

WILLOW DIARY



Anne
Charlotte

Robertson

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foreword

**Benjamin
Cook
and Bárbara
Rodríguez Muñoz**

Anne Charlotte Robertson (1949 – 2012) was a Boston-area based experimental filmmaker who used her intimate personal life as subject to produce a large and distinctive body of Super 8 film. She studied under filmmaker Saul Levine at the Massachusetts College of Art in the 1980s, and along with contemporaries such as Carolee Schneemann and Ed Pincus made a significant contribution to personal diary filmmaking, particularly with the *Five Years Diary* (1981 – 1997), her major work which covers a 15 year period of her life and runs to over 36 hours in length.

Robertson's self-produced films offer a bold answer to ongoing discussions around the value of art as a therapeutic and de-stigmatising tool. Mostly filmed in the home she shared with her mother in Framingham, Massachusetts, the diary's compulsive compilation of reels depicts the artist enacting contemporary obsessions with her weight, ecology and finding Mr. Right. Robertson wanders around the apartment immersed in a chain of frantic domestic activities such as organising the fridge or having dinner with her mother. Recorded live, her voice digresses off-camera as she films, and is then overlaid by her critical commentaries in post-production, which offer a more psychoanalytical view into the complexity of her mental state. By presenting herself – and her emotional breakdowns – with this unmediated and affective approach to a public audience, and by openly stating that making the film diary had 'literally saved her life', Robertson personifies the value of artistic processes as a means for maintaining mental balance and defying psychiatric labels.

During her lifetime Robertson often traveled to present her works in person, showing her original film prints and adding a live narration to the already dense layers of sound and story in the works. While she received numerous awards and prizes for her films, the fact that she was so prolific and mainly self-distributed her work meant that much of it remains relatively unseen. Robertson died of cancer in 2012, leaving her large archive of Super 8 films to the Harvard Film Archive, who are working to catalogue and preserve them.

The Dissociation
of Anxiety

Lisa
Blackman

Anne Charlotte Robertson starts Reel 23 of her *Five Year Diaries, A Breakdown and After the Mental Hospital* (September 1 – December 13, 1982) with a black screen which carries the sound of multiple overlapping voices. One is clearly discernible as the voice of the artist telling us of the recent death of her father and other events (refusal of a loan, living in a poor neighbourhood, a failed relationship), which may have precipitated her breakdown and stay in a mental hospital. There is another voice, one which dissociates this sound of her narration and disjoints any straightforward narrative account: a simultaneous recording of herself on tape, which also registers the sounds of the camera whilst filming. This second layer of sound carries more of a ghostly quality, haunting the narrative with something else; something not quite audible; non-human agencies perhaps. The third source of overlapping sound is the artist's voice added later in postproduction. This one is more analytical and reflects on the experience of breaking down, of being able to witness herself at a later point, and taking on different characters, including mimicking the tone and intention of a psychologist.

Robertson's films carry multiple temporalities, of past, present and – more importantly – of a possible future. The *Five Year Diaries* themselves are made for a husband-yet-to-come; an audio-visual dowry which conveys multiple pasts into the future, and for the artist allows for the very possibility of being able to anticipate a future different to the one that endures on tape. These are a series of diary films where film itself provides a way to anchor the dissociation of anxiety and the multiplicity of selfhood, whilst simultaneously inducing and sharing these experiences with a viewer. They perform an 'ethics of entanglement' which invites the viewer to imagine such an experience, or revisit some of their own experiences, whilst attempting to let go of what we might call self-consciousness or will. Essentially, Robertson's compulsive filming is integral to her survival and strategies of coping; 'it is therapeutic' – she tells us – and allows for the extension of herself into other possible futures.

Anxiety has a close relationship to control or what became known as 'will'. The exercise of control historically became tied to the capacity to be able to enact clear and distinct boundaries between the self and other. The Latin root of inhibit *habere* means to hold in; to arrest, hinder and repress. In the 20th century 'too much will' was seen to result in forms of compulsion and addictive behaviour and became linked to mental disease and disorder. Will was seen as a distinctly human capacity that could be removed, suspended, intensified or destroyed and the cultivation of habit became one of the means to provide the basis of psychological or voluntary control. What was emphasized by psychiatry and psychology was the importance of control; of being able to exercise the capacity of will; a distinct form of self-possession and self-controlled individualism. Anxieties with their diffuse and specific nature stand as a marker of how difficult this normative cultural injunction is. Anxieties communicate with specific cultural norms and their often-shaky foundations; diagnosing perhaps how such a fiction of autonomy is difficult and sometimes impossible to live. Although control as a form of will or self-possession became central to notions of normative psychological health within the psychological and psychiatric sciences, at the time of the professionalization of both disciplines competing theories co-existed and had an impact on how human subjectivity was conceived. These competing ideas influenced early cinema and provide clues for how we might understand the significance of Robertson's diary films for her own survival.

From its inception as a medium, early cinema was pre-occupied with forces, energies, sensations, atmospheres, intensities and feelings which confounded the idea that agency resides with the individual subject exercising mastery and control over their world. This human-centric view of agency, later to become associated with rationality within the psychological and psychiatric sciences, only told a partial story of what it meant to be human. Humans could be possessed or spell-bound (known as automaticity), and the multiplicity of selfhood

was something that was considered more normal, or at least worthy of investigation. Early cinema popularized this fascination and the possible anxiety of being open to the other - human and non-human. Scientists, philosophers, artists, writers and medics studied hypnosis, multiple personality, mediumship, telepathy and clairvoyance, as well as voice hearing, delusions and anxieties. These disciplines assumed that the experience of being more than one, common to all phenomena, was to be investigated and understood rather than confined to pathology or the status of abnormal perceptions.

It is perhaps at the nexus of these competing theories that Anne Charlotte Robertson's diary films might speak to us today. The aesthetic and practice of making these films, that the artist suggests is necessary for her survival, might be considered as forms of extended will. They usefully displace self-control or will as being a distinctly human capacity and demonstrate how agency can be distributed and extended via machines and technologies, importantly including the practice of making the films. This is not the exercise of mastery over the breakdown, but one which blurs the distinction between self and other, past and present, fact and fantasy, human and non-human, and which is mirrored and refracted by the sign-language that she constructs to convey her experiences. She tells the viewer in an authorial voice-over that she has accumulated 900 rolls of film that she cannot afford to process. The film is kept in the fridge and this statement is accompanied by a shot of the fridge's contents. She tells us that she decided to stop eating anything that would cause pain, including a root vegetable in the fridge, which would need to be removed and replanted. This unusual belief is presented as a sign to be decoded; one of course which is taken to be suggestive of her breakdown and the breaking down of sense within the narrative. The conviction of this statement is modulated by flashes of vegetables – a rhubarb perhaps – carried by a shaky handheld camera, juxtaposing flashes and squiggles of light. These flashes are presented with a syncopation designed perhaps to induce the nausea, panic and anxiety of what it might feel like to be out-of-time.

