



The Hand Made's Tale

An Interview with Lindsay McIntyre

by Robert Enright

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Lindsay McIntyre's films are familial and cultural meta-narratives; at the same time that they tell the story of her Inuk great-grandmother's life, they also tell the story of their own making. Much of their power comes from their material presence. McIntyre makes her own emulsion, so that her films look as if they have come to us from another time. The scratching and degradation are utterly seductive; the mind wants to understand what the eye is seeing, and what we are seeing can be everything from an ulu, the Inuk cutting tool, to caribou teeth strung on a wire and held in the beautifully lived-in hands of a matrilineal family member. She can run her camera lens over the weighty surface of a massive steel vessel caught in the Arctic ice, or in her backyard garden where she records her daughter's flickering, lyric presence. McIntyre has an instinctive sense of visual rhythm, and her films move at radically different speeds, sometimes so slow that were it not for the faint movement of grass in the foreground of a landscape, you would think you were looking at still images. At other times her footage flashes by so quickly that your recognition has to play a game of catch-up with your perception.

The range of her filmography is impressive: documentaries about the history of the medium; narratives that repurpose found footage as fictional narratives; visual tone poems that combine her fascination with machinery and the northern landscape; film portraits of a young Inuk athlete and an aged Inuk woman; a home movie about her mother and daughter; a word-driven inquiry into a Manitoba Indian residential school that takes the form of a projection-mapping installation on the exterior of the Vancouver Art Gallery; an unpeopled remake of the famous gunfight scene from *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, where the characters are replaced by a wagon and a rusty cart in a junk pile; even a satiric instruction film about how to make experimental cinema. However different the films may be in subject matter, her signature sits on them all, a kind of visual fingerprint. As she says in the following interview, "There is always the mark of me as a maker in my works."

That touch is most evident in the "Bloodline" series, a set of five films she began in 2007 with *what she would not leave behind* and ended with *her silent life* in 2012. The films relate the history of Kumaa'naaq, her Inuk great-grandmother who was brought south from Nunavut by Ray Ward, an RCMP constable who wanted her for his wife. It was the second time she had been removed from her community. As a young child (she was between six and eight years old), she was taken from Whale Cove by a missionary couple who said she was "too beautiful to live

out her life with the savages.” She returned to the North when she was 18 and lived in Baker Lake for 20 years until she was “kidnapped” by Ward. Kumaa’naaq’s is an extraordinary and tragic story but McIntyre’s handmade films present it as a collection of compelling, unanswered questions. Everything in the films has some connection to her interrogating imagination. “I am telling our family stories, but I’m not trying to claim an ultimate truth about a specific thing,” she says. “I think it is more important to create space for different truths to exist.”

The following interview was conducted by phone to the Cineworks Studio in Vancouver on November 3, 2119.

BORDER CROSSINGS: I like foundational stories that relate how artists become artists, and yours has to do with finding a piece of film on the street in New York.

LINDSAY MCINTYRE: I was a visual artist before I started working in film and I didn’t come to the medium the way many filmmakers do, which is with the intent of trying to tell stories. I came to it more as a visual artist who wanted to work with the material in my hands. The very first piece of film that I came across was when I was playing a game with a friend of mine while living in New York in 1999. It was called the “Up and Down” game and the two of us would walk around the filthy streets of Brooklyn, the Bronx or Queens, wherever we were, and find things on the street and then take them home and make other things out of them. So the person who got on belly-button level and down always got the richest material because you could find things like fish heads, which you could then encase in a rubber mould. The upper levels would only get you unexciting things like paper and plastics. One of those days I was lucky enough to find a ratty little mess of 16 mm black and white film under a tree. I had never seen or touched film before. I didn’t really know what it was, but I could see the images on it (I think I figured out later that it was a guy talking about farming or something). So I brought it home and tried to do some things with it. It was a transparent material, and when I stuck some tape on it, I was able to lift up the image, which was in itself miraculous to me. And then, since that piece of tape was still somewhat sticky, I was able to stick it down onto another piece of film. Basically, in my mind, I had double-exposed the film. Combining these two images was so exciting that I wanted to do more and more and more of it. This was the early days of eBay and the Internet so I made myself an eBay account and ordered some film and bought a projector. I was going to get to do more of this emulsion-lifting thing, but it turns out that normal film won’t do what my found film did. That first piece of film had been sitting in the sun and the rain for so long that its physical properties had changed—it had probably been peed on, for all I know—but it didn’t perform like normal film stock would. When none of the new film I’d acquired would respond this way, I was disappointed and I spent a lot of time trying to figure out how I could make it happen, and in the process of trying to figure that out, I did almost two years of research. By this time, I was getting to know some experimental filmmakers in New York and other places, and I was talking to them about what I was trying to do, but nobody could tell me how to do it. It seemed that nobody knew. The unfortunate truth is that they did know about emulsion-lifting and exactly how to

