

A Feminist Filmmaker Challenges the Repetition when Deleuze Draws a Circle.

Repetition and Transparency: Feminist Artistic Methods for
Challenging Generational Cycles of Mental Illness.

Author:	Vanja Qvarfordt
Title:	A Feminist Filmmaker Challenges the Repetition when Deleuze Draws a Circle. Repetition and Transparency: Feminist Artistic Methods for Challenging Generational Cycles of Mental Illness.
Programme:	<i>MFA in Fine Arts, 120 credits</i>
Course:	FRAKK3 H24, Contextualisation 3, 15 credits
Level:	Second Cycle
Term & Year:	Autumn Term / Spring Year
Supervisor:	Daniel Jewesbury
Examiner:	Jason Bowman

Abstract/Keywords

Artistic methods, Transparency, Repetition, Mental illness, Eating Disorder, Feminist Filmmaking.

Table of contents

1- Introduction.....	3-4
3- Feminist Filmmaking.....	5-6
4- The Artistic Methods of Repetition and Transparency.....	6-8
5- Anne Charlotte Robertson's Artistic Practise.....	8-9
6- Annette Arlander's Artistic Practise.....	9-10
7- Reflection.....	10-14
8- Conclusion.....	14-15
9- Bibliography.....	16

Introduction

Through three generations of women in my family, a mental illness has been repeated. My late grandmother, my aunt, and I have all experienced the eating disorder bulimia nervosa. This essay asks the question: From the perspective of a feminist artist, what artistic methods can be applied to feminist filmmaking to explore the social conditioning producing the same psychological response in different generations of women?

In my artistic practice, I employ the methods of repetition and transparency to create works that question the stigma surrounding mental health. Stigma often fosters secrecy and silence, which, I propose, contributes to the generational repetition of mental illnesses. By interrogating these cycles, I aim to challenge the societal forces perpetuating them.

The persistence of social conditions put on women within society dates back far. However, this essay will concentrate on the contemporary era, the 1960s and forward. Since the 1960s, Western culture, particularly in the United States, has prioritised thin female bodies, granting more societal privilege and acceptance to women who appear thinner. This shift gave rise to fatphobia and size discrimination. The focus on weight loss and body size awareness grew with the founding of Overeaters Anonymous in 1960 and Weight Watchers in 1963.¹ In 1962, low-calorie food items began to gain popularity, and by 1965, the importance of exercise for weight loss became widely recognised through the first charts measuring calories burned during workouts.² Furthermore, the United States Food and Drug Administration's approval of the birth control pill in 1960 marked one of the most important social advancements of the twentieth century.³ This innovation catalysed the sexual revolution and paved the way for the women's liberation movement. However, early versions of the pill contained high levels of estrogen, resulting in side effects like headaches and weight gain.⁴ While the pill allowed women greater self-determination over their lives, patriarchal-driven capitalism exploited weight-related side effects to market products aimed at reinforcing the ideal of the thin and "perfect" woman. This constructed ideal emphasised inferiority, gentleness, and emotionality in women while selling unattainable beauty standards through dieting solutions,

¹ Emily L. Newman, *Female Body Image in Contemporary Art: Dieting, Eating Disorders, Self-Harm, and Fatness* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 1–2.

² Roberta Pollock Seid, *Never Too Thin: Why Women Are at War With Their Bodies* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1989), 137–62.

³ Bernard Asbell, *The Pill: A Biography of the Drug That Changed the World*, (New York: Random House, 1995), 168–70.

⁴ Newman, 2.

beauty products, and fitness regimes.⁵ The 1970s saw the rise of fitness culture, with aerobics popularised through Jane Fonda and the emergence of gym culture.⁶ At the same time, diet fads such as the Atkins Diet gained traction, normalising restrictive eating habits.⁷ The focus on thinness during this time overlapped with the feminist movement, which worked to challenge restrictive beauty standards while also grappling with the clash between its ideals and deeply rooted societal norms.⁸ By the 1980s and 1990s, the diet and fitness industries had grown significantly, introducing products like diet pills and appetite suppressants while glorifying unattainable physiques through supermodels. In the 2000s, calorie-counting apps and wearable fitness technology intensified the obsession with tracking food intake and exercise. During this period, diagnoses of eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia rose, highlighting the psychological toll of these beauty standards.⁹ In the 2010s, the body positivity movement sought to challenge these norms by advocating for accepting diverse body types. Social media platforms amplified diverse representations and perpetuated new pressures through filters and idealised images.¹⁰ A shift from overt dieting to "wellness" rebranded weight-loss culture as health and self-care, often masking fat phobia. While medical advances have challenged the "calories in, calories out" narrative, systemic issues, like healthcare bias against larger bodies, persist, contributing to health inequalities.¹¹ As of 2025, there is still a conflict between progress and ongoing societal conditioning. While body positivity and feminist critiques have helped promote more inclusivity, the influence of patriarchal-driven capitalism remains strong, now supported by digital algorithms that reinforce unrealistic standards.

This essay is organised into five parts: an introduction to feminist filmmaking, an exploration of repetition and transparency as artistic methods, an analysis of works by Anne Charlotte Robertson and Annette Arlander, a reflection on my artistic practice, and a proposed "bulimic film," and a conclusion summarising how these insights inform feminist artistic methods.

⁵ Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 22.

⁶ Shelly McKenzie, *Getting Physical: The Rise of Fitness Culture in America* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 125–127.

⁷ Seid, 162.

⁸ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 112–115.

⁹ McKenzie, 152–156.

¹⁰ Megan Jayne Crabbe, *Body Positive Power: How Women Can Reclaim Body Image* (London: Unbound, 2017), 45–50.

¹¹ Gabor Maté, *The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, and Healing in a Toxic Culture* (London: Ebury Publishing, 2022), 3.

Body

Feminist Filmmaking

Because of this not-surprising ongoing focus on the size and shape of female bodies in the contemporary era, manipulation of the female body has been a key material utilised in art by and of women as an act of resistance. The visuality of an obsession with body weight used through artistic interventions can be compelling as a way to address the persistence of social conditions and expectations.¹²

Performance art is an example of an art form that evolved into a means for women to discuss their bodies on their terms. In accordance to this, art historian Jeanie Forte states that;

Women's performance art has particular disruptive potential because it poses an actual woman as a speaking subject, throwing that position into the process and into doubt, opposing the traditional conception of the single, unified (male) subject. The female body as subject clashes in dissonance with its patriarchal text, challenging the very fabric of representation by refusing that text and posing new, multiple texts grounded in real women's experiences and sexuality.¹³

Forte's quote highlights how performance art can shift perspectives on patriarchal repetition, a concept central to feminist filmmaking. Feminist filmmaking challenges patriarchal systems, power dynamics, and traditional gender roles in cinema. It explores diverse female experiences, amplifies underrepresented voices, and critiques women's media portrayals, focusing on gender inequality, sexual freedom, identity, and intersectionality.¹⁴ Feminist filmmaking can work as a catalyst for the artistic methods of repetition and transparency. Through repetition and transparency, feminist filmmaking can create new temporalities, such as a mentally ill woman's non-linear timeline, and shed light on taboo narratives. This approach fosters collective transparency, where one woman's disclosure inspires others.

Furthermore, feminist filmmaking can offer a transformative approach to cinema by reimagining absence, incompleteness, and fragmentation as creative and political tools. Something that a feminist filmmaker can be reevaluating through the exploration of the "finished film." In Kate Lake's review of *Incomplete: The Feminist Possibilities of the Unfinished Film* by Alix Beeston and

¹² Newman, 1.

¹³ Jeanie Forte, *Women's Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism; Performing Feminism: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 254.

¹⁴ Shohini Chaudhuri, *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1-11.

Stefan Solomon, I understand these concepts to challenge traditional film production and historical norms, opening space for more inclusive and dynamic storytelling.¹⁵ One key possibility lies in reclaiming incompleteness as a generative force. Rather than viewing unfinished works as failures, a feminist filmmaker can embrace the fragmentary and the unfinished to resist the pressures of industry standards and linear narratives. Feminist filmmaking also amplifies marginalised voices by creating and engaging with archives that recover stories and perspectives historically silenced. Building personal and collaborative archives transforms fragments of unfinished projects into new narratives. This action preserves memory and creates collaboration, connection, and resistance spaces.¹⁶ Through feminist filmmaking, the obsession with the ideal female body and the harmful social conditioning behind it can be exposed and challenged.

The Artistic Methods of Repetition and Transparency

Filmmaking is an example of repetition happening simultaneously, layering different realities and creating new temporalities. In his book *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze explains repetition as a movement that can affect the mind and is, by nature, a transgression. In this way, repetition embodies the possibility of invention. In his theory, Deleuze describes two types of repetition;

The first type is mechanical, naked, or bare repetition, a repetition of the same that only remakes the original, while the other type contains difference; it is a dynamic repetition that adopts over time.¹⁷

The second version of Deleuze's repetition, which includes difference, visualises in my mind as a circle of a luminous air flow that circles itself counterclockwise. Each time it reaches the northern part of itself, it pushes a new stream of airflow out of the circle. I propose this to be the creation of difference. It happens because a new stream is created when a repetition keeps repeating but in new temporalities. The stream-like air flow will never stay the same because time keeps changing. This connects an eating disorder like bulimia nervosa to Deleuze's theory. A bulimic person repeats the same impulses of planning, buying, hiding, consuming, and regurgitating food.

¹⁵ Kaitlin Lake, "Incomplete: the Feminist Possibilities of the Unfinished Film, by Alix Beeston and Stefan Solomon," *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 27 (2024): 293-297, accessed December 1, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.27.29>.

¹⁶ Lake, 293-297.

¹⁷ Annette Arlander, "Beyond the Saturation Point," *VIS - Nordic Journal for Artistic Research*, no. 5 (2021): 1-7, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/857358/913275>.

The consumption and regurgitation of food can continue for hours, days, or weeks and depend on how much food has been planned for, bought, and hidden. In an episode, the person with bulimia often exaggerates the intake of food, which triggers the impulse to throw up. The eating disorder brain then might be telling the person with bulimia that this is too much food for you, you do not deserve this food, you will gain weight, and therefore, you will be unlovable. As well, the person with bulimia can be experiencing physical fullness and nausea, and be aware that throwing up will ease this uncomfortable feeling. These impulses internalise in the brain and body of the person with bulimia, and a rewarding system of repetition is built. I envision this bulimic repetition as a luminous air flow circling itself counterclockwise, where the regurgitating is the difference created in the northern part of the circle and creates a new repetition because, once again, the person with bulimia is craving the consumption of food.

In the summary of the theory, Deleuze introduces art into the discussion and states that;

The highest purpose of art is to play with all these repetitions simultaneously, their differences in nature and rhythm, their respective displacements and disguises, their various deviations and decentering, to embed them in each other and to enclose one or the other in illusions whose effect varies in each case.¹⁸

Deleuze writes about art's ability to juxtapose or superimpose different patterns, allowing for a dynamic interplay between what seems to be the same and what diverges.¹⁹ Repetition in filmmaking and film editing can involve displacements and disguises and embed repetitions within layers of illusion, meaning that it deliberately constructs surfaces that reveal and conceal simultaneously. The highest purpose of art is to explore this dynamic interplay. Through filmmaking, the complexity of different experiences and realities can be revealed. Showing how even seemingly identical elements can be different in subtle, profound, and transformative ways.²⁰ For example, the different experiences my aunt and I have of the silence within our family and the experiences of an eating disorder.

In my artistic practice, I explore the layers of my family's stories, uncovering how different family members experienced their reality. What emerged was a profound lack of transparency, a culture of silence surrounding mental illness that had affected two generations of women, my grandmother and aunt, and then later me. This silence protected family secrets and perpetuated the

¹⁸ Arlander, 1-7.

¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 1-31.

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 1-31.

repetition of the eating disorder. Realising that this lack of transparency later hindered my recovery, I began using transparency as a tool for healing. I turned silence into full disclosure, sharing my experiences with my aunt. After decades of silence, she opened up to me, perhaps for the first time feeling she was not alone. In this way, the artistic method of transparency is used to recover from illness, subjective reflection, and collective consciousness-raising when using transparency to erase the lack of transparency.

I found another viewpoint on how the method of transparency can be seen as central to autobiographical art-making and how it plays a key role in feminist art addressing societal issues. For example, by using autobiographical lived experiences in the making of art that exposes or visualises the stigma around mental illness, which could lead to a change in societal oppressive norms. Lauren Fournier, in her book *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, discusses how feminist practices can be used to investigate personal consciousness and foster self-expression through transparency. Fournier's concept of autotheory highlights the power of combining personal narratives with theory to create collective understanding, promote intersectionality, and raise awareness.²¹

Artistic Practise of Anne Charlotte Robertson

Anne Charlotte Robertson is an example of an artist trying to understand herself through her artistic practice. Robertson was a Boston area filmmaker who examined her experiences through feminist filmmaking as she documented hospitalisations, relationships, and family with her Super 8 camera. While battling depression and bipolar disorder, Robertson recorded this in her 38-hour Super 8 opus, *Five Year Diary*. The artwork is a chronicle of her life from the start of 1981, which she completed sixteen years later. It is an obsessive film reel collection that shows the artist playing out her obsessions with her mental illness, her state of mind, how she consumed food, her fluctuating weight, and her close relationships. Her recordings captured the moments of her days and the shifting states of her mind and served as letters to the man she loved. There is repetition in her films, in how she returns to the same place to film and obsesses over the same themes. This repetition can also be observed in her numerous written diaries, which she has kept over the years, and in her food journals, which document her daily meals and weight. In this way, Robertson uses her everyday life to examine her mental illness.²²

²¹ Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as feminist practice in art, writing, and criticism*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2021), 1.

²² Benjamin Cook, *Five Year Diary*, ed. Bárbara Rodríguez Muñoz (London: LUX, 2014), 2-37.

I see a connection between my practice and Robertson's, as both of us engage in constant dialogue with our mental illnesses. Robertson uses the camera to examine her illness, turning herself in and out to understand its complexity. I, too, converse with my eating disorder throughout the day, especially before, during, and after eating. Talking about it with others deepens this conversation. I also recognise this tool being used by Robertson when she makes conversation between herself and her illness in front of her camera. She does this through transparency and repetition as artistic methods to investigate her illness. Anne Charlotte Robertson's work *Five Year Diary* is a good example of an artist playing out her obsessions raw and uncensored within her home, using transparency as her tool to recover from her illness, or at least understand it. In the work, Robertson presents her autobiographical narrative to challenge the presumptions of what a mentally ill woman could be.²³ She presents feminist resistance through the lens of her camera, and within this action, she was letting the silenced be heard, and I experienced a potential shift from monologue to dialogue in her artwork. Through the transparency Robertson displays in her films of her daily life and struggle and courageously using the method of transparency in her monologues, she reaches out to the public through the multiple film screenings she has of her artwork. Through these screenings, she created a dialogue with only a monologue.

I discovered how Robertson uses the artistic method of repetition in the obsessiveness of repeating her way of filming. First, she works with the method of repetition as she chronologically uses time; her life recurs over an extended period in the films, from 1981 to 1998. The daily written diaries and food diaries she kept and used as a part of this artwork are a repetitive way of analysing your artistic practice through your daily life by confronting the control a mental illness can have over your mind and body. From the perspective of the feminist artist, Robertson is using her mental illness in the making of an artwork, and she uses creative processes to preserve her mental stability.

Artistic Practise of Annette Arlander

Annette Arlander is an artist, a researcher, and a pedagogue. She is one of the pioneers of Finnish performance art and a trailblazer in artistic research. In her work *Year of the Pig with a Tatarian Maple*, Arlander uses repetition to change how one experiences one's surrounding world.²⁴ The artwork was created in Stockholm between 2017 and 2018, in front of a Russian Tatarian Maple tree where Arlander, over and over again, would record herself and her surroundings sitting with the

²³ Cook, 2-37.

²⁴ Arlander, 1-7.

tree. During these recordings, she would reflect on what the Tatarian Maple had seen and what historical events it had been through, and because of these experiences, the tree had to bend and change because of its surroundings. Arlander reflects on what she learned from repeatedly sitting with a tree for a year. Arlander explains that our reactions to circumstances, habits, fixations, and repetitions make us and the world we live in what we are and will become.²⁵

Arlander works from the perspective of a feminist artist in the way she expresses care for her surroundings. Historically, care work has been undervalued due to its association with femininity. Feminist approaches can reclaim care as a radical act of resistance and challenge capitalist systems prioritising profit over well-being. Arlander's time spent with the tree can be seen as an action of feminist resistance to binaries like human versus nature or male versus female and rejecting the idea that one side must dominate the other. Expressing care for surroundings reinforces this non-dominant approach.

Arlander is investigating a difference generated by repetition, which she creates using a manual time-lapse video. She relates this to Deleuze's writing about repetition being a movement and its possibility for inventions.²⁶ Every time Arlander presses on the time-lapse video recorder as she sits by the tree, she installs a difference. She recreates a reality from a previous experience of reality and changes her perception of time. Arlander uses repetition in this work to explain that something new or different will always happen when you return to the same place but within a new temporality. Arlander is, through this repetition, expressing care for her surroundings, and she catches her care in film.²⁷

Reflection

In my artistic practice, I delve into the layers of my family's truths and realities, working from a feminist perspective of using the artistic methods of repetition and transparency. These methods underpin my work and resonate in the practices of Anne Charlotte Robertson and Annette Arlander, whose art embodies the intricate interplay of personal experience, feminist theory, and experimental methods. Their works offer a profound lens through which I can examine my practice as a feminist filmmaker, navigating the intersection of mental health, societal norms, and feminist discourse. Within this lens, I see the potential in viewing incompleteness as an opportunity for creativity and new

²⁵ Arlander, 1-7.

²⁶ Deleuze, 1-31.

²⁷ Deleuze, 1-31.

ideas. It challenges the dominance of male-centred narratives and invites a broader understanding of film history that values experimental and nontraditional approaches.²⁸ Through this lens, I, as a feminist filmmaker, can transform the medium of filmmaking into a dynamic space of dialogue, which leads to collaboration and resistance.

As analysed in Benjamin Cook's writings and interviews with Robertson, Anne Charlotte Robertson's *Five Year Diary* exemplifies the transformative power of autobiographical transparency. Robertson's candid exploration of mental illness reveals how deeply personal experiences can transcend individual narratives to foster a collective dialogue. This dialogue creation aligns with the feminist consciousness-raising movement of the 1960s, where private lived experiences were shared to uncover systemic patterns.²⁹ Robertson's work transforms monologue into dialogue, inviting viewers into a shared space of understanding and resistance. Transparency in feminist art, as Lauren Fournier discusses in *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, serves as a critical tool for consciousness-raising. Fournier situates autotheory within the feminist legacy, merging autobiography, theory, and philosophy to challenge societal structures. Fournier uses autotheory as a tool to critique and question societal systems of power and inequality, particularly those related to gender, race, and colonialism. This approach seeks to connect personal narratives with broader theoretical insights to confront and dismantle oppressive structures. It can create what she calls "a collective brain," fostering intersectionality and self-awareness.³⁰

Fournier writes;

Autotheory seems to best describe the practices of artists, writers, and other art and culture workers who move between the worlds of contemporary art, literature, and academia, in spaces where practice and research, writing and studio art, self-reflection and philosophical study meet. Those working auto-theoretically might move between the worlds of studio practice and incorporate diaristic journaling.³¹

My practice parallels these ideas, which Fournier points out, through the use of a studio diary to document the influence of mental illness on my art. This practice helps me recognise patterns of repetition that, while unconscious in the moment, become visible upon reflection. In this way, my work embodies the principles of autotheory, merging personal narrative with theoretical

²⁸ Lake, 293-297.

²⁹ Fournier, 10-11.

³⁰ Fournier, 1.

³¹ Fournier, 8.

inquiry. Robertson's artistic repetitions, seen in her diaristic journaling and obsessive documentation, mirror therapeutic practices such as food diaries in eating disorder treatment. Although I cannot confirm if Robertson underwent such treatment, I find profound parallels between her work and my own experience of using food diaries during bulimia treatment. Both practices evoke a sense of structured temporality and the overwhelming pressure to embody perfection through obsessive repetition, whether as a patient or an artist.

Annette Arlander's work, *Year of the Pig with a Tatarian Maple*, offers another perspective on repetition. Arlander's deliberate return to the exact location over time creates new temporalities and meanings, aligning with Deleuze's theory of repetition. Deleuze explains that repetition is not just about copying the same thing repeatedly. Instead, each time something is repeated, it creates something new, offering fresh insights or perspectives.³² Deleuze meant that making art could change our everyday melancholic repetitions into the profound and deep-buried repetitions of our memory, finally bringing us to the final repetitions of death, where we would meet complete freedom.³³ Arlander's conscious engagement with repetition contrasts with Robertson's potentially subconscious repetitions, shaped by her mental health. This distinction deepens my understanding of how repetition functions differently within artistic practices, whether as a deliberate method or a reflection of lived experience.

Gabor Maté's biopsychosocial framework in *The Myth of Normal* further informs my interpretation of Robertson's work. Maté emphasises that health and illness are not isolated phenomena but expressions of a life shaped by relationships, experiences, and societal conditioning.³⁴

Maté states that;

Health and illness are not random states in a particular body or body part. They are, in fact, an expression of an entire life lived, one that cannot, in turn, be understood in isolation: it is influenced by, or better yet, it arises from, a web of circumstances, relationships, events and experiences.³⁵

This perspective encourages me to view Robertson's art holistically, acknowledging her artistic agency rather than reducing her to her illness. Mental illness, seen through a biopsychosocial

³² Arlander, 1-7.

³³ Deleuze, 1-31.

³⁴ Maté, 3.

³⁵ Maté, 3.

lens, is influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors, all of which interact to shape an individual's reality.³⁶ This framework helps me understand how societal norms, such as those perpetuated by patriarchal capitalism, influence our adaptive or maladaptive behaviours.³⁷

As a feminist filmmaker, I want to challenge this societal conditioning and situate my practice within the broader discourse on female body image in contemporary art. Emily L. Newman's *Female Body Image in Contemporary Art: Dieting, Eating Disorders, Self-Harm, and Fatness* highlights how feminist art resists the patriarchal obsession with body image, which drives consumerism and profits from women's insecurities. I aim to create a "bulimic film" that seeks to interrogate these societal pressures by using repetition and transparency to explore the psychological and generational impacts of eating disorders. These methods are tools for questioning persistent social norms and creating art that bridges personal experiences with broader feminist critiques. Sarah Pucill's *Milk and Glass* (1993) offers a powerful visual reference for my creation of a "bulimic film." Pucill's 10 minutes long film shows; "a black-coated mirror, the hollow of a bowl, a cavernous throat; a brush demarcates a line of lip on a flat surface, a mouth doubles up with the bowl and is virtually spoon-fed till it chokes."³⁸ The film's cyclical depiction of consumption and regurgitation mirrors the repetitive and consuming nature of bulimia nervosa, embodying the psychological landscape of the disorder. For me, Pucill's film evokes the tension between calmness and chaos, control and compulsion, which, from my experience, defines a bulimic episode. In my feminist filmmaking practice, I will use repetition to recreate a bulimic episode, where repetition will carry insight into the disordered brain of an eating disorder. This insight will expose questions about how a disordered brain thinks, speaks, and manipulates its carrier. My aim for this film is to transform a monologue into a dialogue, incorporating incompleteness to resist conventional narratives. I plan to use non-linear storylines with gaps and abrupt shifts in time, reflecting the chaotic nature of bulimia. Scenes will start but remain unfinished, mirroring the incompleteness of mental health struggles. