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## Cinematrope

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Cinematrope

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
In  
Fine Arts  
Photography, Video and Digital Media

by

Kathryn Wilson

B.F.A. University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, 2006

May, 2013

This thesis is dedicated to the faculty and students of the Master of Fine Arts  
program at the University of New Orleans.

I would like to give special thanks to those on my thesis committee,  
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## **Abstract**

My body of work involves photographic and video explorations around the concept that cinema has a great influence over who we are as a culture and as individuals. I use the tableaux technique to illustrate the archetypal language of film through fictional film stills. Congruously, I use video to interject myself into scenes from movies, referencing the way viewers mentally project themselves into movies as they watch them. I am interested in decoding visual stereotypes promoted by cinema through the lens of my own experience with movies.

Photography, Video Art, Fine Art, Cinema, Film, Psychology

## **Introduction**

Films greatly influence cultural as well as personal identity. Cinema is embedded in our society and we grow up feeding our minds with moving images. We take in information from all angles and interpret it through the lens of our own lives. We integrate characteristics from movies into our personalities, while also connecting characters to people we know. We relate to what we see on screen and as a result the distinction between the real self and the idealized “Hollywood” version in front of us becomes blurred. The psychological separation of what was watched and what was experienced in reality can get mixed up. Films are made to mimic life, and in turn, life mimics films. The screen acts as a mirror of sorts, showing another version of us, the audience, who we could be and who we think we are.

Through my own practice of photography and video art, I explore the influence that watching film has over viewer’s identity. I create fictional film stills by utilizing the language of film. I build up a character, a set and a storyline for each image. I often play the different roles I create, illustrating the way we integrate various attributes from films into our identities. I also work with video, capturing myself interacting with projected scenes from movies as if I were another character in it. I am interested in decoding visual stereotypes promoted by cinema through the lens of my own experience with movies.

## **Chapter 1: Early Work**

Since beginning to work with photography in my undergraduate career, I have remained, almost exclusively, within the realm of fiction. I have almost always worked by creating a scene with a character, narrative and setting. Since beginning my studies in the



Master of Fine Arts program at the University of New Orleans, I have used photography and video to explore psychological themes. I would express my ideas through a personal symbolism and narrative. This approach has proven to be somewhat alienating to viewers because a story referring to someone's individual experience can be hard for others to relate to.



Video still from *Confessions*, 2011



*Extract I*, 2011

In one such series I was using the object of an egg to represent words or phrases used in conversation. I had a two channel video installation on monitors facing each other at eye level. On one screen was a male face and on the other a female face, continuously dropping eggs from their mouths. I was interested in exploring the potential for communication to fail or succeed, and the dropping eggs suggested that some might fall and break while others would stay intact. On the wall behind the screens I hung small, framed portraits of eggshells with hair growing from the cracks. This was done to further push the concept of potential growth from these delicate objects/words.



Video still from *Untitled (Confessions)*, 2011

I continued with the concept of the egg representing communication in the video *Untitled (Confessions)*. Once again there were male and female counterparts, this time sitting next to each other as well as standing behind each other in a traditional family portrait style. This format alluded to the roles people play and cultural expectations they fulfill within relationships. This time the eggs were cracked over the others head referring to an argument rather than a conversation, yet the subjects remain composed. This suggests the way communication can be tense and run under the surface, causing more miscommunication. While each of these concepts was worked out visually, the use of an egg as a symbol for words was not successful. The egg is not generally used in that way, therefore the audience would come up with other associations such as fertility. My own

interpretation of the object as well as personal experience in relationships did not communicate clearly to the audience.

I hoped to find a way to combine the personal with the universal because I wanted viewers to be able to relate to my work in a genuinely emotional as well as intellectual way. My goal was to create an image that was visually enticing enough to draw the viewer in and give them a hint of the story I wanted to tell. I leaving it open enough for them to explore on their own, and ultimately relate it to themselves in order to think more deeply about their own lives.

## **Chapter 2: Cinema and Cindy Sherman**

The theme of cinema's integration into our lives has proven to be a topic that almost everyone in our society can relate to on some level. The younger generation has grown up with films and television, with options like Netflix, to give them endless viewing possibilities on demand. The older generation has also had access to films in their lifetime, though with far fewer option. Films have had an influence on everyone's personality in the modern world in one way or another. As Lacan pointed out in his mirror stage theory, what we see in the mirror (which is interchangeable with the screen) is an ideal version of ourselves, giving us a vision of perfection to strive towards.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon goes far beyond Western or American culture, but for the sake of focusing and working with familiar imagery, I refer mainly to the tradition of Western cinema or Non-Western cinema that becomes popular in the West.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I," in *Écrits: a selection*. (New York: Norton, 1977).

Cindy Sherman explored this idea in her series *Untitled, Film Stills* from 1977-1980. She was interested in how cinema exploited and promoted stereotypical female roles from the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. She made images that looked like they truly came from movies because she was able to replicate the look and feel of Hollywood during her chosen period. She dressed herself up as a variety of characters and created moods that portrayed these stereotypes. She played the housewife struggling with domestic turmoil, the free spirited country girl, the savvy businesswoman, and the high-class lady in a swanky apartment. She portrayed the forlorn woman on a bed yearning for her lost love and the young female obsessing over weight issues. She touched on many issues of womanhood that were also being exploited by Hollywood. Her gaze is significant in these images, because it is one reoccurring theme that would not be emphasized in an actual film. Sherman is always facing the camera, never looking directly into it, but always looking just beyond it. She never has her back turned to the camera or her face out of the composition, as would be the case during many scenes of an actual movie. This is an intentional choice by Sherman to speak about returning the gaze of the viewer. She is commenting on how, in film, the female is often an object of desire to be gazed at by the male viewer. Sherman's return of the gaze is a way of her taking ownership over her image, and emphasizing the absurdity of this tradition within cinema.



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still (#21)*, 1978



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still (#13)*, 1978

*Untitled Film Still (#21)* shows a pretty and vulnerable woman in what appears to be New York City. She has probably just arrived, as her clothing and hat look like something one would wear on a train ride. Her right shoulder dips towards the pavement suggesting the weight of a suitcase. Sherman pushes the idea of vulnerability by the way she angles the camera up, making the buildings behind the woman look as if they were looming dangerously. Her suspicious glance suggests that an antagonist may be pursuing her. It appears to be the story of a young woman from a small town arriving in the big city with ambitions of success. The tension in the air reminds one of a scene from a Hitchcock film

*Untitled Film Still (#13)* works in a similar way, also referring to the horror and suspense genre. In this image, Sherman once again plays the vulnerable female. Her sexuality is emphasized by her large chest, pose, and blonde hair. However, she could be playing the virgin who always makes it out alive, based on the visual hints of innocence. The fact that she is in a library, gathering books, leads the viewer to think she may be

playing the nerdy intellectual stereotype rather than the sex bomb. If she were the sex bomb she would likely be wearing darker lipstick and the shot would be from a more revealing angle, showing cleavage or her legs. The books on the shelf refer directly to this world of horror films and visual language by their titles. The most legible titles are “The Movies” and “Children of Horror.” The book that Sherman’s character is grabbing from the shelf is obscured by her hand but appears to be titled “The Visual Dialogue.” The characters Sherman has built in all of her *Untitled Film Stills*, portray the female tropes encouraged and exaggerated through cinematic archetypes.

### **Chapter 3: Early Projections**

The movie screen is like a mirror in the sense that we relate to the characters in front of us by comparing and identifying our own traits with theirs. This directly correlates with Freud’s theory of the ideal ego. According to Freud, the first time we see ourselves in a mirror we think we are looking at someone else. This recognition of the “other” represents a more perfect and complete version of us.<sup>2</sup> In cinema, we subjectively project ourselves mentally, and physically, into the scenes. We become lost in our immediate environments when we identify so strongly with a film. It is a temporary loss of ego, while simultaneously reinforcing the ego. Identifying with movie stars is like recognizing the “other.” They tend to be beautiful, charismatic and clever, all characteristics that most people would like to have themselves. For an hour and a half, one can feel that he or she is like these fictional people, and there will most likely be residue of that feeling which carries over into real life.

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<sup>2</sup> Jacques Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I," in *Écrits: a selection*. (New York: Norton, 1977).

After watching an action-packed Tarantino movie with music that makes the heroes seem even cooler, one is likely to feel a little bit more badass than when they entered the theatre. While we know that what we see on screen is the “other,” we still put ourselves in the shoes of some character in the film.<sup>3</sup> This is especially influential in childhood when we are at our most malleable, and it initiates our development into adulthood, making film like a surrogate parent. We carry this with us through life. As filmmaker Catherine Breillat puts it, “I recognized myself in the first film that I saw...Bergman’s *Sawdust and Tinsel*. I’ve always said that Harriet Andersson was my fictional body. All my films follow from that character because she is me.”<sup>4</sup>

I began exploring this theme of the screen as a mirror by projecting stills from films and photographing myself interacting with them. I intentionally made it clear that I was not actually in the film. Rather than using green screen techniques, I exposed the façade, showing that it is simply a projection on a backdrop. This is apparent through the visibility of the projection on my body and a slight outline of shadow. In some images this is very obvious, while in others it is almost imperceptible to the point of my character looking like it is actually a part of the movie. I like this play between the two styles because it emphasizes the idea that I am trying to be part of the movie, but never will be entirely.

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<sup>3</sup> Laura Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)," in: *Feminist film theory: a reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 122-30.

<sup>4</sup> Maria Garcia, "Rewriting Fairy Tales, Revisiting Female Identity: An Interview with Catherine Breillat," *Cineaste* (Summer 2011).

I produced two separate series of video projection stills, one titled *Mimic* and one titled *Merge*. *Mimic* expresses the phenomenon of watching and copying what is seen. In *Merge*, I enter the scene as another character that has the power to change the narrative based on how I interact with my surroundings.

In *Mimic* (Scene from Tarkovsky's "*The Mirror*"), I stand next to the main character wearing a white cotton nightshift similar to hers. I copied her pose of standing straight up, elbows bent, palms up. I had a bucket of water at my feet, which I dipped my hair into, and then stood up with a similar pose as the woman I was standing next to. In this dream sequence, water falling from the ceiling was soaking her. The imitation in this series illustrates the way film influences how we act. Films can give us a romantic view of something, which may not otherwise seem that way. Watching a road trip movie, for example, will inevitably inspire some viewers to go on their own road trip, hoping to achieve the sense of freedom and adventure they saw on screen.



*Mimic* (Scene from Tarkovsky's "*The Mirror*"), 2011



In *Merge (Scene from Melville's "A Cop")*, I approach the scene differently. This time I noted the fact that Catherine Deneuve's character, Cathy, looks as if she is hiding from someone and she is dressed very formally. She looks sinister, and without thinking of the context of the actual film, I imagined what might be happening based solely on the still. I am younger than Cathy, possibly her daughter, and I look fearful. Maybe she is after me and I am trying to protect myself, or maybe it is the other way around. I almost appear as if I was in the original movie, as there is no visible projection over my body, and even the pixilation of the projector is overlaid on my skin. I wore costume of the era so I could slip believably into the scene. The *Merge* series speaks about the experience of mentally projecting oneself into a movie while watching it. Relating to characters on screen can have the effect of confusing real memories with what has been watched.



*Merge (Scene from Melville's "A Cop")*, 2012

Pierre Huyghe noted this confusion between film and reality very astutely in his two-channel video *The Third Memory* (1999). John Woytowicz robbed a Brooklyn bank in 1972, three years later this robbery became the subject of the film *Dog Day Afternoon* starring Al Pacino. Huyghe filmed Woytowicz recounting the robbery to the best of his memory and found that he mixed up many of the facts of the actual robbery with those depicted in the film. In *The Third Memory*, Huyghe illustrated the actual robbery with media coverage, the fictional version with clips from *Dog Day Afternoon* and the meshing of the two into a third memory, that of the robber after having seen the movie based on his own robbery.

#### **Chapter 4: Fictional Film Stills**

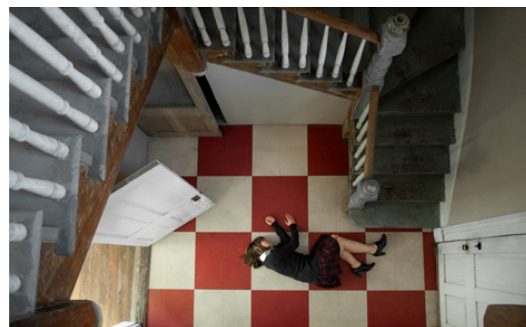
At the same time that I began creating the projection stills I started my fictional “Film Stills” series. I initially looked at thousands of examples of film images throughout history. I collected numerous books from the library, books focused on noir, books about the history of cinema and every decade of “Movies of the...” series by Jurgen Muller (20’s through 2000’s). I scoured movie websites such as Mubi.com or DVDbeaver.com as well as Tumblr, Flickr, Livejournal and Google. I also gathered my own images from the movies I watched by taking screenshots or photos of the screen. This archive of images I built is full of both stills taken by the production company for publicity and moments captured by viewers that are more personally meaningful. It is a mix of iconic Hollywood imagery with the more mundane or unexpected moments. I have created an index of images, giving an overview of what makes western cinema but with a slant towards my own experience. I am

drawing from my own personal history of watching, which is unique, but also intersects with other viewers' experience of watching.

I have come to find that in the wide range of topics and styles that film covers, there are certain images that reoccur. I note these repeated scenes of intense drama or stylistic devices. There are a surprising number of close up shots of hands playing the piano, for example, or of a young girl lying unconscious in a pretty dress. This iconic imagery becomes the language of cinema. Filmmakers utilize this visual language to create a world that entices viewers, so they can lose themselves in it. Film is a form of escapism where the viewers can empathize with the characters to the point where they become emotionally involved. It is like a vacation from reality.



From *Game of Thrones*, 2012



*The Fallen II*, 2013



François Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player*, 1960



Nobuhiko Ôbayashi's *House*, 1977



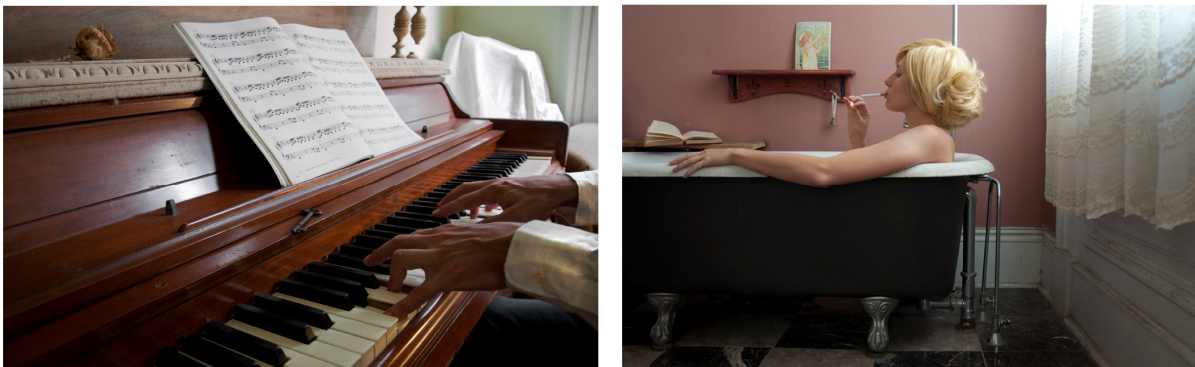
Dario Argento's *Phenomena*, 1985



Samantha Morton's *The Unloved*, 2009

I began to pair some of the stills I created to push an undefined narrative. The context leads one to compare the two images and create a connection and I found that for some of the stills, the pairing made my intended narrative more clear. Forcing two moments together leaves the story a little less open, guiding the viewer to think about a timeline. This suggests a beginning and end or the passing of time, further reinforcing that these are stills from movies. Each individual image has a story, but in some cases that story can be strengthened when placed next to another one. I am very selective about which images I pair, as some of them stand strong on their own and become weaker when forced into conversation with another.

The drama within the images makes the viewer wonder about the moment before and after the moments I represent. This leads him or her to fill in the blanks of a story that has been intimated but not explicated. I title each individual and pair of images as if it were from a real film, to give more clues about the content of the “movie”. Utilizing cinematic lighting, composition and color, I affect the viewer’s emotions and create a connection between the viewer and the image, in the same way movies do. It is subtle and nuanced rather than forced or obvious, because as in film, when one does not notice these elements they are more effective. I use photo lighting or natural light to make the scene look as believable as possible. For the image of hands playing the piano in *Game of Thords*, 1991, I set up lighting in a way that made it look as if a light were coming through the window onto the players hands. This emphasized the veins, which made the character appear as if he was straining himself, adding tension to the scene.



*Game of Thords*, 2012

In *Sour Apples*, there is a soft, natural light and pale green in both images. Using a main character of a certain age and gender, evokes a sense of exploration in a coming-of-age story and the sense that the story is told through her perception. With these formal devices, I intend to suggest a dreamy summer day in the country through a young girl’s

eyes. There is also a tension between the fluid and the ordered. The girl underwater suggests the natural world and a sense of freedom or weightlessness. Standing next to a line of apples in front of the vertical and horizontal lines of the windows shows a contrasting man-made order. The line-up of apples and feet bring to mind the cycle of life and growth, making one conclude that this story is about a young woman at a formative point in her life. The dreamy light coming in through the lace and the vintage tights give a sense of nostalgia, implying that this is a reflection made during a later point in the main character's life.



*Sour Apples, 1976, 2012*

There are a number of photographers whose images I look at who do similar work, but don't refer directly to the film still. Gregory Crewdson and Anna Gaskell create work that is referred to as cinematic, because it employs many of the attributes I have mentioned, but to them it is not important whether his or her images are tied to film or not. Crewdson, for example, employs a large crew, extensive lighting, and major set design on an actual sound stage in his photographs. He often uses people from the community in which he shoots to model for him. He does this because his shoots are so big they become intrusive to the neighborhood in which he shoots and he wants to give back to them in

some way. His budget is grand; a shoot can take over a month. His images are characteristically desolate with a supernatural beauty. He prepares for a film, but what he creates are still images that encapsulate those key moments in a narrative. In *Untitled work from the series Beneath the Roses, 2003-2005*, he built a set to look like the interior of a suburban house. He fully furnishes a bedroom, living room, and bathroom to look like they were comfortable and used. A lone woman sits on the bed surrounded by dirt and flowers, apparently from her garden, looking down into a pile of dirt in her hands. The lighting is stark and dim, creating a feeling of desolation. She is in a setting that should be a place of love, family and comfort, but appears to be feeling the exact opposite. All of this is told through the mood created with lighting, set dressing, and character acting. Even her reflection in the mirror behind her pushes the idea of isolation. Her reflection is the only other figure in the room and it has its back turned to her. Crewdson uses dramatic devices to tell a story as in a film, but with a single image.



Gregory Crewdson, untitled work from the series *Beneath the Roses*, 2003-2005

Anna Gaskell's series of photographs refers to the psychological drama of adolescent girls. They do not reference film directly, but there is always a narrative being told and a drama being created. Like Crewdson, she also uses cinematic lighting, set design and character actors, but in a less produced way. Her images would be the independent film to Crewdson's big budget movie. Gaskell draws from her own experiences as a young woman to explore the larger context of what it feels like to grow up female in today's world. She uses popular cultural subjects, such as Alice in Wonderland, to reinforce her concept. There is a sense of surrealism in all of her works, and also a feeling of danger. She explores the idea of vulnerability in sexuality through children playing at being grownups like with the subject of Lolita or playing nurse. Even though she works in series, each image has enough information and drama to tell its own story.





Anna Gaskell, *Untitled #63 (by proxy)*, 1999

## Chapter 5: Projection Video

*Parallel Realms* evolved out of the *Mimic* and *Merge* series, and explores the experience of mentally placing oneself in a film while it is being watched. Films can evoke intense empathy in the viewer, so much so that they lose a sense of self and surroundings and get pulled into what is going on in front of their eyes. I physically put myself into this position by projecting scenes from movies that have been influential to my own life, and acting in front of them as if I were a character in the story. I wanted to focus on what I've watched to show one person's experience of watching and developing identity. I was also

conscientious about including a wide range of genre, decade and popular versus obscure films in order to allow more of the audience to recognize and therefore relate to the movies.

In the first version of this film, *Cinema is Life*, I dressed in costume that was appropriate to the scene. I would look at the other character as well as the set, identifying the time period, color and inventing the role that I wanted to play. I also thought about which props I could use to emphasize my role. For example, when I was a teacher I carried a ruler into the scene. I acted a part that could easily fit in, such as a customer in a 50's diner or a character running alongside another figure in great danger. As I worked on the film I realized it would create more continuity to have my character travel from scene to scene, wearing one outfit throughout. In my final version, titled *Parallel Realms*, I chose a white dress because it would be less distracting than continuously changing costumes. It also picked up more of the projection, which I found to be visually exciting and felt as if it pushed my concept of being separated from the film more clearly.



Still from *Cinema is Life* (scene from Francis Ford Copola's *Rumble Fish*), 2012



Still from *Cinema is Life* (scene from Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*), 2012

While working on this video, I discovered Buster Keaton's *Sherlock Jr.* (1924). There is a scene in this movie where he falls asleep working at a projection booth in a theater and dreams that he enters the movie screen. He interacts with the characters and locations projected on screen, which change abruptly before his eyes. The difference between *Sherlock Jr.* and *Parallel Realms* is that in his dream, he is actually in the same physical

space as the movie. In my film, it is obvious that there is a separation between the projection and myself. Keaton entering the movie is a hilarious form of entertainment, which seeks the empathy of the audience; my video is a commentary on the disconnection as well as the bond between the viewer and the viewed.



Still from Keaton's *Sherlock Jr.*, 1924

In *Parallel Relams*, I have placed myself in stereotypical roles promoted by Hollywood, much like Sherman did in her *Untitled Film Stills*. Like Sherman, I am using myself to play a variety of characters. For both Sherman and me, this is a reference to the way women fulfill multiple roles in their daily lives. A mother is also expected to be a wife, a neighbor and a friend. I play both a fanatic who wants to be a part of this fictional world, and a critic who is making a comment on the absurdity of film's charismatic influence. Movie viewers expect the main characters to be attractive, good to win over evil, mobsters

and vigilantes to be stylish and cool. Those expectations are created by archetypal and formulaic standards written by the film industry, which have become the status quo. I question the artifice of this type of visually represented individual.<sup>5</sup> While it is healthy to have role models and idols, the expectations these stereotypes promote are unrealistic. They make us question if we are as beautiful or as interesting and important as the characters on screen. Though they are based in reality, they are exaggerated beyond real life.



Still from *Parallel Realms* (Scene from Sofia Coppola's *Virgin Suicides*), 2013

I apply various techniques to create fluidity and transition in *Parallel Realms*. I always come back into the scene from the same side that I exited the previous one, which

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<sup>5</sup> Maria Pramaggiore, "Performance and Persona in the U.S. Avant-Garde: The Case of Maya Deren," *Cinema Journal* 36, no. 2 (1997): 17-40.

makes it appear as if the character is walking out of one movie and into another. I also employ the montage format, which is the unique philosophical language of film invented by Sergei Eisenstein.<sup>6</sup> Editing in montage strings together scenes depicting similar actions, unifying them with sound in order to show passage of time or emphasis of struggle. No other medium can do this in the same way. A book can only tell the reader about these things and a song can only allude to it, but a film can illustrate it visually, auditorily and emotionally.

I utilize the method of montage because it is a persuasive tool, reinforcing stereotypes through repetition convincing the viewer to believe in them. For instance, the more often a viewer sees guns used on screen, the more likely he or she is to want their own. This is not the case for all, but one recent example of real life violence influenced by movies was the Aurora theater tragedy in 2012, where a man pretending to be the Joker from the Batman movies killed twelve innocent moviegoers. Repetition has the power to not only direct emotion, but to direct the whole thought process.<sup>7</sup> It is similar to the way people learn habits. If children repeatedly see their mother smoking, they are more likely to feel comfortable lighting up a cigarette themselves. Filmmakers have the power to manipulate viewers, giving them the social responsibility and choice to glamorize or critique issues like this.

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<sup>6</sup> Aaron Smuts, "Film as Philosophy: In Defense of a Bold Thesis," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67, no. 4 (2009): 409-420.

<sup>7</sup> Aaron Smuts, "Film as Philosophy: In Defense of a Bold Thesis," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67, no. 4 (2009): 409-420.

The Polish filmmaker and artist Zbigniew Rybczyński used a montage scene of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) in his 1987 film *Steps*. This chaotic video depicts a tourist group entering the scene. They receive instructions from a tour guide on how to conduct themselves in the movie and then they go off on their own to get trampled by giant legs or separated from their companions.



Still from Rybczyński's *Steps*, 1987

Christian Marclay's sequencing in *The Clock* has guided my editing of *Parallel Realms*. *The Clock* is a twenty-four hour montage of clips from movies that include clocks. Marclay edited these clocks, and the events happening around them, to fit with real time. It is to be played to sync up the clocks on screen with real time. Not only do the scenes match the time of day, but also the activities within them refer to what people do during those

times of day. The sound is mostly taken directly from the scenes being used, but he employs great care to smoothly blend the sound together so it is not choppy or jarring. In my own film I have found it difficult to create a smooth flow from scene to scene with both sound and image. This is because I am working with clips under one minute that do not have any continuity other than myself. While watching Marclay's video, I began to think about nuances of blending clips such as camera angle or speed of movement. As Marclay expressed, it is like composing an opera.<sup>8</sup> Too much melodrama would not work because it would become cheesy and unbelievable. All humor would get boring because it would start to feel like a gimmick with no depth. I think about the satisfying formula of a Hollywood film, its slow build to a climactic crescendo, an unexpected twist, a bit of comic relief and a satisfying end. I also think about a day in the life of my character, starting off with morning coffee, heading to school, coming home for dinner, nighttime and a climactic adventure with a surprise ending.

For the soundtrack I took sound clips from the mountains of movies I scoured for scenes. I mixed these into a new soundtrack, taking care not to pair clips with sound from their own movies. By doing this I reinforce the idea that these movies come from a formula which can be worked and reworked, but always stays within a framework. Films use sound to play with emotion and lead the narrative, which is also how I use it in my video. There is music and ambient sound, but the majority is music as it assisted in creating continuity

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel Zalewski, "The Hours How Christian Marclay created the ultimate digital mosaic," *The New Yorker*, March 12, 2012. [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/03/12/120312fa\\_fact\\_zalewski?currentPage=1](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/03/12/120312fa_fact_zalewski?currentPage=1) (accessed October 24, 2012).



throughout the video. My first version included dialogue, but that detracted from the flow so I opted not to use it in my final version. The music also helps to hold the viewers attention and entertain by telling a story that evolves from one emotion to the next.

I create tension with the harpsichord music from the soundtrack of Vera Chytilova's *Fruits of Paradise*, which develops into soothing classical music from Harron's *American Psycho*. Sound is powerful in convincing the viewer to believe in what they see. Thomas Demand's animation *Rain* (2008), uses the sound of frying eggs to fill in for rain. This sound is paired with what looks like rain drops falling on cement, and becomes completely believable. Sound is one of films most powerful tools in creating emotion in the viewer as they allow themselves to get lost in it. A death scene might make one cry if a violin is being played, but with heavy metal it would be terrifying. It has the power to lead the viewers' perception of what is happening which is how I matched sound with the scenes in *Parallel Realms*.

## **Chapter 6: Fictional Movie Posters**

The final series in this body of work is fictional movie posters. I made them with a process similar to the fictional film still series. By scouring the Internet, old film programs, books, and magazines, I studied the techniques used on movie posters throughout the ages. Color, composition, image quality and style are the key points that I focus on to make believable posters. They hint at genres such as the 1950's western, the 1970's horror flick or the contemporary drama.

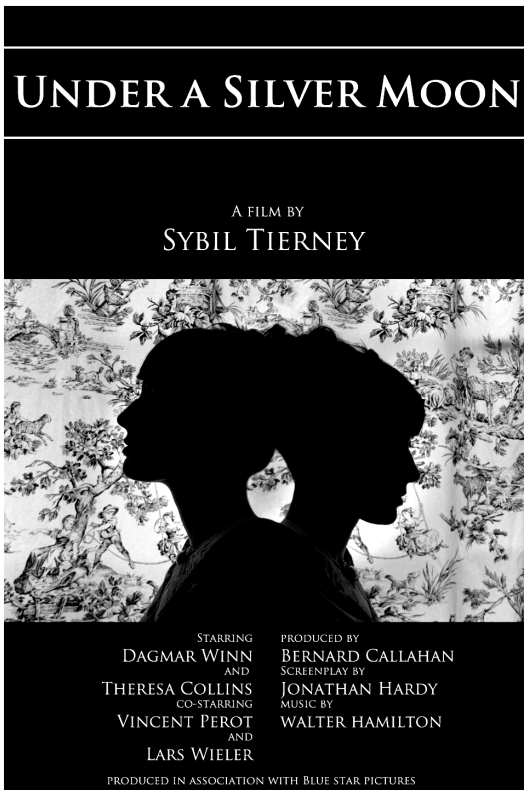


Poster for Fritz Lang's *M* (1931), by Wolfgang Schmidt, 1966

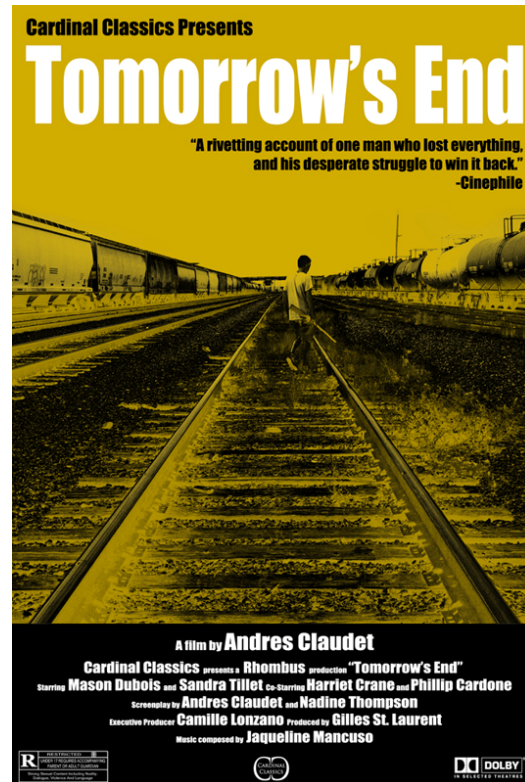
I include contextually appropriate fictional names for the production company (including a made-up logo), actors, director, producer, and screenwriter. In one, I integrate a short quote into the layout as is typical of movie posters, which leads the viewer toward imagining the context of the movie. I print these movie posters at twenty-four by thirty-six inches and display them in black-framed light boxes in a dimmed room to mimic the style of a movie poster marquee used as advertising in a movie theater.

These posters further reinforce the visual language built up by the world of cinema. Movie posters are single images made to hint at an entire narrative. They utilize one key moment of the film along with a title and a small amount of text. For movie advertising, this limited information needs to be enough to express what the film is about and to entice

people to come and see it. Like my fictional film stills, my movie posters are made to draw people in and create a narrative with the clues I give. Ultimately this reveals that our culture has become so familiar with this type of communication that there doesn't need to be an actual film behind the poster for us to have an idea of what the movie is about.



*Under a Silver Moon*, 2013



*Tomorrow's End*, 2013

## Conclusion: Future Work

After exhibiting my work at my thesis exhibition, I feel that the film stills, particularly the pairs, have been the most successful. The photographs of "film stills", along with their title, give enough information for the viewer to begin to create a narrative. The images are enticing and mysterious enough to draw the viewer in to deeper contemplation, and leave it open enough for them to come to their own conclusions. This has always been

my goal with the photo tableaux's that I create, film still or not. I feel that in these film stills I have been able to do this because rather than coming from a personal experience or idea, I am starting with the recognizable culture of movies and referencing my personal interests from there. I plan to continue this series with both singles and pairs. I would like to explore more types of film, going into the visual language of genres such as experimental and documentary film.

I also plan to continue working on new versions of the video, *Parallel Realms*. I would like to try one that does not include any characters other than myself, so I am alone interacting with empty spaces. I shot the first scene in *Parallel Realms* like this, where I am walking through a living room drinking from a coffee mug. This scene is more believable than the others because there is no character on screen that is unaware of my presence. The scene is still recognizable as a film and many could tell which movie it was from. I think this could be a stronger video because there would be less of a disconnection between the movie and myself, further reinforcing my concept. I would also like to create a series of these videos based on genre, such as horror, love story and action film. If all the scenes were from one kind of movie, the continuity of the video might be stronger and it could portray a clearer narrative. I would also be interested in doing portraits of others through this type of video by collecting scenes from movies that have been most influential to them, and filming them interacting with the scenes.

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## **Vita**

The author was born in Lake Forest, Illinois. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in fine arts, with a focus on photography, from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee in 2006. She joined the University of New Orleans fine arts graduate program to pursue an MFA in Fine Arts with a concentration in photography, video and digital media.