Rather than denying these experiences, they are intentionally documented and extended via the process of filming, helping the artist cope and even dissipate or remove certain experiences; including stopping her suicidal thoughts. This practice resonates with the practices of the Hearing Voices Network who have found – contrary to psychiatry – that focusing on the content of their voices, writing them down and sharing them in different ways often lessens or removes them. Conversely, ignoring, blocking or distracting them often makes them worse. Both practices do not enact a separation between self and other, or a form of mastery over the experiences, but rather share and distribute the voices amongst others, taking them out of a singularly bounded human subject. The diaries invite us to consider why such practices of compulsive film-making might be therapeutic, rather than make the experiences worse and more protracted.

These therapeutic tendencies are extended in Anne Charlotte Robertson's diaries by the materiality and affordances of Super 8 film. Time is stretched in these archives; it is disjointed, emotional, other-worldly and the voices and fragments operate as traces and absences. They look backwards and project forwards to what is usually left behind after particular narratives and sorting processes have taken place. They create a feeling of time being out of joint; a term often associated with the 'hauntologies' of the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, who asks the question 'what does it mean to live and to learn to live with ghosts'. The camera I / eye in this moving image work extends perception and opens up the experience of anxiety, voice hearing and mental breakdown beyond the safety and sanctity of some of the more ubiquitous narratives, which viewers might be familiar with. These more common narratives tend to focus on the ordinariness of mental ill-health and function to combat the stigma, prejudice and fear surrounding mental ill-health by presenting recovery as due to insight (that one has a mental illness), rather than exploring how people often find other ways of coping which challenge the biomedicalization of lived experiences. They are also in danger of sanitising the experience

of what it can mean to breakdown and become the subject and object of a psychiatric gaze. Anne Charlotte Robertson's diaries call forth modes of attention which challenge a fortress, defended self and stand as a painful reminder of what we would rather forget if we believe that will, control and rationality are ultimately what make us human.

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She is the editor of the journal *Body & Society* (Sage) and co-editor of *Subjectivity* (with Valerie Walkerdine, Palgrave). She has published four books: *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (2012, Sage / TCS); *The Body: The Key Concepts* (2008, Berg); *Hearing Voices: Embodiment and Experience* (2001, Free Association Books); *Mass Hysteria: Critical Psychology and Media Studies* (with Valerie Walkerdine, 2001, Palgrave).

She is particularly interested in phenomena which have puzzled scientists, artists, literary writers and the popular imagination for centuries, including automaticity, voice hearing, suggestion and telepathy.

Anne Charlotte
Robertson

interviewed by

Scott
MacDonald

I first became interested in Anne Robertson because of her unusual relationship to her films. At the time when her *Diary* was shown, complete, at the American Museum of the Moving Image in 1988, it was over forty hours long, and was shown in a room that Robertson had decorated with childhood artifacts. The extended screening invited viewers out of their lives and prearranged schedules and into hers. Robertson's use of three sources of sound during the screening sound-on-film, sound-on-tape, and in-person commentary confirmed the viewer's immersion in Robertson's experience. That the diary reels were often startlingly beautiful was an unexpected surprise.

As this is written in July 1990, the film continues to grow, though some reels have recently been censored by Robertson (see her comments in the interview). The diary is essentially every film she's made: even films listed under separate titles in her filmography *Magazine Mouth* (1983), for example are sometimes included in presentations of the diary. As I've grown more familiar with Robertson's work (to date, I've seen about eight hours of the diary), I've come to understand that the relationship of this filmmaker's life and work is even more unusual than I had guessed. For Robertson, whose manic-depressiveness has resulted in frequent hospitalizations, making and showing the diary has become a central means for maintaining psychic balance, her primary activity whenever she is free of the mental hospital and free enough of drug therapy to be able to produce imagery

Robertson's *Diary* can be experienced in a variety of ways. She most likes to present it as a 'marathon': complete and as continuous as possible. But in recent years, she has also begun to fashion shorter programs (the most recent I've attended was four hours long). The scheduled show date has become a means for sampling from the diary. If Robertson

schedules a show for April 25, for example, she may show all the reels that were shot during April: viewers are able to see the development (or lack of it) in her life from year to year. In general, we see Robertson simultaneously from the outside (within her recorded imagery and sound, and usually as the in-person narrator) and from the inside, as she expresses her moments of clarity and delusion in her handling of the camera and her juxtapositions of sound and image.

While my original interest in Robertson was a function of the fascinating and troubling interplay between her filmmaking and her illness, my decision to interview her was determined both by the compelling nature of her presentation (particularly her courage in submitting her films and herself to public audiences) and by her frequently breathtaking imagery. The single-framing of her activities in her tiny Boston apartment in early reels she flutters around the rooms and through the weeks like a frenzied moth and her precise meditations on her physical environment make her *Diary* intermittently one of the most visually impressive Super-8 films I've seen. And the way in which she enacts contemporary compulsions about the correct appearance of the body (her weighing and measuring herself, nude, is a motif) and about the importance of meeting 'the right guy' provide a poignant instance of those contemporary gender patterns so problematic for many women. Robertson's *Diary* along with films by Su Friedrich, Diana Barrie, Michelle Fleming, Ann Marie Fleming, and others has re-personalized many of the issues raised by the feminist writers and filmmakers of the seventies.

I talked with Robertson in April 1990.

Scott MacDonald

You remind me of a line in Jonas Mekas's *Walden*: 'I make home movies therefore I live.' For Mekas, the ongoing documentation of his life is very important. But as important as his filmmaking is to him, I think the line is metaphoric, rather than literal: Mekas has a busy organizational life, as well as a filmmaking life. His statement seems more applicable to you. When you're not able to make films, your life seems in crisis. Could you talk about the relationship between your films and your life? Perhaps you could begin with how you got started making films.

Anne Charlotte Robertson

I started the diary November 3, 1981, which, it turns out, is Saul Levine's birthday. Sort of a psychic tribute there. He was one of the people who encouraged me to continue making films. I started the diary about a month after I began sitting in on classes at the Massachusetts College of Art. I'd made eleven short films before that, the first in 1976.

When I began the diary, I bought five rolls of film. I thought I'd film myself, one scene every day, moving around my apartment. And I would go on a strict diet: I knew of a photographer in New York [Eleanor Antin] who had simply taken a still of herself nude every day while she was on a diet. I wanted to do that, but at first, I wanted to be clothed, I wore a leotard. Every day I'd do one more scene.

Five rolls of film it wasn't enough. Sometime in late November, 1981, my father told me to tell a story. I didn't really have a story to tell, except to expand more on my day-to-day life inside my apartment. The whole film starts out with me carrying some grocery bags into the apartment and then emptying out a huge bag full of produce from my garden and from the co-op. Then I take off a black coat, hang it up, go into the living room, and get myself a dictionary a 1936 dictionary,

which has fantastic definitions for the word 'fat.' In the thirties, 'fat' meant something good. It meant plump, pleasing the best part of your work is a 'fat' job and 'thin' had a lot of opprobrium attached: meager, of slender means.

Anyway, I started filming myself in this black coat over yellow leotards I wore yellow because the *I Ching* says that to wear a yellow undergarment brings good fortune. And yellow was the closest to flesh color I could get (yellow is also the color of fat). But instead of losing weight, I was gaining weight. I kept bingeing so I started taking more frames of that. Later, I filmed the actual makings of a binge, and street signs of food. It was all going to be about food. I didn't really have any goal just to lose the weight.

I would do things like lay out the black clothing on the bed, a full suit, black pocketbook, black gloves, black coat, black dress, black stockings (this is after I had mended the black coat and put it away because I was against wool: I was getting rid of animal products in my life, to become a vegan not just a vegetarian, but a vegan).

Well, my father died January 10, about two months after the film had begun, and well, that laying out of the black clothing went, 'Bong!' And, as if that wasn't enough, I'd just finished weaving a big yellow banner on a loom I had built myself. I had had it on the loom for ten years. The next day, my father died. I felt like I'd predicted my father's death. And the reason he died was because he was a hundred pounds overweight when I was a kid at least a hundred pounds. He had a heart attack and strokes.

After that, the film just sort of came. I started doing striptease, kicking breadsticks around on the kitchen table; I read *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and started taking long strings of pictures of lights, because *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* says to stare into the bright light.

S M D

When you say 'pictures,' you mean single frames?

A C R

Frames, images just a lot of pictures of lights, lights, lights, lights,

lights, lights, lights in the city, lights outside. I used to have *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* as a soundtrack for the film, but I discarded it because, though the Tibetans say it's good for people who are alive to hear it, it has an amazing capacity for being used to hypnotize someone. Too many demons, also. I got into a lot of worry about future technologies and people resuscitating brains or keeping people in comas, making them think they're dead. When you die, if *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is true, you first see the white light and then the four bright-colored lights. I'm supposed to warn you: don't look at any of the soft lights.

I took a lot of pictures inside my studio and gradually started taking pictures more and more of people, of my family, of day-to-day life. Sometimes I'd introduce the film by saying, 'It's true, so, it's a trousseau': it's the only gift I have for the guy who will come along and be my partner and say, 'What have you been doing with the rest of your life?'

Eventually, I just sort of discarded the costume, and filmed myself naked. Last fall, I got very paranoid, and I cut out a lot of the naked parts. A lot of pans down my body were cut out. I left all the shots that were at a distance, but I cut out a lot of the ones that I felt really looked seductive. I wanted to take all that seductiveness out of the film, but I discovered you couldn't really do that. You take a picture of a naked body: it's seductive. But I did take out some of the best scenes, several hours of film. Eventually it went from being ninety reels last fall to about eighty-two. I took out nakedness and irreligious statements. I felt I couldn't leave them in anymore (my films of myself naked *Talking to Myself* [1987], et cetera are available only for shows with small, trusted audiences and at legitimate artistic venues).

I also took out a certain amount of obscurity, although I did want to leave as much obscurity as possible, because I am hoping that there is a man in the world (whether he's a video or film artist I kind of doubt; I think he's more likely someone like this actor, Tom Baker [Baker played Dr. Who on *Dr. Who*], I'm interested in) someone who has a burning desire to study parapsychology, and who's in synchrony

with me. For several years I kept a dream diary and I would write down in my diaries all the dreams I had. I'm looking for someone who has done the same thing with random thoughts, poems, images that have come to mind dream images. *Somebody* might have written a poem that said, 'My love is kicking breadsticks across the table and reading the definition of 'fat' from a 1936 dictionary.'

I've got notes in my film log for the first two hundred rolls of my film. I've got starting and stopping dates, right down to the minute I took a picture. I know Allen Ginsberg dates his diaries down to the minute. I thought that would be a good thing to do, so that later I could prove synchrony with somebody who was willing to keep a notebook with him and make jottings of images or the thoughts that come unbidden and you have no way of tying them to anything.

Tom Baker was born in 1934. Tom Baker has two hundred dictionaries. If I can predict my father's death, I might as well believe I've predicted that there's this guy who is interested in me, who happens to have a collection of dictionaries. The whole diary started when I became fascinated with this old dictionary and its crazy definitions.

Sometimes I think I'm going to go back and reinsert the naked parts back into my diary, but I have a feeling probably I won't. I kept them all on reels. Supposedly, they're in order. Some reels got so mishmashed by my paranoia last fall, I could never put them back in order again.

When I started the film, I thought I'd lose weight; and the second thing I thought was that I'd try to tell a story, as my father told me to; and the third thing I thought was that the film would be a trousseau; and the fourth thing was my realizing that my children would be watching.

S M D

One of the things that struck me last night when you showed sections of the diary at Utica College (I don't remember this so much from when I saw the film at the Museum of the Moving Image; I guess it depends on which sections you're showing) was your startling openness about your hospitalization.

interview continues from p25

ANNE CHARLOTTE ROBERTSON

"FIVE YEAR DIARY"

85⁺ reels, approximately 26 minutes each,
t, Super 8 mm and video

Begun November 3, 1981,
in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

I present my life in multi-media: film (1st visual source), sound from film (when possible, depending upon finances; 1st audio source), audiotape dubbed diary (2nd audio source), on-stage live introduction to each reel (milieu-setting, perspective-giving, autobiographical storytelling: 2nd visual, 3rd audio, source), live narration from-within-the-audience (4th audio source), amid a surrounding environment (as much as is possible to bring to a screening; 3rd visual resource), with myself usually available to the audience during intermissions, as the primary source/resource of information and perspective on my life.