do it, but they were hoarding the technique and deliberately not telling me. Eventually I figured out on my own that you can do it with a household cleaner called Fantastik. You basically soak it in Fantastik for a few seconds and then you scrape off the emulsion with a razor blade. I was so put off by the idea that someone would claim ownership of the technique that I made a short film about it called *How to Make a Phantastik Film* (2003).

I can’t help but think you were playing off Rosler’s *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) in *How to Make a Phantastik Film*, as if you were doing your experimental film version of that style.

There may have been some of that. It was definitely meant to be satirical and to make fun of experimental filmmakers. I figured I could do that because I was one of them. The film was made for an audience of experimental film lovers for an Images Festival program called Minute Movies.

When you realized that there was a thing called “experimental film,” did you set out to learn about people like Stan Brakhage, Carolee Schneemann, Maya Deren, Jonas Mekas and Shirley Clarke? How systematic were you in inquiring into something that you had inadvertently discovered on the street?

It was incredibly exciting when I discovered that this kind of filmmaking actually existed in the world and it wasn’t just me doing what I was doing on my own. But it is interesting that I came to it from drawing and scratching on the film to seeing what I could do to change its physical properties and push up against boundaries, and there were a lot of physical boundaries to working on 16 mm celluloid. My world cracked open when I took a class called Recycled Images, taught by Louise Bourque at Parsons University at the New School. I discovered all these other people who were vitalizing the margins of film, and many of them—Brakhage, Schneemann and Clarke—have been a big part of my personal education. Most of that education isn’t stuff I learned in school; most of it came from a desire to seek out films that inspired me and that I was interested in learning about. It was often hard to get your hands on copies of these films, and even though that has changed with the Internet, it can still be difficult to see work on celluloid. Building film communities in the places I’ve lived has been, and still is, a big part of being able to see work that I’m interested in. In the beginning it was Double Negative in Montreal, but now it happens in a much wider network of artist-run film labs.

You have said before that you will always shoot on film because film is a tactile, physical thing. In a way, your filmmaking practice has allowed you to continue your material interests in actually making things with your hands. And, of course, the hand is an implement that appears repeatedly in your films. You’re a very hands-on filmmaker.

I am. I think that film is my material practice in the way that paint might be for a painter or beadwork might have been for my grandmother. It’s the way that I need to work through things. It comes from the fact that my first medium and first love is actually drawing. It is so important for me to have tools in my hands and to be actually manipulating those things, physically. I’m hand-processing film, I’m sometimes making the emulsion

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1. Lindsay McIntyre, performance still, 2012, White Box Gallery, Portland. Images courtesy the artist.

2–5. *her silent life*, 2012, part of the "Bloodline" series, 16 mm, 31 minutes, hand-processed, colour and black and white.



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1–2. *How to Make a Phantastik Film*, 2003, 16 mm, 1 minute, hand-processed, colour.

myself and I'm editing the film on a Steenbeck, physically cutting it. So in all respects it is always in my hands. I'm not a careful filmmaker; I'm not one to wear white gloves and be careful and delicate with negatives. There is always the mark of me as a maker in my works. Sometimes that literally means my fingerprints are in and on the work, but that mark is also there in the choices I make in editing and in filming. And you're right, hands do show up in the work; in *her silent life*. (2012) they are a visual theme throughout the piece. Hands are the tools of tools. In my family, they are the way that I connect with my whole matrilineal history because the hands of my mother, my grandmother and my great-grandmother are all the same.

Do we have a romance about this idea of the degraded image that comes to us through a fragmented poetics?

