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"A Wonderful Ruin"

McLaren's Ode to Paris

Malcolm McLaren has always had a foot in both the fashion and art worlds (among several others), and last night at the Swiss Institute in Soho, he drew a crowd of both designers like Sam Shipley and Jeff Halamos and art-world luminaries like Jeffrey Deitch, Nate Lowman, and Rita Ackermann. The occasion was the U.S. premiere of his film *Paris, Capital of the XXIst Century*. Tie maker Alexander Olch was in attendance, though he had his filmmaker hat on for the evening. (Olch's documentary *The Windmill Movie* premiered at the New York Film Festival and played on HBO last year.) "I feel like editing is an intrinsic part of the cinematic art," Olch said, reflecting on the 60-minute McLaren work, which weaves together footage from vintage French commercials, passages by Baudelaire and Henry Miller, and text and music by the auteur himself. "It's nice to see a film where editing is the emphasis."



Before sitting down with critic Michael Bracewell for a Q&A, McLaren submitted to a few sidebar exchanges. "You know, I've been living in Paris off and on for many years, though even now it's more of a spiritual home than a real home," he said. "But I felt like if I was going to continue living [there], I had to enter into its conversation, contribute something to it, because otherwise I was just a long-term tourist." He went on to say that the collage structure came out of

his desire to make the film "as personal as possible." "It's sort of like, this isn't 'Paris,' this is my experience of Paris, which is as much informed by the writing of Henry Miller, for example, as it is by the city itself. Paris is sort of a wonderful ruin. But," McLaren added, "that's what appeals to me."

— Maya Singer