

LEISURE TIME FOR EVERYONE

A thesis presented to the Graduate School of  
Western Carolina University in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

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December 2012

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members and director for their assistance and encouragement. Their guidance and support has been instrumental in developing my artistic vision and language.

I also extend thanks to my wonderful husband, Brian Postelle, as well as my graduate classmates for their feedback and support. Lastly, I offer my warmest regards and thanks to my parents for their continued support.

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## ABSTRACT

### LEISURE TIME FOR EVERYONE

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The social function of recording devices provides the subject of my thesis, and takes form in an installation titled *Leisure Time for Everyone*. The art work consists of four projected videos and one non-projected work shown on a vintage television set. Each of the works addresses the role and influence of media in the formation of filmic representation and socially accepted behavior. The chronological assimilation of the camera into American culture from the 1950's to the present provides the framework for my exploration. Feminist theory and the implication of surveillance provide further contexts for my investigation.

The works aim to expose the power structures of Hollywood cinema latent in my family's amateur film collection, and the extension of those structures into the contemporary social role of the camera. Two of the projected works consist of digitally manipulated vintage films, and the other projected works consist of footage I shot with a digital camera. These works address the shift from private to public spaces, also reflected in technological advancements of recording devices. The television set plays an audio recording paired with blurry found photographs, which speaks to the personal impact of

technology and representation on memory. Organized chronologically, both the exhibition of the works as well as this paper explore the history of representation and its formation of social norms.

The approaches I employ in exposing the role of the camera include digital manipulations of film or video that analyze the function of narrative. Humor and innuendo also provide methods for addressing the role of narrative and representation. The suspension of diegetic function within the works also likens them to the history of experimental film and still photography. This paper will further examine the social role of the recording device and the influence of media and surveillance on representation within the private space of the home as well as in the public space.

## INTRODUCTION

The camera reinforces and perpetuates certain power structures that result from the activities of looking and recording. The camera functions to alter and influence the way lived experience is represented, commodified, and controlled due to its alignment with mainstream media and its overwhelming infiltration into private lives and public spaces. The presence of the lens, as a means to record intimacy, leisure, and public spectacle, is intrinsically tied to our understanding of experience and memory.

My work exposes the social function and role of the camera, its influence on representation and memory, and the limitations of the apparatus itself. Taking the form of an installation, *Leisure Time for Everyone* consists of four video projections and one work on a vintage television set. The works are organized according to the chronological assimilation of the camera into the private space of family life and the public space of the city street or gathering. This organization reflects the shift from the celluloid of film to the pixels of the digital image, as well as the shift in social uses of recording technology. The shift from recording the intimate space of the home, reliant on middle class economic status, to the integration of recording technology into the masses reflects the move from private to public, or film to digital. The installation aims to disrupt the lens' exercise of power over representation and social behavior through examination of this function over time. My work also stages a feminist critique of the role of the lens in a patriarchal society. This critique is culled from the examination of Hollywood cinematic

influence on the technological development and shifting social function of the camera over a series of eras beginning in the 1950's, and ending with the present time.

My process of digitally manipulating film or video reveals the influence of mainstream media on representation and memory by isolating and removing specific moments from their diegesis. By removing examples of filmic representation from a social history of patriarchal influence, my work echoes the scientific process of "coring". The scientific process of coring refers to removing a singular sample from the geological make-up of the ocean floor, rocks, or ice. Analysis of the core reveals specific information about climate according to the chronological development of the ongoing process of climate change. This small sample, removed from a much greater whole, reveals the entire history and results in a perception of that whole. These "core samples" are taken from the "landscape" of American culture and its relationship to the camera. Within my "core samples" lies the methodologies by which I analyze them; in relation to history, theory, and influence.

This paper follows the same chronological format as the works in the exhibition. It begins with selections from my family's private vintage film collection from between the 1940's- 1970's. It then moves to current video of individuals, in the crowd and apart from it, within public spaces. At the center of this transition between private and public, yet also external to it, lies the one non-projected video work which addresses the fallibility of not only representation, but also of memory.

