MAGDALEENA:

RECONSTRUCTING AND REDIRECTING THE ‘DOMINANT GAZE’

A Critical Engagement Paper

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By

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Ella Katriina Mikkola, candidate for the degree of Master of Fine Arts Media Production, has presented an Exhibition titled, *Magdaleena* and a Support Paper titled *Magdaleena: Reconstructing and Redirecting the ‘Dominant Gaze’*, in an oral examination held on December 20, 2018. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

Experimental filmmaking, expanded cinema, art films and gallery installations are all terms that are used to describe cinematic work that moves away from its conventional form and towards something unexpected and engaging. Magdaleena is an MFA research project that uses the form of expanded cinema to explore the act of looking and the act of being looked at. The cinematic gaze has been defined by theorists such as Laura Mulvey and Richard Dyer as ‘male gaze’ and ‘white gaze’. Following Dyer’s and Mulvey’s definitions, I will analyze the power relationships hidden in the act of looking, which I describe as the ‘dominant gaze’.

My subjective experience is an important part of the research project, as the exploration of the ‘dominant gaze’ takes inspiration from my own non-binary gender experience. I will analyze how the normative power relationship, based on gender and other signifiers, affects the experience of being the object of the gaze. Through this work I will suggest how these power relationships can be shifted, and how the gaze can be reconstructed and redirected through the cinematic medium.

In order to reconstruct the gaze, conventional spectatorship must be disturbed, therefore I will approach the narrative genre experimentally. I will follow filmmaker and artist Maya Deren’s direction on ‘vertical investigation’ in film, and combine analog and digital technologies to create a multi-channel film and installation.

This critical engagement paper will describe the work process and methodologies used to create Magdaleena, a work which looks towards the future of expanded cinema and its capability of changing the way people look at moving images, and each other
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Dedication

Dedicated to all visual and non-visual minorities who have felt like they’ve been looked at as the “other”.

To my fellow genderqueer and trans friends who do not belong to the gender that was biologically assigned for them.

And to mom and dad, who let me express myself to my fullest as a child and encouraged me to follow my ever-changing dreams.
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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

A few months ago, I moved into a new apartment with my partner Miranda. Soon after settling into our new place, we noticed an interesting phenomenon in our bedroom. When we closed the dark curtains during the day, the light spilled in through the tiny holes in the curtains. When this orange and red light reached the white walls they formed white squares, which looked like windows. After observing the colour and the little rectangular shapes, we realized that the light formations represented the apartment building opposite us (Figure 1); we were inside a camera obscura. I first learned about the camera obscura in 2010, when I was in Finland studying for my entrance exam for the Journalism program at the University of Tampere. The idea of images being created not only by light but also by darkness resonated with me, however, I did not know then that it would grow to be such a major passion of mine.

During my time in journalism school, and a few years later when I was working professionally as a journalist, I realized that the goal of uncovering ultimate truths and objectively presenting these truths was an unrealistic illusion. Objectivity could not exist in a world full of individuals who all have their own agendas, belief systems and biases. I was, as a storyteller, telling stories I wanted to tell, in the way I wanted to tell them, yet afterwards, these stories would be called objective news.

After moving to Regina and enrolling in the Media Production program, I saw my role as a storyteller shift. I was now free to tell personal stories, through an utterly subjective lens. This freedom reshaped my identity and professional goals. The tone of my work shifted from a journalistic documentary style towards experimental and expanded cinema. The more freedom I am afforded, the more I strive to push the boundaries further and further. As a journalist, I was
dedicated to tell stories as objectively as possible, but as a filmmaker and artist, I am now motivated to use the subjective lens as a tool and push myself further away from the imagined objectivity. Breaking boundaries through various mediums of storytelling has become a crucial part of my motivation as an artist.

My MFA research project shows my commitment to showcasing alternative approaches to storytelling. *Magdaleena* is a somewhat autobiographical project that describes the experience of being looked at. We live in a binary-system in which only two genders, male and female, are recognized. People like me, who do not fit into this system encounter unwanted situations where the need to categorize and challenge non-binary identities occurs. These situations can be verbal interactions, but oftentimes they appear as intentional looks and evaluative gazes. This kind of gaze is one that categorizes and judges, when it cannot read a body into its catalogue of acceptable forms. The experience of being looked at in a specific and tense way arises. The exploration of this tenseness and experience of being the object of the gaze is one of the main focus areas of this research project.

*Magdaleena* is a hybrid project—a short fiction film and a film installation, with live projection performance—that explores the experience of being looked at in a challenging way. The main characters, Magda and her psychologist, Dr. Eyre, are in a dialog in Dr. Eyre’s office. While the spectators follow their interaction on the digital screen, the analog screen projects images that are describing Magda’s ‘mind’s eye’. Magda, is a woman in her 70s, living in a young woman’s body. Her unusual state serves as a metaphor for a unique kind of body-mind disconnection which can be experienced by a person who belongs to a gender minority such as myself. It is also relatable to anyone who has experienced micro-aggressions based on being a part of a visual minority, due to being a target of the evaluative gaze. Dr. Eyre is in her 40s. She has succeeded in her career but
finds no real passion from her work. I use the pronouns “she/her” for these characters in this paper, however, I have no intention to strictly categorize their gender. My choice of using actors who identity as female was based on availability and talent, though I would not have considered using cis-men as my actors for these roles, because they are over represented in the field of moving images.

*Magdaleena* is a multi-screen film installation where horizontal and vertical structures coexist within the same narrative. By horizontal storytelling, I refer to the linear structure of a film that follows the widely recognized three-act structure, and has a clear starting and ending. By vertical storytelling, I refer to meanings that exist in a metaphoric way between, above or below the frames, not strictly in them. Vertical order does not necessarily have a beginning and an end and it approaches the narrative differently in comparison to the horizontal structure. Vertical approach can be seen as a way to disrupt the horizontal structure and inject a layer of narrative that solely relies on expression, emotion, image and sound. Avant-garde filmmaker Maya Deren (b.1917-1961), introduces the idea of ‘vertical investigation’ in the cinematic medium through her films and essays. Catherine Fowler points out how “Deren’s notion of the ‘vertical investigation’, that does not move on but moves back and around, as an alternative to the conventional ‘horizontal attack’ that is linear and consecutive, operates through cause and effect and strives for a conclusion” (2004, 328). In *Magdaleena* the vertical approach is used primarily in the analog screen, which highlights the act of moving back and around, as well as images, sounds and colours that are emotion and memory driven. For example, a face of a middle-aged man flashes quickly in the beginning of the narrative, then towards the halfway mark the same face is seen again, but this time juxtaposed with an image of a young boy and right after the halfway mark the same man appears on the screen again as a part
of the longer montage of different faces. The act of moving around the same image, repeating it and changing its nature, is a way to expand its meaning, without a linear cause, effect or conclusion.

This work is an exploration with the light, the darkness, the images and the rules that we, as filmmakers, have become accustomed to following. Seeing those white windows among the orange brick, projected on my bedroom walls, served as a reminder for what excites me as an explorer, a learner and an artist. While looking at the images painted by light, I understood how I am still as inspired by the camera obscura as I was when I first learned about it. Indeed, camera obscura serves as an introduction to the vertical cinema and non-linear narratives which I am passionate about exploring through my art, and my research. The presence of light and image in their timeless form is something I aim to replicate and explore further through the analog medium. The endless possibilities that light offers as a medium for us to project and describe our subjective realities for reception by others still works as the primary motivator for me. Magdaleena is a complex product of that excitement.

Figure 1. Photograph of the bedroom with light creating the phenomenon called camera obscura.
1.1. Artistic intent

My motivation for writing a metaphoric story that is based on an experience of otherness is highly personal. I am a part of the LGBT2QIA+ community. My gender experience is non-binary. This has often left me feeling like an outsider in my own skin, a common experience among individuals who have faced discrimination based on race, gender or age. I have chosen to deliver this story through a fictional character, Magda, because it is easier for the viewer to understand personal experiences through a relatable metaphor. This approach has motivated me to create a fictional environment in order to deliver a relatable description of how objectifying looking can be, because it makes one aware of their “difference” in contrast to the people around and therefore increases the experienced loneliness. The other character, Dr. Eyre, represents the power and control with which Magda feels tired and frustrated.

My aim is to translate the emotions associated with disconnection and discomfort, through the experimental treatment of the film and through a more vertical approach in contrast to the horizontal form. Even though the non-binary experience and theme is not directly highlighted in the narrative, it serves as a starting point and main inspiration for me as the writer and director of the work. My hope is that a diverse audience can both relate and emote, as well as be challenged when viewing Magdaleena.

The dual projection screens interact throughout the film, creating the sense that the diegetic reality is experienced in different spaces at the same time. The analog screens represent the inner reality that Magda experiences, whereas the digital screen portrays the character’s external reality. I have put importance on the visual triggers located both in-frame and out-of-frame. Together these
two “frame spaces” create the collective narrative. The concept of in-frame and out-of-frame is explained by Catherine Fowler in her work on reception in gallery films as follows: “I am interested in examining the continuum between the in-frame (the content of the image and issues of film style) and the out-of-frame (the space within which that image is placed to be viewed), with the aim of exploring how context might affect both the content of the images and the viewing experience” (2004, 326). Following Fowler’s investigation, I consider the out-of-frame activity to be a part of the viewing experience of *Magdaleena*. This out-of-frame activity is mostly linked to the performative part of the film and installation. During the screening I will perform with the analog projectors by turning them on and off, changing the volume and placing different colour gels in-front of the projected light. The performative element makes the work more unpredictable and adds to the uniqueness of every screening. The performative movement, which will affect the timing of images and colour, will differ each screening, depending on factors such as the audience, the atmosphere and unforeseeable events. The performative side offers an opportunity for me to channel the way the audience is responding to the work at the time of the screening and adding elements into the narrative while it is being screened. The audience participates in the out-of-frame activity with its presence and because the gallery space functions in its own discourse, this discourse is added to the way the audience perceives the out-of-frame experience. In other words, the way the work is being experienced is tightly linked to the out-of-frame space, which in this case is the gallery space. From the moment the spectator walks in, they are participating in the discourse of the gallery space that differs, for example, from the cinema theatre space, where one would look for their seat and sit down to wait for the screening to start. The performative elements add to the out-of-frame activity, distracting the spectator from traditional, passive, film viewing.
CHAPTER 2: Description

2.1. Synopsis

Magda is in her 70s but is trapped in a young woman’s body. After realizing 40 years ago, in her late 20s, that her body no longer ages, though she continues to age mentally, she has lived most of her life feeling like an outsider, isolated and distanced from the world. Magda has sunken into the world of memories and images that keep her feeling alive, however, some of the memories are too hurtful to remember. The memories are a constant reminder of how the outside world looks at her. The film follows closely an interaction between the two main characters, Magda and her psychologist, Dr. Eyre. Magda is tired of being misunderstood and has given up hope when it comes to others seeing her for who she truly is.

Dr. Eyre is trying to help Magda uncover the reasons behind her frustrations but ends up re-traumatizing her by not being able to relate to Magda’s unique position and dismissing her. Magda understands that only she herself can take back the power she had given up long ago.

In order to present the inner and outer realities that Magda experiences, each reality is filmed by two different cameras: a 16mm analog film camera and a digital camera. The digital and analog images are projected simultaneously by separate projectors: two analog 16mm film projectors and a digital movie projector. *Magdaleena* will be exhibited in the Fifth Parallel Gallery at the University of Regina in December, 2018 (Figure 2).

In this gallery space the elements of cinema, performance and installation art will be combined. The audience plays an important role in *Magdaleena*, as they are invited to move and shift their perspective while the screening and performance takes place. The audience is instructed verbally
before the screening starts to stand in the middle of the space and move in order to follow the shift of
the analog image from left to right, which takes place halfway in the narrative at the time mark 7:27
min. I will now explain in more detail how Magdaleena is constructed technically.

**Fifth Parallel Floor Plan**

Grid: 1 square = 1 foot

Figure 2. Floorplan for exhibiting Magdaleena at the Fifth Parallel Gallery. A1= First analog projection A2= Second
analog projection D1= Digital projection. Illustration template: Fifth Parallel Gallery
2.2. Technical Description

The digital side of the film starts with a shot of analog tape recorder reels. As we hear a Finnish children’s song playing, the camera slowly pans and the shot cuts to a new shot of the tape recorder and a bowl of mints on a table. The third shot is of two ceramic sculptures. The fourth shot shows the main protagonist, Magda, who looks like a woman in her mid-20s. She sits on an old armchair, wears mostly black, knitted clothing, and is silently listening to the music. The clothing and the way her hair is put up are indicators of an older person than who we see on the screen. This is the first sign of Magda’s actual age. From this point on, we follow one long take, with the camera first directed at Magda. At the time mark 7:27 min, the camera pans in a dramatic and rapid manner to Dr. Eyre, focusing on her until the end of the film at time mark 12:50 min. We never see the two characters at the same time, since there are no cuts or edits in the digital screen during the long take. Through the two characters, Magda and her psychologist, the film invites us to join them for a 13-minute session, and step into Magda’s inner world and experience this interaction through her perspective.

The film follows simultaneously two views of reality. The physical reality we enter in as viewers is presented through the digital projection, and Magda’s own mental reality is projected by an analog 16mm film projector. The images seen in the analog projection imitate the visual memories that Magda has, and they show up on the screen as flashes. These flashes include childhood imagery and abstract imaginative environments, like the red forest that signifies the place where Magda’s soul is now isolated. These images reflect what Magda is either remembering or how she is feeling.
Two 16mm analog projectors are positioned on each side of the digital projector, projecting on two different screens (Figure 3 and Figure 4). One projectionist will take care of the digital projector, and a second projectionist will perform with the two 16mm analog projectors by turning them on/off and placing colour gels in-front of the projections. I will be executing the role of the analog projectionist (Figure 3. “P1”). Together, these projections create the film’s narrative. The screens differ in size and image quality, since they are projected by analog 16mm projectors and a digital projector. Filmed digitally on a Blackmagic Ursa 4.6K camera and projected digitally, the digital screen takes the dominant screening space in the venue. The size of the digital screen in the installation is approximately 125”w x 71”h. The two analog screens will be slightly smaller. The analog image has an aspect ratio of 1.33:1 and the digital image is projected using the 16:9 aspect ratio.

Figure 3. Illustration of the screening set up. D= Digital screen, A= Analog screen. P1= Projectionist 1, P2= Projectionist 2, D1= Digital projector, A1= Analog projector 1, A2= Analog projector 2.
At the time of the screening the audience will always see two screens at a time, one digital and one analog. The digital and analog screens are positioned side by side. The analog projectors are positioned on both sides of the audience and analog projections appear in two parts, first on the left side of the digital screen, and then on the right side of the digital screen. More specifically, the first analog projector (Figure 3. “A2”) is on from the beginning until the time mark 7:27 minutes, and the second analog projector (Figure 3. “A1”) is on from the time mark 7:37 minutes until the end of the film.

The audio for Magdaleena is a combination of digital soundtrack and manipulated sound of the analog projectors. The music is a part of the digital soundtrack, but the lower sound frequencies are produced by manipulating the sound that the analog projector produces when the film is running through it. Four speakers are positioned in order to represent the screens they are in connection with. For example, the speakers for the digital soundtrack are located in
the middle, on each side of the digital screen and the speakers for the analog sounds are close to the analog screens on left and right.

2.3. Personal Approach

In the winter of 2016, I had an idea for a metaphoric film narrative based on my gender identity experience. The character I came up with was a woman in her 70s, trapped in a young woman’s body. My initial motivation was to explore the challenges regarding the disconnection between the body and mind and to create an alternative narrative for aging and aged bodies. As I started the scriptwriting process, I soon came to realize that there were also several other complexities in the story and in the form that I wanted to explore in the film. I was creating a fictional character for the first time in my life, so I spent time with my main protagonist by writing three different scripts that all explored her life experiences through different approaches. I also wrote background stories and histories for my character in order to understand her world views, expectations and social habits. After a yearlong writing process, I was able to write the final script that was strongly focused on one specific moment in Magda’s life.

Since the beginning of the process, I had an interest in creating a film that would be projected as a multi-screen installation. I had seen experimental work by artists such as Alex MacKenzie and Eija-Liisa Ahtila, who often use multi-screen projections as a form for their work. I wanted to challenge the flat form that fiction films are exhibited in and create a work that would take inspiration from the experimental film genre and gallery installations and combine those elements with the narrative film genre. I wanted to challenge myself with this MFA project and take myself out of my comfort area, and that is why I chose the narrative film as one of the genres used in this project. I also wanted to break the boundaries between the different apparatuses and combine the
modern digital with older analog technology. I had already done some work that blurred the line between the technologies, and this was something I wanted to pursue in my practice. This is why I decided that the film would be shot on two different cameras for dual screen projection. The digital side would be shot as a short film 13-15 minutes in length, and the analog side would be treated experimentally as a poetic collage film.

2.4. Form

The purpose of the digital screen is to showcase the characters’, and their physical reality, while the analog screen showcases the mentally experienced world that the protagonist sees with her mind’s eye. The digital screen that observes the physical space and time is situated alongside the analog screen that imitates the main character’s mind’s eye in exploring the past, present and future, through her own reflections and memories. The nature of the digital medium as a comparison to the analog, is erasable and detached in quality. The reason for choosing the digital medium to represent the present time in Magdaleena is based on these qualities. The characters seen in the digital screen are situated in a timeless and geographically unknown location. The anonymity of digital as a medium works to support these qualities. In comparison, the analog medium is connected to past memories and the re-imagination of the past. The images of Magda’s memory are presented through the analog screen, because analog film carries the qualities of tactility, memory through trace, displacement and witnessing and can therefore support the delivery of these memory images. When comparing the digital and analog mediums from a technical point of view, they can be seen as opposites when it comes to horizontal and vertical qualities. The timeline of a digital video file moves always from left to right, in a horizontally linear way. In comparison to this, the analog film images move from up to down, when projected through a film projector. The analog images are exposed to the film one after another, creating a vertical timeline, instead of a horizontal one. This
vertical physical movement of the analog film blends into the horizontally read film narrative at the time of the screening. The combination of two screens that represent different times, experienced at once, complicates the horizontal, linear structure through a vertical, associative dynamic.

Catherine Fowler analyzes Maya Deren’s idea of the vertical order in cinema through poetry in her article “Room for Experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eija-Liisa Ahtila” (2004, 327). Fowler points out how Deren uses poetry to describe the idea of the vertical because, like poetry, a vertical development is based on a logic of a central emotion or idea that attaches to itself even disparate images that then, next to each other, have a new meaning that is emotionally charged (2004, 327). The linear order of the words does not matter, but the combination of them leads to the emotional response. Maya Deren describes ‘vertical investigation’ as: “a time of meanwhile, which asks us to stay with, and think around, an event” (Fowler, 2004, 328). This idea served as an inspiration for the film Magdaleena, and the decision to use two screens, next to each other, resonates with the idea of the disparate words in a poem, attending to the creation of an emotion. If the digital screen is seen in Magdaleena as the “horizontal narrative”, the analog screens are approaching the story more vertically. The images that appear on the analog screen are commenting on the horizontal timeline by adding associational meanings that are simultaneously situated in a temporal and spatial way somewhere else.

The digital projection is based on the scripted part of the film, which follows the interaction between the two main characters in a nuanced, but intense way. I wanted to include one long take in this film, in order to highlight the idea of ‘real time’. Most of the digital shoot was dedicated to capturing the long take, which varied between 13 -15 minutes in length. All the dialog heard in the film occurs during the long take. In the three days of the digital shoot, the long take was recorded 23 times.
A long take means an uninterrupted shot that lasts relatively long, before cutting to the next shot (Farmer, 2016). The long take has been used by many artists and filmmakers, such as Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rope* (1948), Bela Tarr in *Sátántangó* (1994), Andrei Tarkovsky in *The Mirror* (1975), Pirjo Honkasalo in *3 Rooms of Melancholia* (2004), Chantal Ackerman in *La Chambre* (1972), and László Nemes in *Son of Saul* (2015). Austrian director Michael Haneke is also known for his use of long takes. In an interview published by Criterion Collection via Youtube (2017), Haneke talks about the advantages of using long takes: “First, you’re not manipulating the time frame. It’s real time. In a film you’re constantly manipulating everything, but you can at least eliminate this sort of manipulation. The other advantage is that if the scene calls for a certain suspense or development, it’s much better for the actors to be able to do it in one stretch and not have to keep pumping themselves up emotionally for the next shot for the sake of continuity.” Another example of a film where long takes are used in order to add an important layer of meaning is Laura Mulvey’s and Peter Wollen’s film *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977). In this film the camera pans continuously, forming an ongoing 360-degree movement for an hour and a half. The whole film is not shot as a long take but it is a combination of several long takes. Mulvey describes why they chose to use the uncut 360-degree pans: “the 360-degree pans were very useful because the circular camera movement finished itself and excluded any questions of editing. Later, we thought of its elegant resonance with an idea of femininity theorized by Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray: the circular, the cyclical, claustrophobia, domestic space; comfort, something womb-like… I think, at first, we were thinking more cinematically, and then the cultural resonances struck us” (Another Gaze, 2018). In *Magdaleena*, I force the long take seen on the digital screen into a dialog with the analog screen, which presents alternative reality and time with its fast cutting and image manipulation. The digital
in-frame space has a similar quality to the frame space in *Riddles of the Sphinx* and the claustrophobic quality gets reinforced when the camera pans in the tight space.

### 2.5. Sound

The music is built around the Finnish children’s song “Magdaleenan laulu” (“Magdaleena’s song”), written by Kaarina Helakisa and composed by Kaj Chydenius. In Finland, Kaj Chydenius is a well-known composer and songwriter who became famous for his left-wing political songs, written in the 1960s. The original song is performed by a well-known Finnish actor and singer Kristiina Halkola, who also was involved with the left-wing movement that took place in Finland in the 1960s. This song holds a personal meaning to me, as I listened to it a lot as a child. It has compelling content and an interesting lyrical and instrumental tone that has always made me feel that the song is partially making fun of the girl in the song called Magdaleena. The song was linked to the project *Magdaleena* since the beginning, and for me it offered the starting point for getting to know the character Magda, who has a linguistic connection to this song. The use of the Finnish song, connects Magda’s past to a linguistic and cultural location and explains further the character’s disconnection of space and time. The accent that the character has also connects directly to the song and makes the spectator aware of Magda’s cultural difference.

The lyrics introduce a little girl who does things in her own unique way: she keeps bunnies under her table, plays in the yard with teddy bears and takes baths under nine clouds. However, the lyrics also point out how Magdaleena can’t sing well, her sock is ripped, and she sleeps in her mother’s pocket. These words have a judgmental tone that has always made me feel that the song is portraying a silly girl, who no one should take too seriously. However, the last line, “She sleeps in her mother’s pocket,” suggests that Magdaleena is not a real human, but a doll. The tone and lyrics
resonated in creating Magda’s character and portraying her as a human being who is constantly judged and categorized in her everyday life. After a long consideration, I have chosen to not include translation via subtitles for the song. Due to difficulties translating the song’s original lyrics, my fear is that they might take too much control of the narrative, and could mislead the spectator.

My original idea was to have the song rearranged by a composer I have worked with before and shift its tone in a more melancholic direction in order to support Magda’s inner experience. However, after contacting the Finnish copyright authorities, it was soon clear that rearranging the original song would not be allowed. For this reason, the song will follow its original form, but slight manipulations will be done at the time of the screening by using a live effect machine. Echoes of the song return later in the film to represent the sound that only Magda hears in her mind. Other digital sounds used in the film were recorded in a pottery studio. Sounds such as that of a throwing wheel and the kiln are used to create an unusual room tone that resonates with the ceramics sculptures seen in both analog and digital screens. My intention is to create a soundscape that is in connection with the mental dimensions of the narrative, rather than with the physical in-frame space where the characters are situated, and this is why I choose to use sounds that would have an indirect relationship with the in-frame space.

In addition to the digital sound, other sounds heard in the film are produced live by the two analog 16mm projectors. If a 16mm film print includes sound, also known as an optical track, it can be played by the 16mm film projector. If the optical track is blank, projectors produce “white noise”. In Magdaleena, this “white noise” is manipulated with a sound effect machine to develop a more eerie background sound that relies on low frequencies. The manipulation is tested and set up beforehand, so at the time of screening there is no live manipulation done separately as a part of the performance, however the volume of the analog sound is increased once just after the halfway mark.
The crescendo in the analog sound starts around the time mark 7:40 minutes, and lasts until time mark 8:16 minutes. While the sound increases the analog screen shows a montage of faces, staring straight at the camera. As the rhythm of the montage gets faster, the volume of the analog sound gets louder until a cut to black appears on the analog screen. This is the point where the volume drops quickly back to the level before the crescendo. This increase in volume escalates the tension and underlines the synchronization of the analog image and the analog sound. Michel Chion writes about the point of synchronization and synchresis in his book Audio-Vision (1994) and how “synch points naturally signify in relation to the content of the scene and the film’s overall dynamics. As such, they give the audiovisual flow its phrasing, just as chords or cadences, which are also vertical meetings of elements, can give phrasing to a sequence of music” (59). The idea of the vertical meetings through sound is manifested in Magdaleena by bringing together the sounds of the digital in-frame space and the analog out-of-frame space in order to create a soundscape that is empathetic to the digital and analog visual narrative.

My use of the out-of-frame analog sound as well as the use of the digital audio recordings from a pottery studio could be considered as sounds that are not in straight connection with the images. Michel Chion calls this kind of sound and image relationship as free counterpoint and uses Andrei Tarkovsky’s Solaris (1972) as an example of the use of it. In Solaris the sound of breaking glass is used as a metaphor, as Chion describes it: “We do not hear them as ‘wrong’ or inappropriate sounds. Instead, they suggest that she is constituted of shards of ice; in a troubling, even terrifying way, they render both the creature’s fragility and artificiality, and a sense of the precariousness of bodies” (1994, 39). The idea of using the sound of the blank film running through the projector and the recordings from a pottery studio align with the idea of the free counterpoint. The sounds from a pottery studio suggest that the character has a relationship with the ceramic sculptures, and that they
represent Magda’s identity experience. While the sound of the pottery wheel is delivered digitally, the sound of the optical track is produced through two analog 16mm film projectors. These sounds connect with each other through the performer who manipulates the frequency and volume of the analog sound in order for it to vibrate with the digital sound of the pottery wheel. The purpose of connecting these two sounds through the body of the performer, is to reinforce the connection between the ceramics as a symbol for the tactile nature of the analog and the process of aging, and also to highlight the placement of the body.

Each analog projector is connected to a speaker, but the level of the sound is much lower than the level of the speakers of the digital soundtrack. I want the low frequencies to act as a representation of Magda’s mind’s eye. This low sound is created by the same apparatuses that produce the visual imitations for Magda’s mind’s eye and therefore it is important that the same apparatuses produce the sound for Magda’s inner imagination and memory world. Magda’s facial expressions could be interpreted as absent from time to time, and I wanted to use this idea as a motivator for the sound. The idea of producing an absent sound has a connection to the use of the blank optical track, which could be interpreted as the sound of silence. However, as Michel Chion writes, “silence is never a neutral emptiness. It is the negative of sound we’ve heard beforehand or imagined; it is the product of a contrast (1994, 57). What is first interpreted as absence is actually a presence and this presence is manifested by the sound that is continuously produced through the blank sound track, supporting and representing Magda’s mind’s eye. The analog projectors in the gallery space are made visible and tied to the narrative by reinforcing their natural sound and presence in the space. As defined by the Film Sound Theory website: “Each room has a distinct presence of subtle sounds created by the movement of air particles in a particular volume. A microphone placed in two different empty rooms will produce different room tone for each” (1997).
The projectors participate in the creation of the site-specific presence by amplifying not only the blank optical track, but also particles such as dust that travel through the optical reader and become part of the soundscape created live at the time of screening. It is important to note that sound has an important role in creating the connection between the in-frame space and the out-of-frame space and reinforcing the relationship between the narrative and the spectator.

I am very motivated to experiment with the sound of the blank optical track, because as proven through my experiments thus far, the track is not empty at all, hence the sound just has to be discovered. For the past year and a half, I have explored ways of using 16mm film projectors as sound sources and this is something I am motivated to continue to explore through my MFA research project and in the future. I am interested in the ways that the organic sound of the projectors can be used to support the screen action. The site specific nature of the sound adds to the uniqueness of the screening at the Fifth Parallel Gallery, because the sound will be manipulated at the time of the set up and can never be produced in the exact same way in the future.

2.6. Place of the spectator

The spectator plays an important part in the film’s narrative as the spectator becomes a character themselves. In *Magdaleena*, my attempt is to make the spectators feel like they are a part of the narrative by underlining the act of looking and being looked at, first through the dialog and then visually. The theme of being looked at is first introduced when Magda mentions how she was not looked at as a child and how that felt good. The spectator is looking at Magda who appears on the digital screen throughout the first part of the film (Figure 5).
An important shift in spectatorship happens when the active spectator becomes the one being looked at when the camera quickly pans, at time mark 7:27 minutes, to Dr. Eyre, who stares straight into the lens of the camera (Figure 6). This continuous staring is not only aimed at Magda but at the audience as well. The spectator is now positioned in Magda’s position as the one who is being looked at. By panning along the axis, without a cut, the classical Hollywood shot-reverse-shot structure is disrupted, and a frame space that showcases clearly who is looking at whom, is challenged. Even though the suggestion of a shared frame space between the characters exists through the real time panning in the middle of the film, a mystery of who is the spectator and who is the one being looked at is added through this visual treatment.
2.7. Casting and Set Design

Casting was based on finding actors who would suit the characters’ natures, externally and internally, in an organic manner. From the beginning, I wanted to cast my longtime friend, the professional Finnish actress Aksa Korttila, to play the role of Magda. I wanted Magda’s character to emulate a sense of fragility and authentic old age and I was certain that Korttila could deliver that in a professional manner. Therefore, it was crucial to use a significant portion of my film budget to fly her to Regina. For the character of Dr. Eyre, I sought out someone who would have an understanding of the therapy setting. I investigated the Psychology Department at the University of Regina and found a faculty member, Jaime Williams, who also has a post-secondary education in Fine Arts. Jaime’s interests met well with my own interests. Her academic work includes mixed methods investigations of issues in health and aging, and research-creation of multimedia visual/performance art, engaging concepts of gender, identity and performing the self; labour and
power relations; and personal and collective autonomy. After sitting down with Jaime to discuss the role, I knew she was the right person to play Dr. Eyre. Surprisingly, the hardest person to cast was the one to play the “real self” Magda. I needed to find someone who would be recognizably older than the character Aksa Korttila plays, and would also share a similar appearance with Korttila. After a long search, I decided to ask Kathleen Irwin, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research in the Faculty of MAP and a professor in the Theatre Department, to consider the role and fortunately she was willing to take the part.

I also needed extras to play characters appearing in Magda’s memories. Fortunately, there were a number of volunteers in the local community willing to attend the one-day shoot I arranged in the production studio at University of Regina. I used archival material collected from my own family’s collection of 8mm films, to construct some of the characters. The most important characters created from the archival material are Magda’s mother and brother. I used images of my own grandmother (Figure 7) and her son, my uncle to represent them.

Figure 7. Still photo of the analog screen showing my grandmother who appears in the original 8mm film.
For the digital screen, I wanted the characters to be positioned simply in an environment that reflects the age and time. I looked for spaces that would have a vintage look and rooms that would tie into the time that would connect with Magda’s true age. I found a business operating out of an old house in Regina called Mystery Mansion. The owner lent the space to us for the 3-day shoot. Some scenes for the analog screen were filmed in the production studio and some outdoors in natural light. I also shot Joviel Buenavente’s installation, *All the Evil* (2018), and used it to represent the red forest.

The mints play an important role in the narrative and therefore appear in both screens. Because they act as a disturbance in the narrative and interrupt Magda’s flow of thoughts several times, I used individually wrapped mints. The sound of unwrapping could be used to reinforce the disturbance. I already owned the tape recorder, and its placement and role was carefully considered at the time of writing the screenplay. The ceramic sculptures represent the mind and body disconnection that Magda is experiencing, and one of them is symbolically turned when Magda’s true self is revealed at the very end of the film. The ceramic sculptures also act as a representation of the aging body, and the unformed or unfinished parts of the body. Clay as a material, has a connection with the analog celluloid film, which also has a tactile form, and recreates itself based on its environment and interaction with the body. I spent the Fall 2017 semester learning the basics of ceramics at the University of Regina with Professor Ruth Chambers in order to make the sculptures.
CHAPTER 3: Critical Context

I like to think of myself first and foremost as an editor. My creation process is heavily influenced by editing ideas and techniques. Even while scriptwriting or shooting the film, I am already editing the work in my mind. Editing creates the tone of the work, and this tone is the first thing I feel when I get an idea for the film. I then pursue the idea by adding more cuts and edits and taking it further as a more cohesive narrative. Although I consider myself an experimental filmmaker, a cohesive film narrative always exists in my mind in some form. I usually start from a single idea or from a desire to translate something I cannot describe verbally. In Catching the Big Fish, David Lynch describes an idea as being like a bait: “The beautiful thing is that when you catch one fish that you love, even if it’s a little fish—a fragment of an idea—that fish will draw other fish and they’ll hook onto it. Then you’re on your way. Soon there are more and more and more fragments, and the whole thing emerges. But it starts with a desire” (2016, 25).

It is important to highlight some of the artists who have worked thus far with digital and analog film mediums, and most importantly combined and explored these mediums together through their work. The work that holds most significance to my research project is Canadian artist and film director Atom Egoyan’s film and installation Steenbeckett (2002), which I saw at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in November 2016. This piece is a combination of a digital projection of Egoyan’s film Krapp’s Last Tape (2000) and an analog film installation that showcases the very same film, circulating through the gallery space in its physical 35mm film form. The contrast between the physical film, that takes over the space with its tactile existence and the digital screen, that is projected in a passive and reserved way on the other wall in the same space, is impactful. The spatial and temporal interaction the mediums have opens a new way of understanding cinema, and
how it can be observed and understood through its connections with past and present. Seeing this work made me more interested in the divide between these two film mediums and increased my curiosity in finding ways to force these mediums into a dialog with each other. Egoyan also connects the apparatus closely to the act of witnessing and remembering through his use of the apparatus in the out-of-frame space as well as in the in-frame space. The tape-recorder that acts as a physical presence for the memories the character is tracking in-frame, connects with the apparatus behind the film that is seen in its physical form in the out-of-frame space. The tactile nature of remembering is reinforced through these apparatuses.

Another example of a film installation that explores the temporal and spatial relationships through analog and digital mediums is Anthony McCall’s original *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) produced as an analog 16mm film installation in relation to the re-stated, digitally showcased version *Line Describing a Cone 2.0* (2010). This is a film installation that McCall has described as “the first film to exist in real, three-dimensional space” (MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2016). He reflects on the shift from analog to digital as being a shift from imperfection to perfection. This is an important part of how analog and digital film mediums are perceived, and how they can be used to reproduce these qualities depending on the context. In *Magdaleena* the perfection of the digital screen is reproduced to a state that it feels unnatural, while the nature of the analog film with its scratches and imperfections is almost more relatable.

Other artists, such as Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville’s *Soft and Hard* (1985) and Adad Hannah’s *Performer/Audience/Remake* (2008), that re-stages Dan Graham’s work *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (1975), explore the possibilities of combining analog and digital elements in-frame. Even though these works do not combine the two mediums together in the same
out-of-frame space, they do create a dialog between them, and are therefore meaningful as a context for my work.

A turning point for me, was seeing Alex MacKenzie’s *Apparitions* in April 2017 at the Regina Public Library. MacKenzie is a Vancouver-based media artist working primarily with 16mm analog film equipment and hand processed imagery. After seeing how he blurred the line of a film screening, an installation, and a performance, it made me want to create something similar. *Apparitions* is an expanded cinema work presented as a live performance. MacKenzie uses archival 16mm footage and film looping in order to explore the transitional space between representation and abstraction, nature and culture. He places translucent objects, such as glass and colour filters, in front of the 16mm projector, which adds a new layer of connotation and emotion to the images seen in the 16mm film. Performing with his film was a conscious decision MacKenzie made earlier in his career. Interviewed by Mike Hoolboom for *Practical Dreamers*, MacKenzie describes how he decided to only present his work when he would be able to be present at the screening. Hoolboom describes how MacKenzie is “massaging the flow of pictures, performing in the dark with his machine accompaniments” (Hoolboom, 2004, 270). After learning about MacKenzie’s approach, I added performing to my own process. This felt very natural to me and since my approach is already heavily influenced by the act of editing, adding another post-production element to the pre-production stage made the process more enjoyable for me.

Alongside Alex MacKenzie’s work, I have taken inspiration from artists such as Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Maya Deren, Stan Douglas, Rosa Barba and Julian Rosefeldt. There is a growing number of artists who work in both, the black box of the film theatre, and the white cube of the gallery. One of the best examples of combining the traditions of both spaces is Janet Cardiff’s and George Bures Miller’s installation *The Paradise Institute* (2001). Andrew Uroskie describes this work in *Between*
**the Black Box and the White Cube:** “Already within the “white cube” of the gallery, we encounter a large, two-level plywood box complete with stairs and doorways leading in and out. Looking inside from a distance, we can just make out the plush stadium seating commonly associated with the multiplex theater” (2014, 1). Cardiff and Miller have literally placed the black box inside the white cube and by doing so the “art gallery—and by extension, the art world—has become a place to stage the cinematic experience” (Uroskie, 2014, 5).

One of the major differences between the black box and white cube is that in a cinema space, the act of projecting has been made as unnoticeable as possible, and the apparatuses are hidden from the viewer: “the black box of the cinema theatre is not only dark but the various devices making up the cinematic illusion are quite deliberately concealed (Uroskie, 2011, 150). A gallery, which is usually better lit, is a space where physical objects and apparatuses are given visibility. This awareness of one’s relationship to the objects and other bodies in the space offer another kind of discourse for the spectator to attend to. The white cube offers a space for the spectator to interact and immerse with my work and understand better their own placement in the narrative. When it comes to the early works that placed the cinematic experience in the gallery space Uroskie writes how “functioning between the habits and traditions of the cinema theatre’s black box and the art gallery’s white cube, these works made an early and prescient move away from an “anti-illusionist” rhetoric of political modernism, with its dream of an affectless sphere of deliberative rationality, towards an embrace of the cinematic as a source for a reconceptualisation of the political” (2011, 152). *Magdaleena* participates in this movement.

In *Mobility and Migration in Film and Moving Image Art: Cinema Beyond Europe* (2016), Nilgün Bayraktar lists some of the artists who work in between the cinematic space and the gallery space: “Harun Farocki, Atom Egoyan, Jean-Luc Godard, Steve McQueen, Abbas Kiarostami,
Chantal Akerman, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Isaac Julien, Peter Greenaway, and Chris Marker journey through art spaces (in the form of screen installations) as well as appearing at film festivals and on mainstream or alternative circuits (as theatrical films), blurring the boundaries between the cinematic and the artistic” (2016, 11). London-based Isaac Julien, describes one of his installations, *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010), which was exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 2014, as follows: “We try to make each installation very unique to the actual space it’s installed. In the mountain atrium, it’s that you’re able to work with the verticality for the first time of the work. Using nine screens where you’re able to sort of move between screens or view them from different angles” (MoMa Youtube, 2013). Julien describes the verticality in his work from a more physical perspective in contrast to Maya Deren’s approach; however, the idea of something being set in between the frames or, in Julien’s case, in between the screens, resonates with me. Furthermore, approaching the subject matter not only horizontally, but simultaneously from different directions can lead into an experience that has different temporal and spatial layers. This will reinforce my intent to deliver a narrative that builds up through horizontal and vertical approaches and therefore can affect the spectator through more unpredictable channels.

When it comes to artists who work in the multi-screen installation form, some of the most significant influence has come from the Finnish contemporary visual artist and filmmaker Eija-Liisa Ahtila (b.1959) and her multi-screen installations, such as *Where is Where?* (2009) and *Consolation Service* (1999). In addition to this, my work resonates with the Vancouver-based artist Stan Douglas’ (b.1960) 6-screen installation *The Secret Agent* (2015) and German artist and filmmaker Julian Rosefeldt’s (b.1965) 13-channel film installation *Manifesto* (2015), which has also been turned into a film. All of these works attempt to move away from the idea of a horizontally aligned linear narrative and take the cinematic presentation away from its two-dimensional unified form,
breaking it into multiple screens that are oriented differently in relation to the spectator. These installations also attend to ‘vertical investigation’ in film.

The idea of moving away from the horizontal structure has been explored by the experimental filmmaker and artist Maya Deren through her films such as *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) and *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945), and later on analyzed in the context of ‘vertical investigation’. Born in Kiev, she moved to America at an early age and changed her name from Elenora Derenkowsky to Maya Deren in 1928 (Nichols, 2001, 3). Deren was a visionary in the field of experimental filmmaking and one of the pioneers of the avant-garde in the 1940s and 1950s. In *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control*, Sarah Keller describes how Deren’s work draws its vitality from negotiating binaries without resolving them. Keller describes Deren’s two films, *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) and the unfinished film *Witch’s Cradle*, as follows: “As we see in these two early films, a shifting balance between key binaries—incompletion/completion, control/contingency, stasis/motion, objective/subjective, etc.—propels her films” (Keller, 2014, 32). The idea of stepping out of the linear way of thinking, breaking binaries and pursuing an approach that supports the artistic expression through the emotion itself is very intriguing to me, because it offers a platform for a more intuitive process. Deren described *Meshes of the Afternoon* as: “A film concerned with the inner realities of an individual and the way in which the subconscious will develop an apparently casual occurrence into a critical emotional experience” (Keller, 2014, 32). Deren’s thoughts resonate with my ideas about portraying the inner realities in *Magdaleena*. I am interested in exploring themes such as memory and dreams, which motivate the inner realities of the individual. This exploration is a big part of the work and it will be delivered through the dual projection, the sound, and the out-of-frame space. For example, showing images that represent Magda’s memory
on the analog projection creates an emotionally charged response. The act of remembering is something we all practice and that often times has an emotional impact on us.

In addition to the vertical approach, Deren has also written about double-exposure, which is connected to time. While watching a film, spectators connect to their past events as well as to the future. This connection between past, present and future makes the act of watching a film personally meaningful. Deren explains: “As we watch a film, the continuous act of recognition of which we are involved is like a strip of memory unrolling beneath the images of the film itself, to form the invisible underlayer of an implicit double exposure” (Fowler, 2004, 328). Fowler herself calls this “vertical investigation” that does not move on but moves back and around. Understanding the idea of double-exposure, or vertical investigation, made me want to explore and underline these ideas through the protagonist of the film. Therefore, throughout the film, Magda is visually attached to the present moment on the digital screen, and to her past and future on the analog screen.

In terms of narrative feature films, Swedish director and writer Ingmar Bergman’s (b.1918-2007) Persona (1966), Maya Deren’s Meshes of the Afternoon (1943), American director and artist David Lynch’s Eraserhead (1977), and English director Sally Potter’s Orlando (1992) serve as the strongest inspirations for my MFA project. The idea of the double is explored and introduced experimentally in these films and the film aesthetic in all of these films has an impact on the approach I have taken in Magdaleena. Bergman’s Persona has especially impacted the way I approach the idea of the double visually in Magdaleena by introducing the ’true self’ at the end of the film through the older looking Magda. In Persona, the two main characters, Alma and Elisabet, are walking through an unusual experience together, and in the end there is a suggestion of them actually being one person rather than two. In addition to the idea of the double existing through the
two actors that play Magda, Dr. Eyre’s character could also be interpreted as a double, depending on how the spectator is decoding the narrative and symbolism.

There are also several experimental, analog films that influenced *Magdaleena*. I have researched different hand-processing methods and optical printing techniques by watching works such as *Pièce Touchée* (1989), by Austrian artist and filmmaker Martin Arnold; *By the time we got to Expo* (2015), by Canadian filmmakers and artists Eva Kolcze and Philip Hoffman; *Isolating Landscapes* (2007), by Winnipeg-based experimental filmmaker Heidi Phillips; and *Farewell Transmission* (2017), by filmmaker and professor at the University of Regina, Mike Rollo. In addition to these films, one sequence of the analog part of *Magdaleena* has taken its visual inspiration from the experimental film *T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G* (1968) by American artist Paul Sharits, who was extremely creative in his use of the flicker effect.

I have also taken a lot of influence from my past education in gender studies, feminist theory and queer theory. Many of my ideas for the film take inspiration from theorists such as Judith Butler, Laura Mulvey and Richard Dyer, who have either introduced the idea of the gaze or analyzed this idea through their work. The ‘male gaze’ serves as a starting point for my own analysis in this research project and I use the idea of the gaze strongly as a method in the film itself.

This project has a special meaning for me, since it is very personal, and I had to go through extensive self-exploration and dialog with myself in order to complete the film. I began the writing by creating a narrative around a metaphor that leaned heavily on my own gender experience. The experience of discrimination and micro-aggressions became my main focus. The choice of using a metaphor to describe my experience was artistic and strategic. I wanted to mislead the spectator...
with my character choices and metaphoric structure in order to invite them to read the story first without the minority context.

This is partially why I have chosen age to be a signifier in the film’s narrative instead of gender. By creating a metaphor that is not in straight connection with my own gender-based experience I am hoping to create a dialog with other visible minority experiences as well. My intention is not to suggest that the non-binary theme is not representable directly, but through this work I am introducing the belief that there are different ways of telling minority stories, and I have specifically chosen this metaphoric way to represent my own subjective experience.

Finnish painter, author and illustrator Tove Jansson (1914-2001) is best known for her creation of Moomins (Figure 8). I grew up watching the Moomins cartoons and reading the Moomins books as

Figure 8. Screenshot of Tove Jansson's illustration portraying characters Thingumy and Bob on right and Moomin on left.
every other Finn my age did. What I learned only later on was that many of the characters were based on Jansson’s life experiences and appeared as metaphors for her suppressed feelings.

“The Moomin stories were also a way for Jansson to pay homage to the women she loved romantically, in a time when it was illegal to be a lesbian. First, her former partner Vivica Bandler appears alongside Jansson as the characters Thingumy and Bob, two inseparable creatures who keep a red ruby hidden in a suitcase (a metaphor for forbidden love). She (Jansson) wrote to Bandler: ‘No one understands their language, but that doesn’t matter so long as they themselves know what it’s about’ (Dening, 2017).

In order for the viewer to understand the metaphor and the bridge between the gender-minority experience and the film narrative, the synopsis for Magdaleena will work as a link that connects the contexts to the content. The synopsis is included in the program brochures, which will be available in the gallery. Without this link, I believe it might be hard for the viewer to understand my motivation for the story. However, I suspect that people who belong to visible gender minorities or have a similar experience when it comes to being aware of the gaze, can relate to the experience that Magda’s character is describing.

CHAPTER 4: Theoretical Framework

Throughout my studies as an MFA candidate, I have been introduced to different theoretical and methodological concepts that exist in the field of expanded cinema. Some of these theories have acted as a support and a motivator for my MFA research project. The theories concerning the gaze had an impact on me already throughout my journalism and gender studies degree, before I entered the MFA program at the University of Regina. I have continued to explore the ideas behind the
hierarchical gaze through this research project. In the first year of my graduate studies I was introduced to the idea of a non-horizontal, vertical approach in film. The idea of vertical serves as the second viewpoint for this research.

4.1. Vertical investigation

Maya Deren defines vertical development as “...a logic of a central emotion or idea that attracts to itself even disparate images, which contain that central core, which they have in common” (Fowler, 2004, 327). For example, a dead leaf or an empty picture frame can each be used to describe absence, but used together the feeling of absence can be magnified. Maya Deren has explored the differences between horizontal and vertical approaches in her essay, “An anagram of ideas on art, form and film” (1946). Deren suggests that, “a human infant must learn beyond its instincts, and often in opposition to them, by imitation, observation, experimentation, reflection – in sum, by the complex ‘horizontal’ processes of memory” (Deren, 11). To revert to a state of relying more on instinct, one must unlearn some of the horizontal patterns, which have characterized western society’s collective understanding of life. In order to do this, Deren created an anagram that is split into nine sections that each approach the subject matter in question simultaneously from different directions (Figure 9). She describes the anagram as follows: “It is an organization of ideas in an anagramatic complex instead of in the linear logic to which we are accustomed” (Deren, 1946, 5). Deren recommends this method for everyone who has trouble compressing an idea into a linear organization that has extended into at least two or three different contradictory directions at once (Deren, 1946, 6). I have explored further the idea of non-horizontal filmmaking throughout my coursework and in some of my academic essays, such as “Vertical Attack through the White Screen” (Mikkola, 2017), “Arrival of the Modern Appropriation of the Indigenous” (Mikkola,
2018), and “Vertical Attack Through Bloodland” (Mikkola, 2018). Since I have focused on the ideologies around the vertical approach throughout my program, it felt natural to continue on this road when preparing and producing my final MFA research project.