This diary is a constant work-in-progress, as is every life. It is a matter of collection rather than pre-visualization of scenes; I try to take a documentary approach to life-events and my surrounds, rather than molding my life into a theatrical artifice. Despite the multitude of information offered to the audience via multi-media, the result is not a barrage, but a view into complexity, and themes of personal change. Making my diary has literally saved my life; it is an inspiration to others, that "examining one's life can help make life worth living."

I am a 50-year-old woman, single, with a vow to poverty. The title Five Year Diary refers to the little blank books with locks and keys, that allow only a few lines to each day's notation; the audience is invited to be my brother and sister, and see what a life can yield. My present and future hope is to leave a full record of a woman in the 20th century. I have been a diarist since I was a child; likewise I have kept visual records, and artifacts. My training in schools and by myself has been in writing, crafts, theater, photography, psychology, and film. During the past 17 years I have added audio recordings to my diary accumulation, thus approaching the utilization of all the senses that art can present of memory. My work in film is entirely self-produced (except for laboratory processing and technical processes such as video/sound transfer); I am the sole artist, camera, editor, lights, and sound.

All that surrounds and interests me would disappear in an apocalypse, as surely as the film image disappears after projection. I take as many personal artifacts as possible, with me to screenings, to create a 3-D environment, so that even the intermissions are alive for the audience.

I am an organic gardener also, someone who has deliberately chosen to leave the city after many years, to live among trees; gardens can be planned to a certain extent, but intensive planting calls for spontaneous crowding, work of art that is similar to my own growth as an artist in multi-media. I am a diarist, a visual artist, a performer, and a storyteller, with my films "at the mouth of the cave", telling you all that we are not merely shadows, we are all complex beings needing nurturing, and change, and the acknowledgement and acceptance of changing ourselves.

A SHORT AFFAIR (AND) GOING CRAZY

(video available)
(1982/1996; Super 8mm film, narration,
and audiotape)
(running time 24 minutes)

This is Reel 22 of my Super 8mm opus Five Year Diary. It covers the period August 23 to September 1, 1982. Within is documented a compulsive paranoid manic-depressive psychotic breakdown, following a brief love affair.

Synopsis: Introduction; a vegetarian dinner; the lover sleeping; sorting garbage; ex-lovers' art; friends and cocaine; moon; composting sable brushes; the kitchen sink; wine; eating with my hands; the kitchen table; self-portraits; construction machines; hiding behind the curtains; morning-glories at dusk; dinner with my mother; the drawings in the hall, yoga, and the goddess rap; calling the lover; saying goodbye; carnival rides; street scenes; weeping; flowers and bees; shadows on the carpet and empty rooms; esoterica sign language; sorting the compost; walking through Boston, hunting for clues; finding him in a fountain; my favorite statue; the slug incident; paranoia about plastic; putting everything in garbage bags; the construction site outside; calling the lover.

A BREAKDOWN (AND) AFTER THE MENTAL HOSPITAL

(video available)
(1982/1991; silent/color Super 8mm & tape &
narration)
(running time 26 minutes 04 seconds)

This is Reel 23 of my Super 8mm opus Five Year Diary. It covers the period September 1 - December 13, 1982. Within are documented a paranoid manic nervous breakdown, a description of a mental hospitalization, and the subsequent recovery period. Sound is of wild tape of the breakdown, and a hidden tape-recorded psychiatric session; the second soundtrack is narration from 1991.

Synopsis: Introduction; paranoia about root vegetables; esoteric sign language; searching for hidden significances; crush on Tom Baker ("Doctor Who" from BBC Television); my cats Amy and Buddy; vegetarian cooking; the compost heap; my mother and her house; driving into Boston; unemployment; television hypervigilance; hiding inside; exorcism with tea and mirror and lamps; too much wine; my friend the painter Susan Brown; the movie The Turning Point; experiences in a mental hospital; psychiatric session recording; autumn street and garden scenes; the mental day-hospital; domestic still-lives; bingeing; self-Gestalt-therapy; school; groceries; winter; my garden; a series of self-portraits.



EMILY DIED

This is Reel 23 of my Super8mm opus, Five Year Diary. It covers the time period September 1 to December 13, 1982. Videotransfer was made in 1991, pro bono, by Bob Brodsky. The second track of narration dates to this later time.

I was sitting in on classes at Massachusetts College of Art, and had just been accepted to graduate school there, in Filmmaking. But a loan had been refused, and I had no money to attend. It was summer vacation; I had just registered for classes, but knew it was futile.

My father had died this year. I see this now as one of the precipitating causes of the paranoid nervous breakdown. Also, a technician at school had threatened to call the police to retrieve my borrowed Nizo silent Super8 camera, which I had damaged this summer. And a new lover had turned out to be both bisexual, and about to return to his school across the country. I was losing everything; even my dream of film school was vanishing.

I carried the camera everyday. This is the actual record of 8 days before I was put into a mental hospital for 3 months. I went to a friend's house, hoping to be safe. There I "exorcized Richard Nixon" and descended into madness. In the morning I left my camera, walked across the street, and lay down in a sandpit, hoping to be buried alive. I was "put away" promptly.

I refused to take medications in the mental hospital. I was beaten, overdosed, and nearly raped. Finally I was threatened with the courts, and took the drugs. After surviving a bout of pneumonia, I returned home.

It was nearly winter. My garden had been killed. I sat in on classes again, and recovered my equilibrium at home.

My nervous breakdown had been characterized by paranoia, and massive manic delusions of being the Goddess of the World. I had been afraid of root vegetables, plastic, and aluminum, and put all my belongings into plastic bags. I had eaten food with my fingers in front of the camera, "since God told me to do so." I kept an audiotape diary of my delusions; this is one of the soundtracks. (The recovery period has a tape of a hidden recorded psychiatric session.)

My diagnosis was manic-depression. Now I saw the psychiatrist every week, and was also soon in family therapy. I ate beets again, so I must have been sane. Yet I had gained 15 pounds in the mental hospital, and was bingeing on food again at home. I felt extremely fragile after having been locked-up inside for three months.

The camera was my saving grace. I could not afford to process the film for several more years, and kept 200 rolls of film in my refrigerator in plastic bags. Yet I used the camera everyday, thus enabling me to capture every mood. Even a mad woman can make art. And art itself is one of the best therapies.