## HOME MOVIES

The works *Elaine* and *Lenore* reflect the post-war era and the 1970's in America, as well as the rise of recording technology available to the middle class. The insertion of the camera into the private space of the home was promoted by companies as a hobby the family could easily share together within the confines of the household. According to Patricia Zimmerman, the growth of suburbs in the 1950's privatized leisure time around the nuclear family as opposed to community events. This provided the ideal setting for fetishizing and commodifying the family through recording the intimate experience of family and leisure time with home movies. (25-31) The function of the lens as a means for documenting family life is also addressed by Rosalynd Krauss in her article *A Note on Photography and the Simulacral*. She writes about Pierre Bourdieu's theories of the photograph:

The camera is hauled out to document family reunions and vacations or trips. Its place is within the ritualized cult of domesticity, and it is trained on those moments that are sacred within that cult: weddings, christenings, anniversaries, and so forth. The camera is a tool that is treated as though it were merely there passively to document, to record the objective fact of family integration. But it is, of course, more active than that. The photographic record is part of the point of these family gatherings; it is an agent in the collective fantasy of family cohesion, and in that sense the camera is a projective tool, part of the theater that the family constructs to

convince itself that it is together and whole. (56)

*Elaine* and *Lenore* reveal recording technology has been assimilated into private spaces as a naturalized and normalized presence, enmeshed in the experience and memory of family narrative and leisure. In both works, evidence of the movie camera as fully integrated into the make-up of family life is clear in the women's "performances" and the techniques of the cameramen. In *Elaine*, my grandfather pans up and down the body of my bikini-clad grandmother standing on the beach. She is ever-so-slightly holding in her stomach in an odd and forced position. The peculiar expression on her face, coupled with her body's position, makes clear that she is aware of the lens, as she seems to be caught between discomfort and prescribed exhibitionism. In *Lenore*, my mother, also aware of being recorded, sways her hips back and forth in an exaggerated fashion as she walks away from her father filming her from behind. Both the women and the cameramen actively interact with the lens as a means to signify the roles they must fulfill. These roles are defined by what Krauss goes on to identify as Bourdieu's idea that the snapshot becomes an indication of "class or caste" that resorts to stereotypy and reveals the social function of the camera as a means to create a social index. (56-58) The works address the stereotypes of femininity in filmic representation differently. In *Elaine*, the guise of family togetherness as a social construct relies on stereotyping and the influence of mainstream film, while *Lenore* functions as a subversive means to deny the social function of the camera, and to resist the function of a stereotype.

My grandmother is getting the proverbial "good old up-and-down" (traditionally

followed by a whistle) by the camera, while my mother replicates and exaggerates the seductiveness of a Jayne Mansfield-type-“sexy-walk” for the camera. Each of the women's performances varies and relates to the cameramen's actions differently. The commonality they share is that the location of meaning occurs within their bodies, either as recipient of a “male gaze”, or in resistance to it. In *Elaine* the panning action of the cameraman holds her body captive while he (my grandfather) objectifies and subjects her body to his gaze in a social allegiance to Hollywood cinema. In *Lenore*, the subjection of her body to patriarchal structures of representation is denied through her use of humor and play. In playing up the role of the bombshell, she can use the overt sexuality of a mainstream film's star as a joke. She protects herself from the gaze by poking fun at it.

The women in each of these works are either aligning with or resisting the power structure of the “male gaze” in mainstream film. Although they function differently in relation to the latter, each work is imbedded in the ritual of recording family life. The insertion of the camera into the private space of the home as a means to remember and signify leisure time also reflects the influence of Hollywood cinema on intimate relationships and representation. It is the pleasure we receive when viewing cinema or participating with the camera that causes us to invite technology into private spaces, and also what enables such power structures to hold sway over social behavior and representation. If the social function of the camera is to exert power over the social body by creating stereotypes, then the invitation of it into private spaces provides the means for surveillance and control in the construction of familial intimacy and identity.



Figure 1, Elaine, Nora Hartlaub, 2012. Video Still, 58 Second Digital Video.



Figure 2, Lenore, Nora Hartlaub, 2012. Video Still, 58 Second Digital Video.

## NATURALIZED SURVEILLANCE

Drawing upon Michel Foucault's analysis of modern disciplinary societies, Allan Sekula argues that in the mid 1800's photography not only invented the means to capture nature visually, but it also imposed upon its subjects a system of surveillance. Using portraiture as his example, he derives two distinct modes functioning within the "dual function" of photography, which he calls the "honorific" and "repressive". First, he relates the photographic portrait to the tradition of the painted portrait, as a means of "providing for the ceremonial presentation of the bourgeois *self*". And second, as a new function completely unconnected to the tradition of painted portraits, and rooted instead in "the imperatives of medical and anatomical illustration. "Photography came to establish and delimit the terrain of the *other*". The systematic and scientific differentiation between bodies through documentation led to the creation of the "other", or the criminal body, and ultimately led to what he calls the formation of the "social body". (6-10)