I'm good with the fragmented poetics idea, but I'm not sure that I think about it in romantic terms. There is a sense of a revitalization, or maybe a renaissance, in celluloid filmmaking. I wonder if that comes from a sense of romanticism about the vintage look—the poor image. Celluloid was my first moving image medium and it was the first thing that I latched onto after drawing, so there may be an unwillingness and a stubbornness to let it go. It wouldn't be the first time that someone called me stubborn. But it is so much a part of my practice that the qualities that come with it are part and parcel of the work itself. Sometimes when I'm working on commercial film stock, I feel like I'm cheating because somebody else made that film, someone else put in all the science and technology to make it beautiful. Commercial film is designed to be a window on the world and, for the most part, it gives us a perfect representation of our world. It is so incredibly good at what it does, and all I did was to take some pictures with it. So now I make my own emulsion. I think my essential defining core as an artist is that if there is a way to make something more difficult, then I am probably already doing it, or I am about to figure out how to do it. It's important that my work is a labour. I do occasionally work digitally and I teach people how to make films in a digital environment, and there is a great deal of usefulness to the digital medium and form, but they are very, very different things. For me, it really comes down to its being a more material practice. Film is my material practice.

When you make your own emulsion, you put on a chemist's coat, and I wonder if that makes the process less mysterious because you actually know how the medium is made.

Even though I've been shooting film consistently for 20 years, there is nothing about it that isn't still magic. It is endlessly exciting to see what can arise from making an emulsion or trying a new process in the darkroom. For my practice, I need to understand the physical properties of film, and that takes me into realms I never thought I'd visit. I really wish I had taken chemistry in high school. In one sense, handmade emulsion is a very simple process, but it gets quite a bit more complicated when you think about using it for motion picture film. Some of that has to do with how the film gets coated onto a transparent plastic base material, some of it has to do with making an emulsion that is fast enough that it can be exposed in a camera at 24 frames per second and some of it is just crazy, mad science. When I first started making handmade emulsion, I was looking at notebooks and lab notes and scrawls from scientists and researchers who were working in the 1850s, but they weren't measuring things the way that I would or could measure them now. In some cases they would say you need a pinch of this or a taste of this other thing. They were actually tasting their chemistry to see if it was potent enough to work in the recipe. Those are things I can't do. It's like entering a different kind of alchemical world. There's always magic involved in the darkroom. You can never exactly reproduce an emulsion, either. It's going to be different every single time: the speed at which you stir the solution, the speed with which you add one solution to another, how long you stir them, the temperature they're at and then, of course, the measurements of the different chemicals contribute to what can sometimes feel like a completely different result—an emulsion with a very different physical and chemical property. Then, after you've made your emulsion, a lot of the work involves figuring out what



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it can do and experimenting with various coating methods. It is very much a collaboration with the materials.

You have remarked that filmmaking for you is cathartic in that it engages your being at a visceral level.

That's true. It's about engaging my physical body, and when I'm making a film I am more alive than in any of the other processes or things that I might do in my life. It's emotional, it's freeing, it's physical and it's totally engaging. The only other thing that does that is my drawing practice, which I still have. But I can't separate myself from the films that I make, so they are personal not only in the way that I make them but in terms of what they are about.

You also perform your films, and I get a strong feeling that the performance of showing the film is a critical aspect of your practice.

I came to performance as a way of trying to make the film more alive. I had made a wordless portrait of largely landscape-based images in *Qamani'tuaq* (Baker Lake, NU), called *where she stood in the first place*. (2011), but it didn't fully convey the beauty of the place. I started thinking about making that footage come to life and it occurred to me that one of the ways to do that was to incorporate it into a projection performance. So I combine loops of colour images with black and white images, having four, five or six images combining live on the fly in front of an audience. I am able to build the experience with the audience, and in that sense the images do come to life. Which loops I'm using and the length of time it takes change every time. In *A Northern Portrait*, which is a piece I performed a number of times between 2011 and 2017—I don't do it anymore—I pulled from as many as five or six hundred loops to create that performance. It ranges from 25 to 45 minutes in length. It has a trajectory and it has movements, but I like to keep it open and find space so that people can find their own meaning, their own definitions and their own truths within it.

If These Walls (2019), your recent film about the residential school in Birtle, Manitoba, uses words that you have taken from the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and one of the lines that appears is "if these lands could speak."



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It brings up the question of speech and speaking, or the lack of it, which is one of your persistent interests for both cultural and familial reasons. Do you deliberately inscribe the question of speech into that particular piece?

That's absolutely right. I don't have a personal connection to the Birtle Residential School, or to the residential school system, but in the Arctic my great-grandmother went through many of the same kinds of things that happened in the residential schools, many years before they existed. She was taken away from her family as a young girl and taught to speak English and French. Later in life, perhaps out of a sense of propriety, she didn't speak Inuktitut at all. So my way into it was the idea of the removal of voice in *If These Walls*, and there are many times that I've wished that the land could speak and we could hear its stories. Or maybe it does already and we just can't hear them. That same theme of not speaking is very strong in *her silent life*. (2012), which transitions through six different sequences of silence that mark the life of my great-grandmother, Kumaa'naaq.

Silence is a kind of taxonomy in the film. It makes the denial of speech the structural frame out of which the film can develop.

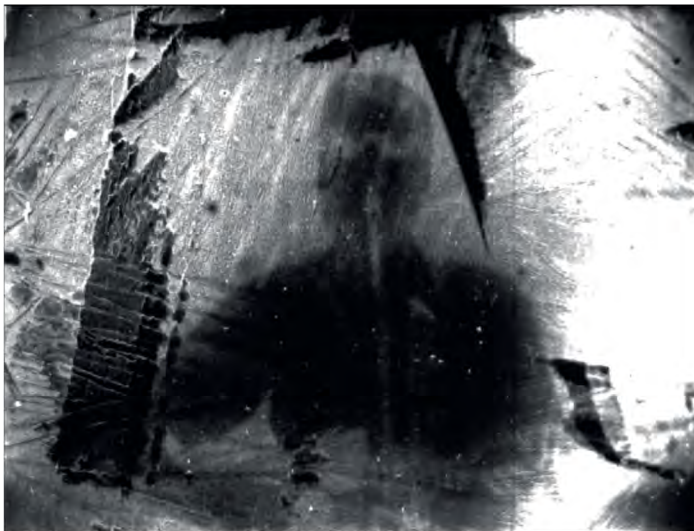
I did not preconceive a structure; I just made the film that came out of the material. I don't think the structure occurred to me until very near the end of a gruelling research and editing process. That film took many years to emotionally process. I should also say that the other four pieces in "Bloodline" came about as ways of processing the information that I was dealing with for *her silent life*., which is the longest of the pieces in that series. I never really know if the things I am doing are going to work; I just have a strong feeling about how it needs to be.

In your paper "Silence As Resistance," you make silence a form of revolution or a weapon and you declare that you choose to speak because your great-grandmother either couldn't or chose not to. So the notion of silence as a form of speaking is critical to your being.

I love that idea. It's necessary to look back on people who didn't speak a lot or who didn't speak up for themselves and to shine a different light on what was actually taking place. What is unique about Kumaa'naaq's story is that she was an interpreter for the



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RCMP, so for a whole period of her life she was a speaker; she spoke the words of others; she was a communicator. I say she was a “metaphorical loudspeaker.” Then, in the later part of her life in Edmonton, where I grew up and where I knew her best, she hardly spoke at all. It involves a real tragedy, but rather than looking on this loss of communication, knowledge and culture as potentially devastating, I think she was actually saying some important things, and I feel it is my duty to say the words that she couldn’t or wouldn’t say. The act of asking questions is considered rude in some Inuit communities, so I have always considered myself not a good Inuk because all I ever did was ask questions. In fact, even in most of my films I am asking questions and I’m not necessarily providing answers. That can be frustrating for people because I don’t present stories with a traditional beginning, middle and end. But we are hard-wired to want to hear stories. So I am telling our family stories, but I’m not trying to claim an ultimate truth about a specific thing. I think it is more important to create space for different truths to exist.

You do say that “reflecting on a family history is never a tidy business,” especially when “caked with colonial confusions,” and in “Bloodline” you seem to recognize that there is never

just one story. It is a way that literature and film have operated; Faulkner’s 1929 novel *The Sound and the Fury* and Kurosawa’s 1950 film *Roshomon* both take one story and tell it from a myriad of perspectives. I view “Bloodline” as a recognition of there being many ways to tell the same story from many points of view.

I think the best example of different versions of my family story is shown in *her silent life*. The other films in the series all deal with different components or elements that I was processing in order to tell that longer story. In a way, I get stuck in stories. More than one of the films deal with the physical objects that she brought down with her from the North: *what she would not leave behind* (2007) is just images of her ulus; and *though she never spoke, this is where her voice would have been*. (2008) is the image of these caribou teeth that she had on a wire in a little leather pouch, which you see many times in that film. *though she never spoke* was a way of processing some really hard ideas. The audio in that film is jarring and difficult to listen to; it is a recording I made on a Fisher-Price tape recorder I had as a kid. I carried it around and recorded totally nonsensical things. I would record over and over and over again on that one little yellow cassette tape. So it is a pretty mangled piece of audio with different clips of me, my siblings and the neighbourhood kids doing ridiculous things, making noise, singing songs or playing games. At one point, I inadvertently recorded my great-grandmother telling a story on the insistence of my great-grandfather, so you hear him saying, “Go get your great-grandmother to say something,” and you can hear me express very clearly, I’m just eight years old at the time, that I don’t want to, and that part is repeated over and over again. The film is called *though she never spoke, this is where her voice would have been*. because I did eventually record her speaking and then a few days later I inadvertently recorded over it. The loss of that piece of audio was really devastating to more than me. When it happened my mom was madder than I can ever remember before or since because I had destroyed a piece of our history. Another echo on the theme of silence. The way in which I constructed that particular piece was so that the image and the sound are never on the screen at the same time. It was an intentionally jarring disconnect. You might call it a version of the story, but it’s very abstract. And *her silent life*. doesn’t tell the whole story, either. It doesn’t talk about when Kumaa’naaq was taken away from her family as a very young girl by a missionary and his wife; it doesn’t talk about the first 25 or 30 years of her life. But I think it’s an important part of Canadian history that we don’t know enough about. Nobody talks about how things worked up North and how the Inuit were treated.

The rhythm of *where she stood in the first place*. (2012) is fascinating; a lot of the shots read like photographic stills, so the landscape comes across as a space occupied by minimal semaphores. How conscious were you of the rhythm of this film and your films in general? In a sense, this question addresses the way that you combine a method of representation with experimental filmmaking.



The timing of things is intuitive for me and a lot of it comes from when I'm physically there in those spaces filming, so they have a natural rhythm to them. I don't know that I can answer your larger question about timing. To give it context, I was living in Baker Lake for most of a year, where I was an outsider but also in some ways an insider, because I was related to a good number of people in the hamlet. I met many family members I didn't know I had. I also grew up in the South and for all intents and purposes I am an absolute outsider. I was searching for ways that I could ethically look at that place. I think the film is also a subjective portrait based on how I was feeling and how my story echoed the story of my great-grandmother. It's possible that she was not very happy, and it has been intimated that she might have been suicidal. I think the film had more to do with the need to express a particular kind of emotion without making a really big definitive statement. It was also a way to let the land and

the place speak for itself rather than have me speak for it. There are some sequences that show remnants of industry left on the land and there are the remnants of animals that have been harvested by the community. You can see in a lot of those images a flashing texture that comes in from the sides where the film is either overexposed or exposed in the wrong places. That was partly a manifestation of physically running the film through the camera when it was so very cold and dry that static flashes actually happened inside the camera. I think of them as the Arctic's rejection of me and my technology. There were a lot of physical challenges in shooting film when I was living there: getting access to chemistry, finding a space that was dark enough to turn into a darkroom when it was always light in the summer months and having the grease in my lenses freeze as soon I went outside. Most of those films were shot with a high-contrast film stock that's not meant for a film camera—it's called 7363. It is my favourite stock



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1–2. *darg: construction*, 2013, 16 mm, 3.5 minutes, hand-processed, black and white.

3–4. Video still, 2012, 16 mm, 1 minute, hand-processed, unwashed handmade emulsion, black and white.

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1. *though she never spoke, this is where her voice would have been.*, 2008, part of the “Bloodline” series, 16 mm, 4 minutes, hand-processed, black and white.

2–3. *ada*, 2011, 16 mm, 13 minutes, colour.

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1–3. *In The Backyarden*, 2015, 16 mm colour reversal, 5 minutes, in-camera, sound, colour.