(video available)

(1996: color sound Super8 film
plus narration)

(running time 26 minutes 49 seconds)

This is Reel 80 of my Super 8mm opus Five Year Diary. It covers the period May 14 to September 26, 1994. Within is personal documentary; midway occurs the death of my 3-year-old niece Emily; the impact of her death is explored.

Synopsis: Title; doves; spring flowers; driving past pond; self-portraits; a crush on the lawn-mower; raps in studio; seedlings; my cat Zouina; my brother's family; moon; my garden; friends and their children; summer flowers; ozone disappearing; quote from James Thurber; side-effects of medication; death of Emily, my niece; nervous breakdown; leaving the mental hospital; Alcoholics Anonymous; picking flowers for Emily's ashes' interment; fruits of the season; bringing flowers to Emily's grave; the gravestone; sun rising; Emily like a flower; typing grant applications; the vegetarian sub; medications.

Partially funded by the New England Film/Video Fellowship Program of the Boston Film/Video Foundation, through a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

My niece Emily was born April 25, 1991. She was a charming child, petite, constantly hugging everyone and telling us " I love you." My sound camera wasn't working, so I have only silent footage of her. My last film of her is on the porch, waving goodbye.

She had begun to have convulsions when her blood sugar was low, and had been in intensive care several times, covered with monitors yet constantly asking to be held. She came home again.

July 16, 1994, she awoke in the morning, asked for a glass of water, drank it, then died in her father's arms. Emergency medical technicians, then hospital personnel, worked on her for hours, but she could not be resuscitated. The results of her aut opsy: an enlarged heart, and evidence of a rare condition concerning blood sugar uptake.

My sister is a pediatric nurse. I cannot talk to her about this film. Her grief is so huge, it almost cannot be shared.

My grief was so immediate that it surfaced as absolute denial, and a psychotic breakdown. (I have been diagnosed as having a schizoaffective disorder.) I was hospitalized for 17 days (following the shot of the full moon, and sounds of my ravings) then emerged to take up the daily camera again.

What had been ordinary diary, raps in my studio, friends, family, observations of the world, daily life, now all seemed to revolve around the loss of my niece, who was only 3 years old. I feared death and "blinking out like a lightbulb" or never having children of my own; I wished for a Paradise with gardens as beautiful as Emily was, our little flower.

As I gathered flowers for her ashes' interment, I heard her speak in my head, "Be sure to leave some pink and purple ones, because the bees love them." Can there be messages from beyond?

When my youngest brother Andrew died in 1967 at the age of 9, my father wrote a poem; it is in bronze on our family gravestone:

"On the morrow, in the sun, we will see you, hold hands, ride the morning star, and stand together on the high mountain top overlooking all."

If my film succeeds, it is because grief is a common human condition, and the death of a child causes the ultimate grief, which you share. Yet this is also the story of a mind's survival, using art as therapy. Carrying the camera through this time helped me transcend psychosis, and convey the sense of our darling little girl to you all. I give you my sense of loss, and a hope to see Emily again someday.

A C R

Well, I've got to be! Otherwise, as Kate Millett says, you're a 'ghost in the closet.'

S M D

Is the history of your being institutionalized simultaneous with your making of the diary? How do you see the two things relating?

A C R

Well, I think Mekas's comment, 'I make home movies therefore I live,' is really apt for me. You see, I didn't have any way of explaining why I was into bingeing, but I knew the bingeing was going to go at the beginning of the film. The film had a theme. The theme was I wanted to lose weight, because I didn't want to die like my father had. Yet, I couldn't explain why I had gotten into overeating, eating literally until I got sick, until I had to lie down because it was too painful to stand up.

S M D

You said last night that you had never been a bulimic, that you never purged.

A C R

No, that's true. I wouldn't do that. But there's such a thing as making eight dozen cookies and eating four dozen and then just feeling sick. This was after a whole day of being so very, very careful with food. The mental hospitalizations that had happened to me by 1981 I had been hospitalized three times happened every fall. For three months each year, I was in a mental hospital. Mostly, I'd fight the drugs they gave me, but I would have to give in eventually because they'd say they'd take me to court: they'd inject me.

I had no way of explaining why I had breakdowns. It was another inexplicable thing in my life. When I was a kid growing up, I never thought I'd be having delusions, and be hospitalized. In 1981 I started the diary, and in 1981 I didn't have a breakdown. I think it might be because I was going to film school: I had somewhere to go, I had a camera to borrow. I made several other short films the fall of 1981 and then began the diary.

One short film was called *Locomotion* [1981]. It shows me against a blue wall, screaming and exhibiting the side effects of medication I had observed in the hospitals. The first real breakdown that I got on film was in 1982. I showed my delusions. I showed that I was afraid that root vegetables suffered, so I was going to take them back to the garden and replant them. You can see me getting on my big rain slicker and getting out the beets and carrots and onions and preparing to take them back, making sign language in front of the camera.

In fact, that first breakdown occurred shortly after a person at school threatened he'd call the cops and take the camera away from me. Losing that camera, I lost my mind. Every time there's a breakdown, I try to take pictures of it. My problem with a film diary (and with a written diary) is that sometimes I become so paranoid and obnoxious. Voices in my head become so frightening, and I cannot bring myself to document them. It's just too terrifying.

I believe in film being necessary every day. Monet did his haystacks and I have done the gazebo in the backyard. This winter I was so depressed, after getting out of the hospital and being put under a whole lot of restrictions, I was taking pictures every day of the gazebo in all kinds of weather. In fact, just this last week I stopped.

So for a while in the diary there are pictures of the gazebo, and of Tom Baker on *Dr. Who*. Daylight is the gazebo, where I'd hoped to get married someday (I've discarded that notion since I think a justice of the peace is just about as good). Evening is *Dr. Who*.

Anyway, I had so much trouble from my paranoia of the people across the pond, the neighbors. My problem is that a lot of my paranoia is warranted. I can't say the voices in my head are warranted, but I'm damned if I'm going to say they come from me! When a person starts getting third-person stories, more hideous than they've ever heard before, or ever read before, the psychiatric establishment says, 'You invented that,' and everybody else says, 'You thought of that.' Nobody, not even the psychiatrists, want to know how horrible the stories in your head are. I have never had a psychiatrist ask me, 'And what do

the voices say to you?' No one has ever said, 'What do you mean by the insane monologue in your head?' Nobody wants to know because they're too scared. They think that the person is insane and hears voices is making them up and is in some way as evil as the voices.

It's a real old thing. Instead of putting you in iron chains, they put you in drug chains. They've done a lot of drug pushing over the years. Speaking of drugs, another thing that's in the diary is the drugs I've chosen to use at times a lot of pictures of alcohol, of cigarettes, of pot smoking, a few of cocaine, and the prescription drugs. I thought I'd focus on all the things I ever did that were wrong, and then I'd put them, one by one, into the films, along with the bingeing, and get perspective so I could shed bad habits.

A C R

So far every subject I come up with excess apologies, thoughts about suicide (for three years, from 1976 to 1979, I heard voices saying, 'I want to kill myself' it was my voice) . . . every subject has been affected by being included in a film. I made a film about suicide [*Suicide*, 1979] illustrating some of the ways I thought I'd kill myself, and literally edited it in about an hour and a half and screened it, and as I watched the film, the suicide voices stopped in my head and they haven't come back since.

S M D

Did that happen with bingeing, too?

A C R

Yeah, it happened with bingeing, when I made *Magazine Mouth*, which we watched last night. I was taking Polaroid pictures of myself with my mouth wide open, and closed but bulging like I had a lot of food in my mouth. I filmed all the objects going into my open mouth food, fish, baubles of the rich . . . all kinds of things going into my mouth. And bingeing stopped being a major subject in my life soon after.

S M D

When you had the breakdown last year . . .

A C R

In September and then again in November.

S M D

Did it have to do with preparing for the show we had scheduled? Are there passages in the films that create problems for you when you watch them?

A C R

I can handle things once they're on film. But it's hard to know what I can have others see.

S M D

You're remarkably good with a Super-8 camera. I don't believe I've ever seen more beautiful Super-8 footage. Sometimes it's very subtle and precise. When you're looking through the camera, how fully are you thinking in terms of texture and color and framing what the image will look like?

A C R

I'm trying to take a pretty picture, if that's what you mean.

S M D

I was surprised to hear you say that you shot for a long time before you even looked at the footage.

A C R

I still do! I don't look at it for at least a year! I just do assembly editing. Everything I take is in the film. The only alteration I've made is the taking out I've been doing lately, and I really regret that in a way. I thought that with the diary it would be great if *everything* was included, if I left overexposed or underexposed film in. Then the guy who is in synchrony with me somewhere in the world would have plenty of room to put in his words. But lately I've been taking more and more out of the diary so that he has less and less space to put his own words over. Mostly I just take out anything that's not visually comprehensible, that's completely black or completely overexposed (thinking ahead to video transfer). Almost everything else stays in.

The idea of not looking at what I take is so that I always have a naive idea. I don't take a picture deliberately and then take another picture deliberately. I take pictures when I find something I really like. Recently I noticed that an image of John Lennon and Yoko Ono, naked (I saw it on MTV), had gotten paired up with a picture of myself standing nude in front of my closet where my measurements and weight are printed on the side of the door. So there's probably subconscious memory and association involved with some of my images.

S M D

How much other avant-garde film have you seen?

A C R

I saw a fair amount when I was at Massachusetts College of Art, but I've gotten out of going to a lot of films. I've got to put going to see film back in my life. I'm trying to rebuild into my life things that I let go when I was really depressed like reading.

I started reading last fall in order to counteract the boredom of the mental hospital. I read voraciously and I've been reading ever since, which is good, because about a year ago, and at times over the last few years, I've found it difficult sometimes even to read a newspaper. So I've been building reading back into my life.

And I've built exercise back into my life. They say a person who wants to lose weight should gradually increase their physical exercise. Well, I'm running every day now. I think the next thing is going to films.

The problem is that I moved back home with my mother, to save money for film and get out of the city. It costs about fourteen cents a second just to shoot and process original film, without making prints. Then my mother decided to be the guardian of my mental health. She used to be in the habit of going out to film festivals with me. At the moment, I hardly have anyone to go with except her. And I'm kind of afraid to say, 'Mom, I'm going out to a film': she'd be disappointed that I wasn't going with her. I'm dependent on my mother for transportation, since at the moment, I'm not working full-time. But I don't want her to think she has to be my moviegoing companion.

At least I keep the camera going when I'm depressed. It's only been one or two times that I've let the camera go for two months. When I first began the diary, I used to carry the camera every day and take a picture almost every hour. It's less, lately between one and four scenes a day. I'm sorry, you asked a question?

S M D

About other avant-garde filmmakers. One reason I asked is because the reel about your cat Amy's death reminds me very much of Carolee Schneemann's *Kitch's Last Meal* [1973–78].

A C R

I saw part of that at Massachusetts College of Art about three or four hours. I remember the scene of her holding her cat and weeping. I felt really guilty when Amy died, and I took a picture of my guilt. When Carolee was filming her diary, she followed everywhere that Kitch walked. I remember coming up to Carolee and saying, 'I must go for a walk with my cat.' I never did that, until Amy was dying. And it came back to me that Carolee had done it. I feel guilty, really guilty about that. Amy was a good old cat.

S M D

That's a powerful part of your film.

A C R

It does come off well in screening, it's a true story.

S M D

I think what comes through in your screenings is your openness. A lot of filmmakers think they're open, but you reveal agony in a way that goes much further than what's usually called 'openness' especially on the soundtrack (your in-person narration is less emotional).

A C R

Well, the sound is from that time. It's real. Sometimes I use three sound sources. There's sound on the film, and there's sound on tape at the same time, and I narrate in person. I do worry about saying too much in person because to hear two sound sources might be okay, but three is pretty hard. Usually, I interrupt the flow when the sound

is from tape that was done at the same time the images were made. Then it's like you're looking at a photo album with someone, explaining certain pictures you know he or she won't understand.

S M D

When you've shown the diary, have you always combined sound-on-film, tape, and in-person narration?

A C R

Yes, but at the beginning I was using unedited stretches of original tapes. I didn't know I could take samples from recorded sound. I'm afraid of mixers and fancy laboratories. People were telling me how you have to go very complex with films, and make finely tuned, synchronized soundtracks. I don't do that. If I have tapes for a period of time, I'll simply go through them and pull out anything I find interesting. Then I play that over the stretch of film and see if anything happens that's so completely off that I have to cut out a piece of sound. If you don't go trying to make things match up, they'll match up anyway. It's like fate. It's happened to me when I've just played a whole stretch of unedited tape, and it's happened to me with dubbed excerpts. You put little pieces of tape next to film, without looking at the film, and synchrony happens or an interesting contrast.

The sound that goes with Amy's reel is an original stretch of a tape I made when I was just keeping the diary tape along with the diary film. But most of the tapes I've been making lately are dubs of the best of the best.

I have several hundred hours of tape. My problem is that in the last couple of years I've been sending most of my diary tapes away to a guy Tom Baker again.

This last year the sound on my camera broke down, but I didn't know because, as usual, I didn't look at the film until a year later. Consequently, in 1989 I have stretches of film and no sound to put over them. I figure I'll read some of my political letters. A fifty-one page letter should cover up several reels! And the audience will get an idea of the verbal delusions I have. Well, I don't know if they're

all delusions. But some of them are pretty farfetched, I'd say.

S M D

Who do you send those letters to?

A C R

I send them to the United Nations, to representatives, congressmen, governors. The first batch were sent to women representatives. I've sent them to show-business figures and music stars, Susan Sontag, a whole bunch of people. I've sent them to the president of the United States that was probably my biggest mistake. Mostly, they're just sort of your all-purpose liberal-green-politics letters.

S M D

How many times have you shown the whole diary?

A C R

I've only done the marathon three times: at the Massachusetts College of Art as my thesis, at Event Works in Boston, and in New York at the American Museum of the Moving Image. I'd like to do it a lot more.

Last night was the third or fourth time I've done a sample show, using a cross section of time, sampling from reels that cover the same time period each year.

S M D

That's an interesting way to show it.

A C R

Yeah, it is, except this spring show I did last night was really full of breakdowns. Actually, probably the whole film is! I don't know how many people have documented breakdowns. I understand Carolee [Schneemann] did.

S M D

In *Plumb Line* [1971] she documents a breakdown. Can your films be rented anywhere but from you?

A C R

I don't have any copies. I don't make prints of any of my films.

S M D

You're showing originals all the time?

A C R

I'm showing originals. Every time I see a scratch, I wonder if it's a new one. I can't afford to make prints. It's cost me twenty-four thousand dollars to make the diary so far. I don't have twenty-four thousand dollars to make a print of the whole thing. No way! I don't make prints of the shorter films either. All I can afford is originals.

S M D

Have you applied for grants?

A C R

Well, I'm planning to do that, retroactively to do a video transfer. The problem is you have to make a copy to show people in order to make money to make copies! It's possible that if I made video copies, I could get the money afterward to cover the cost of the video copy, and film prints.

I've applied for grants. I was a semifinalist once. But they don't really want a diary of a mad woman.

S M D

Well, this is a very beautiful diary of a mad woman. Of course, New England has a long history of quirky women artists: Emily Dickinson . . .

A C R

Oh yeah! I read all of her poems last spring. She wrote 1,775 poems in her lifetime and put them in little books and put them in a box. I read somewhere that she asked to have them burned when she died. They didn't do it, and they didn't do it to Kafka's things either. I've thought sometimes of killing myself. But it's interesting, I've got myself trapped now. I can't commit suicide. I have all my written diaries, which fill about four fruit crates, and ninety reels of film, plus a box of edited-out stuff, and several boxes of audio tapes. How could I possibly jump off a boat with all that? It's too heavy to carry! Then I thought maybe I could just jump with the edited-out stuff. But then

my family would be confronted. They would come upstairs and see all this film. It would be the most depressing thing in their lives because there would be all these home movies of the family growing up that they'd never be able to touch again because they'd be too melancholy to rent a projector. I've saddled myself with something, in effect, that prevents me from committing suicide. So it's another way of saying that the film has kept me alive.

S M D

I was thinking the other day that the diary is sort of like your skin.

A C R

You were thinking that about my film?!

S M D

The celluloid is like an outer skin.

A C R

There was a lot of skin in it! This last spring [1990], when I edited some of the nude material out, I discovered I'd accomplished one of my goals, which was to look at myself naked and like myself at all the different weights. I discovered it was true that a person who is thirty pounds overweight can be quite beautiful and that there was no reason for me to dislike the way I looked. I sent a ten-minute excerpt of the best of the naked that I was still too paranoid to keep in the film to . . .

S M D

Tom Baker?

A C R

Yes. (He had written to me in 1989, thanking me for films of myself, my cats, and my family.) He's a plausible nut. He's a plausible nut. He might be The Guy. The thing is, if he *isn't*, I've boxed myself into a corner. I've said I'd give all this to my husband. If I meet some other guy, and *he's* the one, he's going to say, 'Where's the film for me?' I'm going to have to say, 'I've already sent it away to some other man.'

Earlier, I was sitting out here [I interviewed Robertson on my back porch], and I set the camera up on the tripod and took a picture of me in the corner of your house. Luckily, your house is a nice neutral color,

like a lot of other houses.

I don't like taking pictures of other people in my film, because I've been a target. Someone has been breaking into my family's house. They've stolen from my garden, and left, really, some of the weirdest things. They've dug holes the size of a coffin, four feet deep, at the side of my garden. They've left piles of sand with feathers arranged on them. I've found a pile of something that looked awfully like human excrement in my garden. They've broken into my house; they've taken my cats overnight; they've left food and lace panties. They took film and then returned it to my house. I feel my letters have made me a target, and I don't want to get anybody else targeted.

S M D

What do the 'experts' you deal with psychiatrically tell you about yourself?

A C R

I'm a manic depressive. Sometimes they call it 'bipolar syndrome.' That's just the label for it.

S M D

It sounded last night like you've been through a whole evolution of ways in which they think they're dealing with it.

A C R

Now they think the miracle drug is lithium. It's not a miracle drug; it doesn't stop you from having grandiose ideas. I left naked parts in my film and irreligious things that I can't even look at now. I was on lithium, and they seemed like perfectly fine pieces of film. When I went off of lithium just this last summer, I went into my film and felt I was looking at it with brand new eyes, with my own eyes, rather than drugged eyes. They told me I had to be on lithium the rest of my life. They've told me that about a number of drugs that have made me feel like a zombie. Every time they give me a drug, they tell me I have to be on it for the rest of my life.

I would be carefully monitored if I were pregnant. They would withdraw me from the drug and put me in a mental hospital. I've seen

women who were pregnant in mental hospitals. There was one woman I knew who was convinced they were going to give her electroconvulsive shock treatment while she was pregnant. I kind of doubt that's possible, but I really wouldn't put it past a psychiatrist. I don't have any confidence in psychiatrists anymore not a single one of them. They're almost all of them drug pushers. Right now, I'm in a situation where I take the antipsychotic drugs and they do a blood test every two weeks and see if I've got it in me. That's all they want to know.

