

“No History. No equality”.

The Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C.

A rediscovered gay underground film shot in Hollywood in 1960, screened only in gay bars, is featured in a new, three minute video produced by the Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. The Mattachine video entitled “No History. No Equality”, warns about the challenges of erased history, ‘alternative facts’ and fake news-- in our time-- for LGBT Americans. “Thanks to the long-forgotten, filmmaking social club, the “Gay Girls Riding Club” (G.G.R.C.), we are treated to a hilarious and powerful glimpse into the lives and fears of gay men a decade before Stonewall,” said Charles Francis, President of the Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. “ We wanted to use the G.G.R.C. humor at a crazy Hollywood party---doing the twist in a real queer time warp---to make people laugh, then think seriously about life in the day and the challenges of our times.”

The Gay Girls Riding Club drag satire (16 mm, B&W) excerpted in the Mattachine video is entitled, “A Roman Springs on Mrs. Stone” (1961), directed by an unknown member of the G.G.R.C., credited as “Connie B. DeMille” and starring “Frieda” played by Warren Fremming. Formed by Ray Harrison, the G.G.R.C. produced a series of half-hour movies screened in Hollywood gay bars (where else?) like the Apache in Studio City and the Capri on La Cienega. Lost for decades, the prints are now preserved in the UCLA Film & Television Archives. The G.G.R.C. films are part of the extensive Pat Rocco (b. 1934) Collection of gay erotic short features, documentaries and home movies.

Francis continued, “We want to personally thank Pat Rocco who is rightly considered a “pioneering figure in the cultural wing of the sexual revolution” (“Hey, Look Me Over, The Films of Pat Rocco”, Whitney Strub) for giving us permission to excerpt one of the G.G.R.C. films in his collection. Rocco’s career in erotic photography, gay community events, political advocacy, documentary production and managing gay-related charities such as the Hudson House emergency shelter for gay men and lesbians in Los Angeles, set him apart as one of the original entrepreneurs of gay civil society in California.

Rocco was a longtime friend of the original Mattachine Society. He writes today from his home in Hawaii, “ I will never forget hosting a large party for the Mattachine Society members at Mt. Baldy, California at the 6500 foot level, with Harry Hay leading the large group of revelers at my cabin!”

The Mattachine Society of Washington video includes an interview with Arkansas activist/artist V.L. Cox who uses authentic, historical objects, such as “Whites Only” signs or an Arkansas KKK hood, and other materials in her installations, featured most recently in an “End Hate” series exhibited at the LGBTQ Center in New York City and in Washington, D.C. in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

The Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. is the oldest LGBT “brand” in Washington, D.C., formed originally by Dr. Franklin E. Kameny in 1961 as a platform for his and other activists’ advocacy for full gay civil equality. The re-purposed Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. is an LGBT history society that conducts original archival research into the often-erased, LGBT political past. “Archive Activism” is the Society’s motto as its team of activist researchers look for the evidentiary history of federal and state government persecution of LGBT Americans.

“As we continue our ‘archive activist’ research project into the Gay Girls Riding Club, we are intrigued by the G.G.R.C. “Rules & Regulations”, the first of which was, “All members must be non-Communists.” And the second? “Two members make a quorum....more than two is a daisy chain”. The largest advertiser in the G.G.R.C. newsletter was Marshall’s Bail Bond Agency: “After all darling, who wants to stay in those nasty old jails?”.

The Mattachine Society “re-founders” Francis and Pate Felts “dedicate themselves to using the Freedom of Information Act along with a legal team inside (the international law firm) McDermott, Will & Emery to find the paper trails left by decades of discrimination. The MSW website offers a treasure trove of original documents,” writes Rick Valelly in a “Washington Post” column (“Monkey Cage”, January 19, 2017) about Secretary of State John Kerry’s official U.S. Government apology for the “Lavender Scare” investigation of homosexuals in the 1950s. That Kerry apology has since been removed from the State Department’s website.

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