According to Sekula, the use of the camera as means to literally fabricate social archives of physiognomy, phrenology, and criminality, directly relates the social function of the camera to Foucault's description of Jeremy Bentham's model prison, the Panopticon. Foucault explains that the power over the masses must be efficient in effectively holding the "maximum intensity" at the "lowest possible cost." Just as the Panopticon disciplines inmates by teaching them to internalize their own surveillance,

social norms of behaviors are internalized by member of a disciplinary society. Sekula extends this function to photography

But in a more general, dispersed fashion, in serving to introduce the panoptic principle into daily life, photography welded the honorific and repressive functions together. Every portrait implicitly took its place within a social and moral hierarchy. The private moment of sentimental individuation, the look at the frozen gaze-of-the-loved-one, was shadowed by two other more public looks: a look up, at one's "betters," and a look down, at one's "inferiors". (10)

The suggestion of "public looks" subconsciously directs the women in *Elaine* and *Lenore* to depict their bodies in relation to, or in opposition of clichés that fit neatly into pre-subscribed roles. Whether exaggerated or slight, the women's performances are only completed by their recognition of being filmed. If photographic representation itself becomes the entrance point into a social archive as a means of locating power within the surveilled body as it differentiates itself from the body of the "other", then this results in the absolute assimilation of the camera into the formation of gender representations and how they function in the collective memory. If these works are examples of the insertion of the movie camera and its social function into the private space of the home and personal history, the works *Poses* and *Protest* extend this analysis to the public spaces of the city street and digital media. Paralleling developments in camera technology, the shift reflects as well a move from the naturalized surveillance of private spaces to the public space of the street and the public gathering.

Both of these works reflect Sekula's argument that the camera has a dual function. Through its creation of an index based on 'difference' between bodies, as well as a means for the apparatus to influence social control over the index it has created. Each of these works is "portraits" to an extent. In *Poses* the camera documents strangers voluntarily "striking a pose" upon request in the public space of the downtown street. In *Protest*, the public gathering is documented by means of a montage of shots of cameras held by various individuals attending the event. *Poses* illustrates the role of the lens in creating identity through the representations of the body, and in *Protest*, the camera itself is not only the "portrait subject", but also the apparatus which creates the "archive" in which the portrait functions.

The "portraits" in *Poses* illustrate a form of naturalized surveillance in the subjects' eagerness to participate. The construction of impromptu identities in the public space also reveals the influence of the media in constructing norms of social behavior. The participants' cultural groupings clearly dictate the actions (or inactions) of their poses. Individuals, couples, and groups "strike poses" according to their gender, age, or identifying clique. The division in representation along demographic lines illustrates Sekula's argument. If the differentiation between groups leads to the social indexing of the body based on such differentiation, then the bodies in this work are revealed as being concretely located in such a system.

For example, in the poses of two sets of different teenage girls, both sets of friends echo Miley Cyrus's famous character "Hanna Montana" in their poses. Sticking out their

tongues and making a sweeping gesture with their torsos and hands, they emulate the posturing of a character from television. A woman in her fifties or sixties suggests the 1950's "pin-up" pose of putting one hand to the head in display of a sanitized sexuality. The body language of women in straight couples tends to illustrate their submission to the men within the relationship who generally have no "pose", along with single males. These predictable and demographically "appropriate" representations locate the individuals within the very system they produce and reinforce. Related to the gender and class roles embedded in mainstream media and film; these portraits of strangers reveal the camera as a means to exercise power over representation, and therefore the body. In *Poses*, the portrait becomes an indication of the structure it is embedded within, and in *Protest*, surveillance is made obvious in the overwhelming presence of the camera at the public gathering.



Figure 3, Poses, Nora Hartlaub, 2012. Video Still, 3:14 Digital Video.



Figure 4, Poses, Nora Hartlaub, 2012. Video Still, 3:14 Digital Video.

The "portrait" is of the recording apparatus itself in *Protest*. Video footage of attendees' cameras, edited together, emphasizes the social role of the camera as a means to document lived experience and facilitate surveillance. The overwhelming presence of the camera within this public gathering suggests a spectacle. Aimed at the mid-sections of mostly male cameramen, but some women as well, the footage emphasizes the sometimes overtly phallic quality of the lens, and the flood of cameras and technology within this crowd becomes all the more revealing upon the context of the gathering.

The public event at which I recorded this footage at was coordinated by "GoTopless", a national organization that hosts protests in cities around the United States in which women bare their breasts in challenge of laws that prohibit women, but not men, from appearing shirtless in public. On this particular Sunday afternoon, about half a dozen women bared their breasts, while a multitude of onlookers photographed and

videotaped the women, who sometimes posed for the cameras, with or without members of the crowd. The implication, or feeling, that something lecherous is happening is evidenced by the sheer amount of recording devices and the ominously sedate atmosphere of the crowd. My inclusion of a bland audio track; the murmur of the crowd and a lone street performer playing the horn, furthers this assumption. The monotonous quality of the crowd and the video, in combination with an uneventful, unsurprising soundtrack emphasizes the lack of the context as to why so many people and cameras have amassed at this gathering.

The bodies providing the rationale for this gathering are absent from the video, and the camera fills in for those absent bodies. Recording only the cameras, and not the content of the event, reveals that the participants in this crowd are clearly experiencing the event through their documentation of it. Apparently recording these bodies in order to revisit the event in the privacy of the home, they are participating in an active and objectifying surveillance, further emphasized by the form of the apparatus itself. The cameras act as a barrier between the people recording and the bodies performing. The act of experiencing an event through a recording device subjects lived experience to the scopophilic and voyeuristic function of the lens.



Figure 5, Protest, Nora Hartlaub, 2012. Video Still, 3:43 Digital Video.



Figure 6, Protest, Nora Hartlaub, 2012. Video Still, 3:43 Digital Video.

## BROKEN MEMORY

In *Life Goes On*, a recorded phone conversation with my father is paired with a blurry slide show of televised images and found family portraits. The piece is displayed on a found vintage television set; of the same model our family owned. Sitting upon a large pedestal built specifically for the television, this piece is the only "object" in the exhibition.

Addressing the effect of technology in the private space of the home, this piece illustrates the fallible nature of memory and its correlation to the problems invested in photographic representation. My memory of the specific event occurred when I was a teenager. I remembered a tender, intimate moment I shared with my father after we had watched a television show together. Our recorded conversation reveals that I cherished this particular moment up as an example of good parenting on my father's part, while he does not, in fact, recall it. Memory becomes a nostalgic and hollow representation of an intimate experience that ironically, was spurred by a constructed narrative of intimate family life within a TV series. Much in the same way that recorded images can never escape a system of representation embedded with power structures resulting from the acts of looking and recording, memory is proved to be just as impeded by its own fallible nature. Neither image nor memory can ever encompass lived experience. The impossibility of images and memory to achieve their intended purposes of recording and remembering is beautiful in its flawed state within this piece. The intimacy and humor of

our conversation, and the beauty and timing of the blurred images invokes an emotional response that is experienced in real time and physical space.



Figure 7, Life Goes On, Nora Hartlaub, 2012. Audio Recording, Found Photographs, Vintage Television Set, 2 Minutes.

## GAZING ON NARRATIVE

In both *Elaine* and *Lenore*, short film clips of women in my family become both spectacle and catalyst in their removal from an ongoing narrative. Repeating these segments of film through digital manipulation, the actions of both the cameramen and the women reveal themselves as reflections of mainstream film. The women's awareness of the lens dictates their performances, and in repetition, their gestures become obvious and crass comments on their own narratives. Through my digital manipulations, the fetishization of their bodies disrupts the narrative sequence of the films, while pointing to the influence of Hollywood cinema on the social construction of familial intimacy.

The roles of both the voyeuristic spectator and the director are collapsed into a singular subject within these home movies, that of the father, who is the bearer of patriarchal power. Film theorist Patricia Zimmerman argues that the "angle of the camera, its mobility, and its control over representation unfurl patriarchal prerogative." After describing a found home movie from 1956 in Chicago she goes on to write:

The father is absent from all of these images, strung together in jump cuts like shaky, almost volatile, tableaux of family life. Yet the camera imprints his presence and control over the actors. It traces his leisure, his time away from work, his experiments with family and technology.

Zimmerman's observation is reflected within my family films as well. The father figure produces the images and narratives of the home in these nostalgic films, and he is subconsciously echoing and reinforcing the power structures within mainstream film. Zimmerman states that amateur film was "constantly practicing to achieve a homology to Hollywood productions." It is from this point of view that the role of the lens can function both as a means for scopophilic pleasure and also as a tool for imposing the power structures of mainstream film on the intimate family narrative.

Whether exaggerated or slight, the women's performances are only completed by their recognition of being filmed, of being recorded. Their awareness of the lens, their status as spectacle, and the techniques of the cameramen, my grandfathers, provide the basis for how I digitally manipulate the segments of film. Repeating, reversing, and speeding up or slowing down selected clips from the original films not only removes them from the diegesis of the home movie, it exposes the power structures in the camera apparatus.

The suspension of belief necessary for narrative to hold sway over its participants is disrupted by the singular moment removed from its context. In the examples from my family's film collection, the infiltration of the lens into the private life of the family reveals the embedded modes of appropriate social behaviors on both sides of the lens. The women perform in accordance with an intrinsic set of beliefs and expectations, and the men record in accordance to that set of beliefs.

Laura Mulvey's seminal article from 1975, *Visual Pleasure and Cinematic Narrative*, developed a critical theory of the roles and representations of women in Hollywood cinema. Using the established theories of psychoanalysis to analyze, pick apart, and hopefully disrupt the patriarchal "status quo", Mulvey defines "woman" within mainstream film as the fetishized object. (15) Mulvey argues that the male spectator must sanitize and fetishize the image of woman in order to quell his own fear of castration. It is this process which displaces the woman into what Jacques Lacan calls the "symbolic".

Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier of the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning. (15-16)

Mulvey argues that the role of woman in cinematic narrative is intrinsically tied to her symbolic representation as the signifier of lack, as the phallus. Woman's meaning is always given in relation to the male viewer's anxieties of castration. Suspended in a state of fragmented perfection, she also suspends the diegetic flow of the fictional narrative. For Mulvey, the voyeuristic "male gaze" of the spectator, aimed at the fetishized female body and combined with the visceral experience of cinema compresses the space between viewer and moving image. The spectator's identification with the protagonist of the narrative, and the isolation of the darkened theater, enables him to suspend belief and become the removed observer, able to engage in voyeuristic pleasure while securing his position of power through the act of looking.

The stereotypical performances of the women and the cameramen reflect the idea that the structural function of the male gaze in Hollywood cinema is also latent within amateur film and video. In *Elaine (grandma)*, I repeat the up-and-down pan of the camera so as to mimic the process of coitus, or masturbation. Her body literally becomes the penis. In *Lenore*, the ever slowing down of her hip-sway movement becomes absurd, destroying her impromptu intention of simply "hamming it up", and therefore deconstructing the "male gaze" in the fracturing and repetition of real time.

## NOSTALGIA

In both of these works, the aesthetic of amateur film also inevitably conjures nostalgia. The function of nostalgia and narrative is defined by Susan Stewart in this way:

Nostalgia is a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience. Rather, it remains behind and before that experience. Nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack.

Stewart defines nostalgia as a failure of narrative to reproduce an authentic experience. It is essentially felt as an absence or lack. In both these works the suspension of time through repetition echoes nostalgia's removal of experience from its past. If the role of nostalgia provokes feelings of longing for something that was never there, the camera functions in the same way within these works. The inability of the camera to produce an authentic representation of experience, is one and the same with nostalgia's inability to "take part in lived experience." The visceral experience of feeling "lack", in relationship to film, is related to the commodification of that experience. I relate the function of nostalgia within these works to the economic and cultural status of the middle

class family as a romanticized and fetishized outlet for leisure time in twentieth-century America.

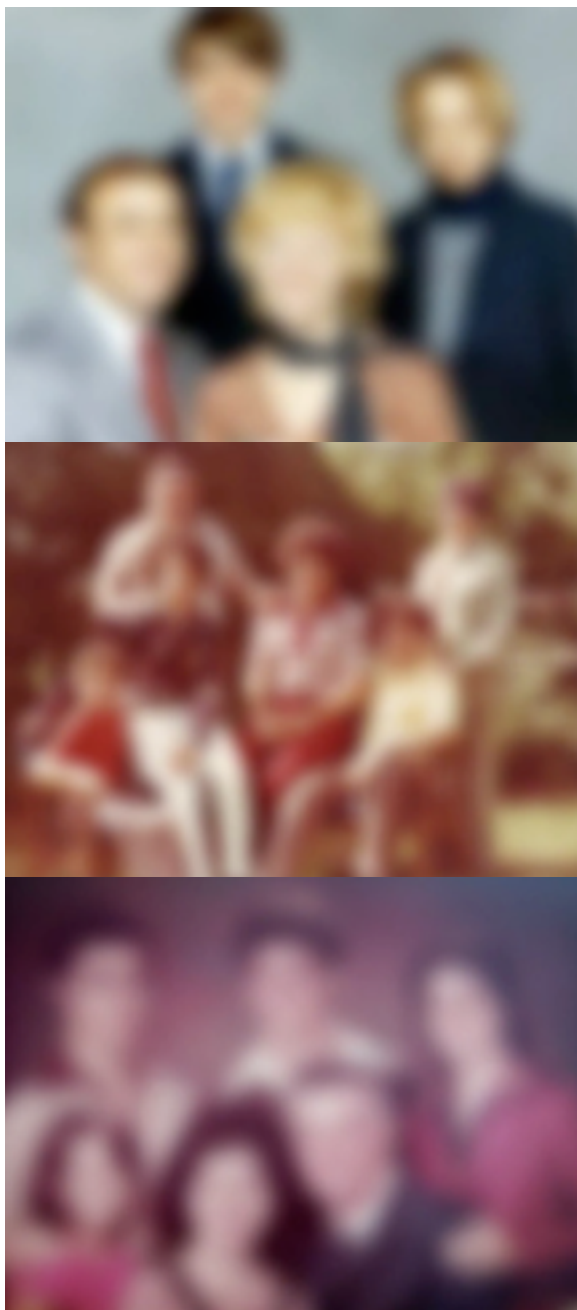


Figure 8, Life Goes On, Nora Hartlaub, 2012. Three Stills of Found Photographs.

## PROCESS AND INFLUENCE

Digitally manipulating specific segments of found film and recorded video generates the "core samples" that reveal and challenge the social function of the camera in modern society. As focused snippets, or specimens, each of the works in the installation reflect the process of "coring" in order to address the perceptions of the "whole" of the cultural value of filmic representation and my art historical influences. The works of Tony Conrad and Cindy Sherman provide models of comparison to which I relate and scrutinize aspects of my own works.

The use of absurdity, humor, and innuendo allows for another approach by which these samples may be analyzed, edited and presented. If Laura Mulvey believes that "analyzing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it"(18), then I believe making puns and utilizing jest functions in the same way. Through such techniques I can expose the historical processes of social control materialized in the recording apparatus. Humor provides a mechanism for coping with and critiquing inequality in representation.

Turning my grandmother into a giant penis in *Elaine*, through digital editing, makes obvious the sexist motion of the camera. Played on a loop and sped up, this movement becomes frenetic. The effects of digital manipulation within this work produce a "flicker", activating the bodily perceptions of the spectator, as proved in Tony Conrad's 1966 film *The Flicker*. The up-and-down motion of the camera, imbued with the

innuendo of sexual manipulation, offers a commentary on the role of women in Hollywood cinema, but also the history of experimental film, and uses the mechanism of the “dirty joke” to navigate through the relationships amongst these systems.

In looping and repeating clips of film in order to isolate moments that address the construction of identity in cinematic narrative, my work also reflects what Laura Mulvey calls “moments of erotic contemplation”. (19-20) The methods I use in digitally altering footage to suspend narrative makes obvious the influence of Hollywood and media on representation. This can also be seen in Cindy Sherman’s *Untitled Film Stills* series from 1977-80. Rosalynd Krauss writes about Sherman’s photographs of herself posing in a multitude of fabricated identities as “A concoction of stereotypes, the images reproduce what is already a reproduction- that is the various stock personae that are generated by Hollywood scenarios, TV soap operas, Harlequin Romances, and slick advertising”. (62) The construction of identity based on media defines this body of Sherman’s work, and my work reflects the influence of media on representation as well. The point at which my process diverges from hers is in the effect of projected and moving images. The ability of the recording device to point to socially acceptable norms of representation through its own influence is addressed in the works, as well as the function of technology in relation to the construction of experience.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, my works challenge the structures of hierarchal power inherent in mass media and the social function of the camera in our culture. Through the process of coring out the depths of photographic representation, I attempt to destroy the function of the apparatus through my analysis of it. Drawing on Allan Sekula and Michel Foucault's theories, I relate the insertion of the camera into the private space of the home, and its subsequent acceptance into the public space, to structures of social control and surveillance. The overwhelming presence of technology in culture influences social behavior and intimate relationships. The processes I employ reveal and disrupt those structures through feminist critique and humor.

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