S M D

But they would want you to take it, ideally, every day?

A C R

Every day and twice the dosage I'm taking.

S M D

When you're on it, is it more difficult to make a film? Or is it just a different kind of film you're making?

A C R

I don't think I take as many pictures on lithium. I think my mind kind of closes down. What would have happened if van Gogh had taken lithium? They would have prescribed it for him. They probably would have prescribed Thorazine for van Gogh, too. They like to make people take a 'chemical stew.' I don't think he would have taken it. I think he would have had the same problem a lot of mental patients do: they just want to be off all their drugs. There's no one to talk to about it except the doctors, who say, 'Take the drug; that's all you need.' The patients have no way out.

Sometimes, the act of taking a picture every day has kept me sane. I believe in it. I have to take a picture every day. It's true with tapes, too, though diary tapes don't help as much except when I started sending tapes to Tom Baker, *that* helped (I began in spring of 1986). There was a crisis one winter, when I was so depressed and so agonized because my family kept staring at me. I was the nut in the family and had to be carefully monitored, and I had no friends because the friends had left me because of the mental breakdowns and subsequent depressions.

The only thing I could talk about was my films, and they just didn't want to hear about it. I found myself becoming autistic. If my mother said something to me, I'd stammer, and I wouldn't be able to say anything. The only thing that kept me going was taping for Tom every day. I gradually began to be able to talk again. And I still talk to him more than to any other human being. I talk on tape and I'm normal. I have to *lie* to my shrink.

I have to work part-time in order to make my mother think I'm sane.

I can't talk to the people I work with. The last few jobs I've had have been extremely paranoid-building. I have hassles as soon as I emerge from a depression and try to pick up the real world again. A lot of people are crazy out there in the nine-to-five world, but they lay it onto me and say I'm the crazy one.

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Scott MacDonald teaches film history at Hamilton College and Harvard University and in 2011 was named an Academy Scholar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He is the author of many books, most recently *American Ethnographic Film and Personal Documentary* (UCPress, 2013)

full filmography
with
short descriptions
written by

**Anne Charlotte
Robertson**

Experiment (1976)

3 mn, black and white, silent
Two selves face each other.
Mirroring motion, cross-fading,
time-lapse sunlit wall.

Pixillation (1976)

3 mn, black and white, silent
Another experiment in doubling
oneself, set against clouds, brick
column, and wind.

Spirit of '76 (1976)

10mn, color, silent
Self-portrait allegories to doll,
porch, garden, smoke, fire,
compost pile. Cat, etc.

Subways (1976)

13mn, black and white, sound
Lightshow in public transit
tunnels, patterns and flashes,
screeching and bells.

Dawn (1979)

13mn, color, silent
Many days and dusks. Palpable
moving light time-lapsed
in view of a city backlot.

Snoozalarm (1979)

10mn, color, silent
The day-sleeper. Amid cats,
snores and re-sets the alarm
clock, through seasons.

Suicide (1979)

10mn, color, silent
Desperate artshock self-therapy,
fantasies mixed with diary,
saving life and mind.

Homebirth (1980)

10mn, color, silent
Documenting a swift painless
midwife-assisted birth of second
daughter to yogic family.

Locomotion (1981)

7mn, color, silent
Overdose, breakdown,
and rage at system in a stylized
mental hospital isolation room.

Out a window (1981)

3mn, color, sound
Self-portrait; stark loneliness
of winter rooftop architectural
details; crowd sounds.

Going to work (1981)

7mn, color, sound
Daily morning trudge and trolley
through snow and ice.

Lonely streets (1981)

10mn, color, sound
A long walk through poor
neighborhoods, loneliness

Five year diary (1981-1997)

36+ hours, color
Autobiography, storytelling,
images, experimental

Magazine mouth (1983)

10mn, color, sound
Folly of american consumer

bingeing, animated with photos
ads and patriotic band music.

Depression focus please (1984)

3mn, color, sound
Intended as a longer film,
this proved sufficient to vignette
the nuances of
my sadness.

Talking to myself #1 (1985)

3mn, color, black and white,
sound. Double exposed,
self faces self, wrangling.
Complaining, trying to hear
oneself think.

Kafka kamera (1985)

3mn, color, sound
Filmmaker's paranoia:
one day the camera wakes
you up, and pursues relentlessly
all day.

Fruit (1985)

8mn, color, silent
Fantastical comparisons
of myself to ripe fruits, as
I lose weight eating them; nude.

Rotting pumpkin (1985)

13mn, color, silent
A white pumpkin painted
with a lady's face rots in
time-lapse over several weeks.

Anne Robertson (1985)

4mn, color and black
and white, silent
A visual chronology,
compilation of still photos by
myself and others, introduces
diary. [This is now part
of five year diary reel 1]

My obsession (1986)

16mn, color, sound

and performance

Crush on the bbc scifi hero doctor who, filmed off tv, with comic fan interaction.

The nude (1987)

17 mn, color, sound

and performance

Naked film dances, losing 40 pounds; live clothed self attempts to censor the image.

With clothes (1987)

17 mn, color, sound and

performance.

Film self tries on clothes while losing 40 pounds; live self in paper suit censors image.

Talking to myself #2 (1988)

17 mn, color

Sound and performance.

Naked film self sits and converses with naked live self, about health, weight, and image.

Weight (1988)

55 mn, color, sound

Walking and sitting in a repetitive pattern for three years, loss/gain of over 50 pounds.

Diet (1988)

24 mn, color, sound

The eternal resolutions to go on a diet that never seems to happen; nude comedy.

Apologies (1990)

17 mn, color, sound

My therapy for excessive apologies, a constant sense of neurotic personal guilt explored.

Melon patches (1998)

27 mn, color and b&w, sound

Gradually, life-affirming images of children, gardens, birds, replace depression.

Alien corn (1998)

14 mn, color, sound

Dark visions are replaced by cheery scenes of children and adults as alien invaders.

Artist's residency

(digital video) (2001)

61 mn, color, sound

Literally, an artist's residency learning digital video in buffalo, New York.

My cat, my garden,

and 9/11 (2001)

6 mn. color, sound

My adored cat zouina died a week before the tragedy; a week after, my garden died.

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