. Then there's the entry. No woman skipper had ever been allowed into the race. There would be pushback. A bigger problem would be finding a sponsor. Companies saw only foolishness in an all-women crew, skeptical investors were certain there would be no return. And then the final challenge: how to make good in a race of nine months and a 33,000 mile voyage on rough and unforgiving seas. “It's wet. It's cold. It's miserable. It can be horrifying. The ocean is always trying to kill you.”

The ladies gave their boat the name “Maiden” (so rich with meaning). Now, thirty years later, their great adventure is recounted on film.

Maiden, the story of that journey, weaves together archival footage with one-on-one interviews with the crew as well as with some of their male competitors. As luck would have it, the woman who took on the role of cook for the “Maiden” also served as the cinematographer. She even lashed one camera to the mast to capture activities on the deck including the storms that swept over the vessel. It's an inspiration. In the words of one critic: “A surprisingly moving and thrilling adventure, this little known story makes for an epic documentary.”

Tracy Edwards later commented on the criticism her crew received from the media and competitors: “What is shocking to me now is that we just accepted the way things were and pretty much ignored it. Some were openly laughing at us, and that really hurt. It just proved how much we had to do and how important it was to succeed, because if we didn't, it would be harder for women the next time.”

Winner: Best Documentary, 2019 | National Board of Film Review

DIRECTOR: ALEX HOLMES

PERFORMERS: TRACY EDWARDS, JO GOODING, NANCY HARRIS, ANGELA HEATH
UNITED KINGDOM 2018 | 93 MINUTES | PG

FEBRUARY 9 & 11



RUBEN BRANDT, COLLECTOR

The protagonist (Ruben Brandt) of this animated feature is a psychotherapist who has nightmares in which he is attacked by the paintings he loves. The solution: steal the originals. “Possess your problems to conquer them.” The theft will ease the obsession, he hopes. His clients, a band of professional criminals, travel the world intent on helping the doctor by robbing the world’s great museums of thirteen masterpieces.

Right off, the film suggests a 1960s caper (James Bond, *Pink Panther*, *Oceans 11*) with cheeky humor, glamorous people in sports cars, auto chases spinning around hairline curves. But, here, every frame is overwhelmed with art imagery. All the characters look like they’ve emerged from a Picasso dreamscape. The scenes are filled with art references that zip by faster than you can recognize them. (They are identified at length in the closing credits.) And those that linger you will remember: traveling through an urban landscape out of De Chirico, having a shootout with Warhol’s “Elvis”, sipping coffee with Hopper’s “Nighthawks”.

Ruben’s nemesis, the one investigating the thefts, is Mike Kowalski. And Kowalski has obsessions of his own. His apartment is stuffed with movie memorabilia. It turns out the two, the pursuer and the pursued, have a lot in common.

The animator-cowriter-director of *Ruben Brandt, Collector* is Milorad Krstic who grew up in Slovenia but now lives in Budapest. This, his first animated feature, was chiefly financed by the Hungarian National Film Fund. It achieves that rich, expressive look with a crew of 150 animation professionals working on just a \$4.25 million budget.

There is a wonderful interview with Krstic by Tunde Vollenbrock (8/19/2018) on cartoonbrew.com. Check it out.

“The Magritte painting, ‘Ceci n’est pas une pipe’ is best known as ‘This Is Not a Pipe,’ but Magritte’s title for it is far more interesting: ‘The Treachery of Images.’ ‘The Treachery of Images’ could be the subtitle for Milorad Krstic’s animated film, a zippy-glamorous-art-heist caper.”

—Sheila O’Malley, rogerebert.com

DIRECTOR: MILORAD KRSTIC
PERFORMERS: IVÁN KAMARÁS, GABRIELLA HÁMORI, ZALÁN MAKRANCZI
HUNGARY 2018 | 101 MINUTES | R
IN ENGLISH

FEBRUARY 16 & 18



HONEYLAND

In a day and age of Whole Foods shopping, cellphones in every hand, online streaming services, and multicar garages, it may be hard to imagine a life without electricity and running water. In a rural area of Macedonia, filmmakers Tamara Kotevska and Ljubomir Stefanov found a woman who lives in such simplicity while earning a living by beekeeping.

Hatidze lives in a remote mountain setting. She follows ancient honey harvesting traditions largely unknown to modern audiences. The small enclave of homes in this setting have been abandoned. It’s a four hour walk to the nearest village. Only Hatidze and her mother, 86 years old and half blind, inhabit the area. And still, they are perfectly at peace in this environment, a coexistence with honey gathering: half for “us” and half to remain to keep the bee production cycle going.

A narrative conflict ensues. A nomadic family moves in next door, one with less respect for Hatidze’s way of life. Their style and their needs are always to ramp up production. Chaos follows and Hatidze’s careful routine is shattered (for a while).

The filmmakers spent three years on this production. There are no interviews, no narration. They just filmed what they found. The third year was spent editing four hundred hours of film into a visual presentation. They then worked with a translator for the language they did not know.

When asked if the filmmakers did anything to manipulate the storyline, Kotevska responded that “in any reality, if one stays long enough, it becomes a great fiction.”

Honeyland received three awards at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. It is North Macedonia’s selection for Academy Award® consideration in the International Film category.

Winner: Best Documentary, 2019 | New York Critics Circle

“Stunningly beautiful and quietly powerful, this a portrait of a vanishing way of life and of a determined woman who’s just trying to make her way in the world.”

—Helen O’Hara, *Empire*

DIRECTORS: TAMARA KOTEVSKA, LJUBOMIR STEFANOV
PERFORMERS: HATIDZE MURATOVA, NAZIFE MURATOVA, HUSSEIN SAM
NORTH MACEDONIA 2019 | 90 MINUTES | NR
IN TURKISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

FEBRUARY 23 & 25



WOMAN AT WAR *KONA FER Í STRÍÐ*

“Wacky and wonderful” may be the best brief critical assessment for *Woman at War*. Hella, the woman of the title, is an environmental warrior taking on one electric pylon at a time. Her day job appears to be as a choral director. How fitting then that the film features three musicians and three singers who appear as melodic commentators (sympathetic bystanders) visible only to us, the audience.

This may be the first movie that any of us have ever seen from Iceland. But it is actually Benedikt Erlingsson’s second feature, a follow-up to his much acclaimed *Of Horses and Men* (2013), an imaginative anthology piece which might be described as a country romance about the human streak in horses and and the animal instinct in mankind.

The heroine here, who greets everyone on the street with a warm smile, is known as Mountain Woman in the press. There is a propaganda war against her. They have blurry surveillance pictures. They just don’t know who she is. Fortunately, one of her choristers works with the ministry and helps maintain her anonymity. Then, just as authorities are closing in, Hella receives a letter telling her that her application to adopt a child from the Ukraine has been approved. How will this turn out?

The wonder here is how Erlingsson tells this story with such witty intelligence, never letting us forget that our woman at war lives the ideals of the heroes displayed on her walls. The movie never loses its message. At one point Hella is prone on the ground, her face in the dirt, avoiding authorities, and she deeply breathes in the smell of the earth with all the concentration of a mother’s love.

“The adoption sub theme is a critical element in it all, as if to concretize her role as mother and caretaker, one small country, one small child at a time.”

—Jay Weissberg, *Variety*

DIRECTOR: BENEDIKT ERLINGSSON
PERFORMERS: HALLDÓRA GEIRHARÐSDÓTTIR, JÓHANN SIGURÐARSON
ICELAND 2018 | 101 MINUTES | NR
IN ICELANDIC WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

MARCH 1 & 3



PAIN AND GLORY *DOLOR Y GLORIA*

Pedro Almodóvar’s film opens with a man underwater, eyes closed, enjoying a sense of relief from debilitating ailments. That man is a filmmaker in his senior years and who is also experiencing a creative block. His name is Salvador Mallo, a name that is a rough anagram for Almodóvar.

Significantly, Mallo’s aging mother admonishes him with “Don’t get that storytelling look.” It can’t be helped. Much of Almodóvar’s work is a study in self-reflection, a genre of Spanish filmmaking known as autoficción (autobiographical fiction). *Pain and Glory* seems to have been made for those with a knowledge of the artist’s life and career. Those connections are too numerous to mention here.

The story unfolds like a dialogue between Mallo’s past and present, the aging and successful filmmaker and his impoverished and impressionable boyhood. It may seem loosely plotted but all the parts are expertly woven together, intentionally and intimately connected, for a satisfying denouement in the healing power of art.

Almodóvar’s career took off during La Movida Madrileña, a cultural renaissance in Spain following the death of Franco. That freedom produced a body of work notable for its irreverence for social and sexual mores. Almodóvar’s films were anticipated for bright colors, high camp, and the engaging spirit of a provocateur. *Pain and Glory* finds the seventy-year-old director in a more somber, reflective mood.

Perhaps central to the film’s critical success was Almodóvar’s casting of Antonio Banderas as a stand-in for Almodóvar himself, the character of Salvador Mallo. The two have worked together over many decades. Their friendship— and one-time estrangement—clearly influenced the performance but in a way in which our knowledge of director and star falls away as we become invested in the story of Salvador Mallo.

Winner: Antonio Banderas, Best Actor, 2019 | Cannes Film Festival, New York Critics Circle, and Los Angeles Film Critics Association (who also chose *Pain and Glory* as Best Foreign Language Film.)

“Pedro Almodóvar’s sublime *Pain and Glory*, a story of memory and creation, youth and loss, circles around the idea of art as self-creation.”

—Manohla Dargis, *New York Times*

DIRECTOR: PEDRO ALMODÓVAR
PERFORMERS: ANTONIO BANDERAS, PENELOPE CRUZ, JULIETA SERRANO
SPAIN 2019 | 113 MINUTES | R
IN SPANISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

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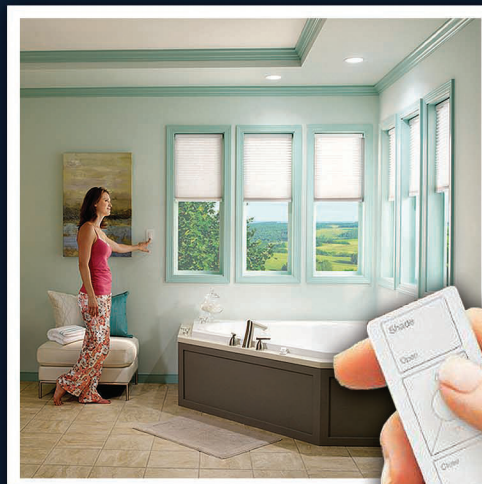
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