Figure 9. Screenshot of the anagram discussed in Maya Deren’s essay “An anagram of ideas on art, form and film” (1946).

4.2. The Gaze

In The Power of the Gaze, Janne Seppänen writes about his experience of the objectifying gaze after dressing as a cis-woman for research purposes: “My performance showed what an important role the looks which are directed to us play in defining of identity. We form our conception of the environment by looking and, at the same time, wondering how we ourselves are interpreted by the looks of others and the visual orders structured on the basis of these looks. Moreover, the performance showed how strong the visual orders connected to gender really are and how little
tolerance there is towards those who violate these arrangements” (2006, 59). Even though the example is problematic, since there are individuals who experience the objectifying gaze in their normal day-to-day life, and are the true knowledge keepers of this experience, Seppänen points out as an outsider of this experience, how dramatic the contradiction is for someone who represents the ’norm’. The effects that the anonymous gaze that targets a human being from outside themselves have been analyzed before by philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and psychoanalysts such as Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) (Seppänen, 2006, 70). While these early theories and ideas would offer an interesting framework to reflect against, I will focus on the theories that relate more with my idea about the ‘dominant gaze’, which I will unpack further in the next chapter.

One of the most important theories behind my own research is the idea of the ‘male gaze’, which was introduced by Laura Mulvey in 1975 as a part of her well-known essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” Mulvey introduced the term ‘male gaze’. Her claim is that Hollywood cinema “reflects a patriarchal language: woman is represented as ‘other’, as an object rather than a subject, materializing man’s unconscious” (Sassatelli, 2011, 124). Since 1975, Mulvey’s idea of the ‘male gaze’ has been criticized by other feminist film theorists who explain that the original text lacks analysis on the active audience and alternative self-conscious spectatorship and observes gender through a binary lens. It is important to note that Mulvey’s gaze theory was presented during a time when gender binarism was widely reinforced and therefore it cannot be looked at without understanding its historical framework. However, the essay has earned its place as one of the most significant theories in the history of feminist film studies.

I believe Mulvey’s theory can be developed to observe the different gazes that remain dominant in the mainstream Hollywood cinema. Mulvey herself has shifted her theoretical thinking towards the possibilities that new technologies open up, and, in doing so, she makes “an opening
towards the possibility for the spectator to be helped by technology in overturning dominant visibility regimes, including the male gaze: invoked is the figure of the alternative spectator, who uses curiosity and desire to decode the screen and cultivate a consciously utopian scene, beyond the here and now, from which to gaze into a possible future” (Sassatelli, 2011, 125). Mulvey calls these active and curious spectators “pensive spectators” (Sassatelli, 2011, 125). The idea of using technology to overturn dominant visibility regimes serves as one of the inspirations for my MFA research project. As the technology itself has always been a big part of controlling the gaze, it can also become the tool to overturn the gaze and reconstruct it.

Before explaining how I aim to reconstruct the gaze in my MFA research project, I will further theorize the idea of the ‘male gaze’ in cinema and pinpoint some of the core ideas that are important to my research.

4.3. Dominant Gaze

The original idea of the ‘male gaze’ was tied to the idea of the gendered act of looking and being looked at. Masculine is presented as the active subject while feminine is presented as the passive object, or a spectacle that was created for the voyeuristic pleasure of male audiences. The ‘male gaze’ also represented another force on top of the masculine, that force being American popular culture.

As Laura Mulvey writes in one of her later essays, “Unmasking the gaze: some thoughts on new feminist film theory and history” (2001), In 1975, “I argued that this way of looking is understood as gendered "male", in keeping with Freud’s naming of the pleasure of looking, voyeurism, metaphorically as active and therefore masculine.” The ‘male gaze’ has always been connected, not only to the male gender or hetero-sexuality, but also to popular culture. Roberta Sassatelli suggests
as a part of her interview with Laura Mulvey that “you can’t escape the male gaze as it is ‘the gaze’: there is no other position from which to look at those films” (Sassatelli, 128).

This brings us to think about how the gaze creates otherness by dividing the act of looking and being looked at into an unbalanced power-relationship. The ‘male gaze’ creates a hierarchical relationship between the active male and the passive female. However, the gaze can be also directed to other signifiers that reinforce the hierarchical order between race, gender or sexuality. Richard Dyer has analyzed the predominantly ‘white gaze’ in his book *White* (1997, 34), where he points out how the gaze is not only masculine, it is also white. The heteronormative hegemonic structure of Western societies is in straight connection with the gaze itself, whether we isolate the gender, sexuality or the race. The norm, more specifically the imagined majority, controls the gaze and therefore the one being looked at, the other, represents the idea of the minority in this hierarchical relationship. The majority might not actually correspond with the numeric majority, but more importantly it corresponds with the imagined and dominant majority and the dominant mode of looking.

Thus, the question of the gaze has been problematized since Mulvey’s influential work, and it is not enough to analyze the gaze as merely the ‘male gaze’; therefore, through my own analysis, I will use the term ‘dominant gaze’ in order to theorize the approaches I have taken in my research project. I use this term to describe the power relationship between the one who is looking, and who is being looked at. The purpose of my film is to redirect this gaze and rebalance the power relationship between the spectator and the screen object.

### 4.4. Non-binary gender
Laura Mulvey produced her theory within an assumption of gender binary, and neglected to consider non-masculine viewing agency, and non-binary modes of production. In this research project I analyze gender from a non-binary perspective. As a genderqueer filmmaker, my work recognizes gender as a binary system, but does not participate in the act of reproducing it. While the ‘dominant gaze’ is producing the act of looking, there is always the experience of being looked at, and often times this experience is shared among the people who are a part of a minority of some sort such as visible gender minorities. The experience of being looked at is portrayed strongly in Magdaleena and could be a representation of my own experience as a gender non-conforming individual and filmmaker.

In “Falling Outside of the ‘Nice little binary box’: a Psychoanalytic Exploration of the Non-binary Gender Identity” (2018), Mairéad Losty and John O’Connor explain how non-binary gender minorities have been treated throughout western history: “Although such identities have been documented in the history of many Eastern, Indigenous and Western cultures for decades, these individuals were largely viewed as second class citizens, sexual deviants or mentally ill (Drescher, 2010)”. Even if gender non-binary individuals are not currently seen as mentally ill, there is a lot of confusion when it comes to understanding this specific gender status. As cis-normativity is seen as the majority experience, oftentimes only binary transgender experience is recognized as an alternative identity. Losty and O’Connor write how the gender variant identities have become more visible within the past 50 years (2018, 41). However, they also mention how “much of the gender discourse within Western society seems to be centered on the experiences of men, women, transmen and transwomen (Drescher, 2010; Mayer & McHugh, 2016; Richards et al., 2016)”.

In 1990, theorist Judith Butler wrote Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, introducing the term “gender performativity.” Her theories about the performativity of
gender opened a new way of seeing gender, and through her and other queer theorists’ texts, understanding of gender performativity and the divide between sex and gender has developed further. As Losty and O’Connor describe, “since the 1970s, this disorder-oriented and non-conforming view of gender variance has been challenged by queer theorists who contended that it is based on a socially constructed view of gender in which only biologically derived gender identities are seen as normative (Bornstein, 1994; Butler, 1990, 1993; Feinberg, 1996, 1998; Halberstam, 1998)”. While the understanding and knowledge has grown, the discrimination and the amount of micro-aggressive behavior are still significant towards transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. The redirected and returned gaze that I aim to construct in my research project is based on the experiences I have had as an individual who belongs to these visible gender-minorities. It is important that queer identities can empower each other and making artistic work that aims to the empowerment of the minority representatives is crucial. Through the symbols of power, that I use in the film narrative, such as the tape recorder and the gaze, I shift the power towards the end from Dr. Eyre to Magda. This is a symbolic way of taking the institutionalized power back and placing it in the hands of the minority.

4.5. Reconstruction of the Gaze

The critical and self-reflexive reconstruction of the dominant gaze is created in my research project in a few ways. First, the antagonist of the narrative, Dr. Eyre, represents the dominant gaze with her presence. It was important to me to not choose a cis-man to represent the dominant gaze in order to reconstruct it and isolate it from the male gaze. Even though my fictional narrative is situated in the binary world, showcasing two characters who appear as two cisgender women, its non-binarism is
present in the message that is being encoded in the film’s metaphoric meaning and accompanying text.

The psychologist is a highly educated character who represents the power that is hidden in the socio-economic system and, furthermore, the power that western medicine and western law holds. Although there is an important contrast between these two characters, with the psychologist having more power within the relationship than Magda, they also share something similar. They are both hiding their true feelings towards the interaction and towards each other. Dr. Eyre is trying to get Magda to open up about certain childhood memories, but Magda feels like she is continuously repeating herself and after many traumatic interactions is afraid of being misunderstood once again. It was important to me that they have visual similarities in order to highlight the construction of the imagined power and experienced hierarchy between these two characters and, by creating these similarities, lead the audience to question this hierarchy.

In addition to the role that Dr. Eyre’s character has in representing the dominant gaze, the audience also has an important role in representing this gaze as it is being redirected. While Jacques Lacan is most known from his theories on the ‘mirror stage’, in his later work, he analyzed how the gaze can become something that the subject encounters in the object; it becomes an object, rather than a subjective gaze (McGowan, 2003, 28). Todd McGowan unpacks Lacan’s ideas further by explaining how “the gaze is not the look of the subject at the object, but the point at which the object looks back. The gaze thus involves the spectator in the image, disrupting her/his ability to remain all-perceiving and unperceived in the cinema” (2003, 29). The audience is placed in the narrative and therefore in the film, which can be seen as the object in the case of Magdaleena. My intention is to manifest Lacan’s idea of the moment when the object looks back and this happens in Magdaleena not only when Dr. Eyre’s character looks at the camera, but specifically when Magda
looks straight at the camera at the very end of the film, making the audience aware of their place in the narrative. The audience is simultaneously experiencing the Psychologist’s gaze empathically as well as directly. The spectator should be able to make the spatial connection between Magda and Dr. Eyre, and therefore the spectator understands that Dr. Eyre’s gaze in the narrative is aimed towards Magda, however the fact that Magda is now out of frame and Dr. Eyre is looking straight at the camera, also makes the spectator aware of their own presence and interaction with the gaze.

4.6. Spectatorship

Mulvey suggested in her original essay how the “gendered gaze produced contradictions, especially for the female spectator, whose position would necessarily oscillate between an alignment either with the male gaze or a self-conscious detachment from it” (Mulvey, 2001, 7). It is important to consider this suggestion when it comes to the spectatorship that appears in Magdaleena, and analyze how the spectators that identify as representatives of a minority react to this role. In Mulvey’s example, the gendered gaze produces contradictions, especially for female spectators, therefore in my research project the ‘dominant gaze’ could possibly produce contradictions for the spectators that belong to a gender minority. Even though I intentionally strive to create contradictions in the spectatorship, I do not wish the members of this minority group to feel that they are being targeted. Therefore, it is important to shift the balance in the spectatorship from the beginning until the end by changing the way the main character is positioned in connection to the spectators. In the beginning of the film, the dominant gaze is aimed at Magda, and the spectator is given the power to look at her without being challenged.

The shift in the spectatorship is first introduced when the images seen in the analog screen start connecting with the digital narrative (for example, when Magda talks about her mother, an
image of the mother appears on the analog screen). This is when the protagonist gains more power as the spectator of her own experience. The final shift happens on the digital screen, when the camera turns at the halfway mark and is pointed at Dr. Eyre instead of Magda. This is an important shift for two reasons. The first reason is that Magda is no longer the object of the gaze since, through this shift, the spectator becomes the object being looked at, because Dr. Eyre’s character is staring straight at the camera, hence straight at the spectator on the other side of the screen. The second significant reason is that through this shift the spectators take part in the narrative and are positioned similarly to Magda’s character; furthermore, they are a simulation of Magda, while the camera is aimed at Dr. Eyre. After the time mark 7:27 minutes, the gaze of the spectator is being first returned by Dr. Eyre and then, at the very end, also by Magda. By shifting the target of the gaze throughout the film, I aim to shift the balance in the spectatorship and treat the spectator as a third character in the narrative.

One of the main goals of my research project is to find ways to redirect and reconstruct the ‘dominant gaze’ and invite the audience as a group of pensive spectators and participants to be a part of this process. As an individual, I have faced a lot of micro-aggression, based on the way I express my gender, and this has created a need for me to showcase how it feels to be in that position. With this film, I aim to recreate the experience of being looked at and being questioned. Because of the way I position my audience, and shift the balance in the spectatorship, this experience is being reinforced. When Dr. Eyre is looking at the camera, the spectators are positioned to face the gaze that is imaginatively directed at Magda. My ideal goal is to offer a way for the spectator to understand the power that one has as the subject of the gaze, and through this understanding a suggestion of an alternative gaze is introduced. By alternative gaze I refer to a
spectator that is aware of the ‘dominant gaze’ and actively refuses to participate to the production of the dominant gaze.

Sassatelli explains “Mulvey closes the book with a reflection on the status of the spectator: ‘the possessive spectator’, who needs to appropriate the ‘ephemeral experience of kinematics’ almost materially, through its gadgets, the photos of the stars, the posters; and the ‘pensive spectator’, who can now look not at the world through the movie(s), but at the movie(s) as a world of images and codes that can be dismounted and remounted” (Sassatelli, 125). I want my audience to be positioned on both sides of the spectatorship, first being in the position of the possessive spectator, then shifting towards the minority position, and in the end becoming a pensive spectator. The audience has had an important role throughout the process of the writing of Magdaleena and then the producing of it. My main focus has always been in making the audience feel and relate, rather than apprehend the narrative in a specific way. The film structure follows the three-act structure to some extent. The first act presents the possessive spectatorship, positioning the audience in the perspective of the psychologist. The second act still presents a possessive spectatorship, but this time the audience is positioned in the protagonist’s perspective. The third act presents a new position for both the characters and for the audience, and this is the time I suggest the spectatorship shifts from possessive to pensive. I will now elaborate in more detail, how I aim to achieve this.

CHAPTER 5: Methodological approaches

The images that appear on the analog screens represent the inner sight and Magda’s memories that are constantly re-imagined visually. The images on the analog screens are treated experimentally, and are in many ways the opposite of the main digital screen, containing a lot of cuts, hand-
processed film, and experimental editing. In contrast to the stable long take method on the digital screen, the analog screens are unpredictable, and their pace is, from time to time, very fast and restless. The reason behind this is to create a clear contrast between the physical and the mental worlds that are experienced simultaneously, while they still intertwine through the connection they have with each other.

5.1. Lab procedures and 16mm film

The first part of producing the analog screen was capturing the images used to represent Magda’s mind’s eye with a 16mm Bolex film camera. The second part of the process was the developing and hand-processing of the celluloid. The third part was editing the 16mm film manually, using both an optical printer and a Steenbeck 16mm film editing table. Keeping the analog process manual was important to me, as I wanted to achieve the maximum contrast between the digital screen and the analog screen. In addition, I wanted to spend as much time with the images as possible, while relating to the main character’s mind and developing it. I will now describe in further detail the three different stages of working with the 16mm film.

5.1.1. Filming with the Bolex

I chose the Bolex as the apparatus to capture the inner mind of Magda (Figure 10). Bolex is one of the most well-known 16mm film camera brands worldwide. The Bolex functions without a battery and is a very reliable camera. It has a hand-wound spring motor, capable of capturing a shot for a maximum of 28 seconds. It is also capable of taking single frames, and the film can be rewound in-camera in order to create multiple exposures.

The early Bolex cameras were put out on the market in the 1930s and they have retained their popularity to this day. However, nowadays most of the filmmaking done with the Bolex 16mm
cameras is in the hands of experimental filmmakers, educators and film students. I was most familiar with this 16mm camera and had one at my disposal. However, I had only filmed one complete roll of 16mm film before, and therefore *Magdaleena* is going to be the first film that I have shot myself on 16mm film. I wanted to have a camera that I could take with me whenever I would need it in case I had a spontaneous idea I wanted to execute immediately or an ideal weather condition that I wanted to use as support for the imagery.

When choosing the right 16mm film stock for the project, I wanted to use a black and white stock that would have a film speed fast enough to capture different lighting conditions, since I was planning to shoot interiors and exteriors. After some research, I chose to use the Kodak 7266 Tri-X Reversal film to be used in most of my shots. Reversal film can be developed as a positive or a negative image, whereas a Negative film can only be developed as a negative. Reversal film is also less sensitive to scratching when running through the projector. Along with the Kodak 7266, I used one roll of ORWO N74 Plus B&W for two shots in the film. I also used high contrast film stock more suitable for the printing processes. My initial thought was to send all the 16mm film to a film laboratory to get developed, but after doing some testing with organic developers, I decided to develop every film roll myself. Using two different film stocks, one being Reversal and one being Negative, was a decision that was made to accommodate the research I did on organic developers.
5.1.2. Eco-processing

In order to develop film, the film must go through the chemical process that includes three stages. In the developing tank, the film interacts first with a developer, then with a stop bath, and lastly with a fixer. In my process for this film, I used water as the stop bath and Ilford Rapid Fix, which is a ready mixed chemical, as the fixer. For a while I have been interested in mixing my own developer to process film by myself in the darkroom, so I took the MFA project as an opportunity to come up with a self-made developer and develop everything for this film by using organic products. Prior to
this, I had used an organic developer “Caffenol” to develop still photography prints and wanted to shift towards a more natural process when developing 16mm film. The decision to do this was partially based on my hope for a safer work environment and partially because I wanted to use natural ingredients, which would resonate with the idea of the organic process of memory. The chemical process feels more industrial in comparison to the eco-process, which in my opinion connected better with the method for the narrative I was fostering.

There is only a little bit of research available when it comes to organic or eco-developers. As a resource I used recipes created by Roger D. Wilson and documented in his workshop manual “Exploring the Process: Making your own black and white film developers.” I explored two main recipes, one made with instant coffee, vitamin C, and washing soda, and one made with grape juice, vitamin C, and washing soda (Figure 11). After a month of research and testing I came up with a new recipe that combined these two recipes. For testing I used ph-strips, which allowed me to measure the ph-level before developing the film. By doing the ph-strip testing, I was able to determine the ideal ph-value for the developer, which resulted as ph 9. This became an important part of the eco-processing, since the source ingredients I was using were more unpredictable and the measuring of the ingredients less reliable than the ready mixed chemicals. With this recipe of my own I developed six 100-foot rolls of black and white 16mm film. The next step for me was to select parts of the material shot on 16mm film and continue onto the stage of contact printing and optical printing.
5.1.3. Printing

The first stage of editing took place when selecting the parts that would be used in the optical printer, and the second stage of editing happened through the optical printing. The optical printer is a machine that combines a projector and camera, in which an exposed and developed roll of 16mm film can be re-photographed onto an unexposed roll of 16mm film, frame by frame (Figure 12). Optical printers were used to create special effects before the digital age, and nowadays optical printing techniques are mostly used by experimental filmmakers and for educational purposes. The order of the frames can be manipulated as well as the amount and size of the frames. Common effects include fades, dissolves, slow motion and fast motion. The manipulation is achieved through a remote controller that controls the number of frames that run through the camera and the projector (Figure 13). The images printed onto the unexposed roll of negative film appear as positive images.
after the same development process, if the exposed and processed stock was developed as a negative. This benefitted my own process, because it allowed the images to turn positive for the final print.

Figure 12. Optical printer, located at the Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative. Photo credit: Ella Mikkola.
I used different techniques including juxtaposition, reversing, and repeating images frame by frame in order to create the effects I wanted. Optical printing was one of the most time-consuming parts of the whole process. At this time, I already had the rough cut for the digital side of the film ready, and I used the time codes from the digital footage in order to determine the lengths of the optical prints. I then counted how many frames I would need to print for each section based on the planned length of each part. After this, I developed the optical prints, using the same eco-processing method I had used previously. The film stock used for the optical prints was a higher contrast film stock in order to achieve the desired result. This meant that I needed to also adjust the developing times with the eco-developer.

I also did some contact printing in order to achieve some effects I wanted to use for the part in the film in which Magda brings up her family. Contact printing is a technique in which you expose a piece of film to light while placing objects, or in my case another film, on top of the film. I placed
parts of my own family’s 8mm archival film on top of the 16mm film and by doing so I was able to place these images into the optical printer despite their original format. With the Bolex camera, I also re-photographed the same archival film projected on a mylar screen. I then used the optical printer to combine these two techniques into one multi-layer image.

5.2. Analog representations

From the beginning, my motivation was to use the analog screen to represent the inner mind’s eye of the protagonist. The physicality of the film offered an opportunity for me to be in direct contact with the images I was creating, and the darkroom worked as an ideal environment where I could connect with my main character and her mind’s eye. As my process went further, I also understood that my medium was commenting on the idea of a memory and the act of remembering images seen earlier in life. Since my developer was unpredictable, as it was mixed a little bit differently every time, the results were from time to time under or over developed. To me, the ‘errors’ that resulted from hand-processing the film, mimic how we remember as human beings, and how re-imagining the past gets harder with time as the images fade or get more confusing (Figure 14). My decision to manipulate the images through the optical printing process was based on the desire to reinforce and imitate further the act of remembering visually. The last step was to insert the black leader in between the optically printed sections and cut together the parts that together form the analog side of the film. For this, I used the Steenbeck 16mm film editing table.
5.3. Screening Space

I approach my MFA project through two perspectives when it comes to screening. The first of these perspectives is the creation of the in-frame narrative, in other words, what the audience sees as the in-frame activity, when looking at the digital and analog screens. The second perspective is to look at the film through the out-of-frame perspective. This perspective includes all the activity that exists in the out-of-frame space at the time of screening. In Magdaleena it has been essential to consider both perspectives in order to create a work that responds in the best possible way to the challenge of disturbing the horizontal structure of the narrative. Therefore, I took into consideration the placement of the projectors and live effects early and organically, at the time of writing the screenplay.
The consideration of the screening space was a question as well in an early stage of the project. Because *Magdaleena* is a film and an installation that can be considered as expanded cinema, it falls in between the black box and the white cube when it comes to the options of where to screen this work. I chose a gallery space that allows the spectator to move around the work and participate in a film screening that takes place inside the white cube discourse. Therefore, I am exhibiting *Magdaleena* in the Fifth Parallel Gallery at the University of Regina. This space offers some options on how the screens and apparatuses can be positioned and how the wall can act as the screening surface. A complex multi-screen projection such as *Magdaleena* needs a venue that offers lots of empty space in order for there to be enough choices for the positioning of the projectors and speakers. The gallery is turned into a screening space by bringing in all the equipment needed such as projectors, chairs and lights.

Because of the placement of the projectors and the live sound effects that contribute to the buildup of the narrative, it is essential to have a space that supports this form. The audience is positioned in the middle of the space, imitating the original position of the digital camera. The digital projector is positioned similarly in the middle of the space, behind the audience, mounted on the ceiling. The two analog projectors are positioned also behind the audience, on their left and right side. The audience has some room in the middle to move in order to follow the positioning of the projections as they move from one side to the other. Audience members who are able and willing to stand are instructed to do so. There is one row of chairs, for those who cannot stand or choose not to stand. The act of standing breaks the discourse for cinema viewing and underlines once again that *Magdaleena* is something in between film, installation, and performance. The performance is a small part of the work, but it is still an important piece of the narrative. Without the colour gels that are placed in front of the analog projection, there would not be any colour in the analog images and
therefore the emotion translated through the imagery would be quite different. I am excited to explore in the future, how movement and other distortions can be added to support the narrative, but at this time I have chosen to focus on the effect that colour can produce in this context.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusions

At the beginning of the process, I had some ideas that needed to shift radically in order to make this film achievable, while some of the early ideas maintained their importance throughout the process. I started with the notion of a dual screen film that would combine digital and analog technologies. I was able to keep this form and use the two technologies simultaneously, and build a film in which these technologies are combined in an unusual way in the space they share. I also wanted to blur the line between an installation and a film screening, and present Magdaleena in an environment that does not match the expectations for “cinema films” and “gallery films”. Magdaleena is also a project that can be developed into a cinema film or a gallery installation, but for the purpose of my MFA research project, I want to showcase Magdaleena in its ideal form, in between these two worlds. In the future I aim to explore further possibilities for this film and installation to exist outside of these two environments. I aim to further understanding how the relationship between the spectator and the out-of-frame environment affects the way that the work is received and read.

Another motivator for me was to create a piece that includes live elements and performance. Following Alex MacKenzie’s example, I created a work that I can take part in and keep alive through every performance, by adding value to each film screening as a unique presentation. As in the world of theatre, performance art, and live music, the spectators can always feel that they are sharing a unique moment that cannot be repeated in the future. Cinema lacks this quality of
uniqueness in time, and even though every film screening is different, the work that is being watched most often stays unchanged. I am excited about the opportunity that I have as a maker and artist to make more room for performative cinema that still attends to the narrative film tradition.

In addition, I wanted to use ‘vertical investigation’ as a method to create emotionally charged work that steps out from the linear narrative tradition. Even though there is linearity in Magdaleena, through the dialog and time in the digital screen, the ‘vertical investigation’ is present through the analog screen that manifests the presence of multiple time layers and realities that all exist in the same moment. When the film is being screened, another layer of time takes part in the ‘vertical investigation’, as the spectators of the film also share their presence and become a part of the film.

Since the beginning, it was important to me to include analog filmmaking in my final MFA project. I had been learning techniques like optical printing and contact printing for the last academic year and wanted to put these techniques into practice. The analog medium offers different ways for a filmmaker to approach making the images, and the physicality of the image intrigues me. In addition to this, the orientation of the frames, with them being on top and below rather than next to each other, lets me think about film as a vertical medium. The movement that is needed for the image to move on a white screen is produced vertically, not horizontally and it excites me that moving images that may tell linear stories are always produced through a vertical movement when using the analog medium.

What I did not anticipate was that the archival family footage I used in Magdaleena would offer me an opportunity to reconnect with lost relatives through the images I was bringing back to life after being stowed away in a storage room for decades. Using my own family’s archives made me connect more with Magda’s reality and it also led me into an exploration of my own history.
Through my process I started to ask more questions about the people who appeared in the 8mm films, questions like: who were they, where they came from, and what was their life like? The question of who is looking at my grandparents and relatives through the lens also occurred, since the cinematographer of the films remains unknown. I started to also connect with the person behind the camera, through looking at the same events they captured more than a half century ago. The process of connecting the fictional and factual pasts together created a new kind of meaning for me as I crafted the film. Catherine Fowler writes in her article, “Remembering Cinema ’Elsewhere’: From Retrospection to Introspection in the Gallery Film” how “The reuse of cinema’s past by artists is not a new phenomenon, but the notion that this might be undertaken in a spirit of ’collaboration’ is” (Fowler, 2012, 27). Fowler talks about collaboration in the context of gallery films and cinema films, but I see that there is also an opportunity for collaboration between mediums (analog/digital), forms (film/installation), and genres (documentary/drama), and spectators actively viewing multi-media work that can be achieved through a similar type of collaboration. I had this in mind when choosing to use the archival, documentary footage, re-visit it and position it into a new context.

Maya Deren, was a visionary in the way she approached cinematic expression and redirected the ‘dominant gaze’ through her work towards a more ‘alternative gaze’. I continue to explore her legacy through this MFA research project. There is still a significant gap in the field of cinema when it comes to LGBTQIA+ communities and genderqueer people’s voices. It is crucial that more filmmakers who identify as genderqueer take space in the productions that focus on LGBTQIA+ subject matters in order to tell more in depth and diverse stories around gender and sexuality. I see it as an opportunity to also empower and take power back by choosing how to portray our own stories. It is important to give power to the characters that represent the minorities first in-frame, in order for that power to also be achievable in the out-of-frame space. Just as Maya Deren or Laura Mulvey
expressed their voices and took space through their cinematic and theoretical practices decades ago, gender and ethnic minorities still need to demand more space. *Magdaleena* participates in the new tradition and hopefully the future direction of LGBTQIA+ filmmakers in having our voices expressed by ourselves in the forms we choose. By redirecting the gaze that has objectified us for so many decades, an opportunity for more diverse and meaningful work presents itself.

One of the challenges of this work is that it engages its audience differently, based on each spectator’s individual experience. One of my attempts was to deliver a narrative that would be relatable for the representatives of gender and other minorities, without damaging them further with the representation of the dominant gaze. This work relies on the queer spectator’s ability to connect the experience delivered through a metaphor, with their own experience. As the creator of this metaphor and narrative, I believe that a spectator who has experienced the dominant gaze is able to identify it and understand it, even when delivered through a fictional metaphor, that in the end offers a feeling of empowerment for individuals who identify themselves as a part of a minority of some kind.

Based on the comments I received from exhibiting *Magdaleena* for the first time, I will continue to research the possibilities which could allow this work to exist in different forms in the future. As intended, the spectators were conflicted by the gaze aimed at them after the halfway mark. Many of them experienced discomfort with Dr. Eyre’s gaze, perhaps because they felt that they were also being looked at. Some of the spectators were unsure of who was the object of the gaze, and therefore in the future, I will aim to reinforce the spectators’ experience of being looked at by reconfiguring the placement of the screens and re-evaluating their size and adding possible movement to magnify the effect. I will also reconsider my own role as the performer, and possibly
add elements that make my role more visible. This would also connect my own body more to the narrative, and make the connection between gender and the metaphor stronger.
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