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and Kodak discontinued it, which is actually why I started making my own emulsion. But it needs an immense amount of light to be exposed, so it works really well in the North in the summertime when the sun is eternally in the sky, but in the fall and the spring and throughout the winter months, it isn't even bright enough to get a decent exposure on a super-sensitive video camera sensor.

The film in Baker Lake includes a group of kids on their bikes. You use them again in *A Northern Portrait* and they keep coming back over and over again, like in *Zabriskie Point*. There is something about them that is terrifically uplifting.

Yes, those kids are the heart of the community. They would follow me around wherever I went. While it might seem that some of what I am exploring is a bit darker, as is my way of looking at things, the community and the place itself are vibrant and alive, and, for me, those kids represent the future.

Your films are often minimal in what you show. Do you ever feel that you have too much to say and not enough to show it?

I do. I had another image that I could have used instead of the one with the kids on their bikes. It was a cropped shot—an empty shot, actually—of kids jumping on a trampoline in slow motion. They come up into frame and then they go out of frame. It was an incredible amount of fun and is an even better visual example of the fact that these kids are the life and the future of the community, but it didn't fit the rhythm of what I was trying to say. When I shoot, I shoot intuitively, I shoot everything, and sometimes I will make a list of things I want. But I'm not the kind of cinematographer who sets things up and then lights them. I'm the kind of cinematographer who finds beauty and ways of looking at things. Sometimes there's too much of one thing and not enough of another. You can write a film and then you can shoot a film and you'll have a different film from the one you wrote, and then in editing it

becomes something different again. All you can do is make the film that you have, and if you're not willing to collaborate with the materials and be open to all those processes, then you're going to find it very difficult to be a filmmaker.

You're very skillful at repurposing the footage you have. It's like they're a repertory company and when you have a different story to tell, you just set them into that picture space.

That is one way of looking at it. I also think I have an almost fetishistic way of looking at material. These pieces are a part of my history. They are my own home movies because they are all things that I have shot and my sense of self is expanded through the different ways that I can recombine them or think about them in other contexts. One of the things I used to do was make stories out of other people's home movies, the kind you would come across at a garage sale or on eBay or the Internet. It felt to me as if these families had ceased to exist, like they were forgotten. I found it devastating because I've always wished that there was more footage of my family. There are thousands of photographs of me and my siblings as children, but there are no moving pictures. So what I would do was watch all the footage of these found families and edit together a new film, making up stories about the people in them. So *Not Waving But Drowning* (2005) is about someone who was gone and is missing. The film is a fiction.

I haven't asked you about the way that you use colour in your films, which is not often.

I find colour oppressive. As a young painter and drawer I was always attracted to the graphic qualities of drawing, much more than to the complications of paint and mixing colour. Even when I was using paint, I would often turn to a more graphic way of working. The films that I make are not perfect windows of representation. I'm not interested in making things clear and open, so even in some of the colour works there are double and triple exposures, such as in *bernard gaspé* (2013) and *In The Backyarden* (2015). Colour film lends itself very nicely to multiple exposures. In *ada* (2011), which is also a colour work, I'm filming through pieces of melted plastic and glass. That is also partially a way to combine form and content. *Ada* can never really see anything truly in focus, so why should we be able to look into her life with such excruciating detail if she can't? I was also interested in wrecking the focal attention of the lens, which is a thing that Brakhage worked with. For me, colour fixes things in a time and place in a way that doesn't happen with black and white, even though we think of black and white as nostalgic—it has more freedom. In my films, it removes specificity and makes the images seem a little more timeless. I think of film as a constantly present medium. It doesn't happen in the past or in the future; it's always happening now. That is part of the reason why I make some of the personal works I make; they are an ever-present record of the things that matter to me. But, for me, it is always about embarking on a journey into a different world of image making and black and white lends itself to that. It is also a very practical form because the processing and the manipulation are so much easier in a hands-on environment. It is easier to make the chemistry. I can process the film with

beer or urine or flowers, and even bleach it without access to costly chemicals if I want. I can also shoot considerably more film in black and white, particularly with high-contrast film stocks, whereas colour film requires very specific chemicals that are harder to get, more expensive, and they demand a lot more care in terms of time, temperature and handling. They don't lend themselves as easily to the way that I make films.

In *Room 11A, Ortona Armoury* (2017) there is one frame in which a blonde woman appears. The other place where a blonde woman turns up is in *undoing* (2013), the performed piece you do with the woman twirling around as if she were in a fashion show, and then another woman comes and either yawns or lifts a cigarette to her mouth. Are they the same blonde woman?

Yes, it is the same woman. When I was doing research for *Film's Final Curtain* (2018), which is a documentary about the supposed death of film, I wanted to maintain my focus on the analogue side of things, so I had to secure the rights to 600 clips from different films that I had sourced on 16 mm. That particular footage came from a batch of films that I bought on eBay, a stack of 15 or so large 35 mm film cans that would hold several thousand feet. Most of the footage was from an ad agency that must have been working with or for Kodak—they were all these commercials in which Donna, the Kodak girl, would show up doing various things. The commercial that makes up most of the *undoing* performance is from a vacuum commercial where she wears a negligee and this other character uses the vacuum to suck the lingerie off her body. So she is actually putting her hand up to her mouth in a shocked gesture, in a sort of burlesque fashion. *Room 11A* is a documentation of the chaos of my studio, so that piece of 16 mm film was laying around and made it into a frame somehow.

In *In The Backyarden* (2015), there are two occasions when a young girl is framed inside the sky reflection and her mother is contained inside window frames. Your instinct seems to be never to just construct a film but to draw attention to how we see the film.

Yes, I am interested in finding different ways to look at things, but that's the way I see. In *In The Backyarden*, and in a couple of other films, including *Room 11A* and *bernard gaspé*, I was attempting to make the practice of shooting film closer to the act of drawing. Sometimes when I am drawing my brain isn't participating at all, it is almost like an immediate connection between my hand and my eye, and I wanted to capture some of that immediacy. Film is encumbered by technology because you need this device that had to have been engineered by somebody, and it has a lens on it, and the lens has an aperture, and it has to be focused and you need a light meter. There are so many processes that interrupt the way we experience a space or a place or a time with a camera and all three of those films deal with film time in a different way. They are all exposed and edited in-camera, so the double and triple exposures are things that happen on the day, on the fly. There is no editing after the fact and, for that reason, I think they give a stronger sense that "this was this place in this time." They are very simple portraits of spaces or places or times. The layered framing that you mentioned came out of that process. But



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aside from that, I have always been interested in drawing attention to how we see the film and to viewership in general. I also have a strong interest in framing and I seem to have a fascination with structure and industry and buildings. Some of my films are fairly structuralist and there are some classic films that really resonate with me, like the city symphonies, *Portrait of New York*, Shirley Clarke's *Bridges-Go-Round* but also Peter Hutton's *At Sea*. In fact, *At Sea* is similar in sentiment to *barge dirge* (2010), although I made it before seeing the Hutton film. Even though they are very different, my film now feels like a mini-tribute to his feature-length film. He filmed the construction of these huge seafaring vessels and documents their life all the way through to their eventual death on another shore in another country, where they are being taken apart and salvaged for scrap metal. *barge dirge* was a portrait of this incredibly massive vessel that was literally stuck in the ice in Qamani'tuaq, which is on an 80-mile-long lake that feels like an ocean. This massive structure far overshadowed the size of any building or anything in the entire community, and it was bright green, too, which you don't get a sense of from the film because it is high-contrast black and white. But this structure stuck out so much in the ice and the snow that I was compelled to make a portrait. It was subsequently sold for scrap as well, and in researching the film, I dove into the vessel's history, construction, sailing record and eventual demise.

You're also making a portrait of yourself. The most fascinating thing happens at the three-minute mark, when a slow-moving film suddenly begins to move very fast and changes radically, as if the subject matter gets jettisoned in favour of the medium itself. It tells me that by instinct you are an experimental filmmaker. I am always interested in making the viewer aware that they are watching a film, and sometimes that means I do really jarring things with the medium and sometimes it means the shot is on-screen for an uncomfortable length of time and a person in the audience might start to question what the hell they are doing there. But I'm still making a film and that film is almost inevitably made on film and I'm unable to separate those two things. In a way I'm not really happy unless there's a relationship between the form and the content of the films that I make, and while I'm not always successful, that is where I'm happiest as an artist. ■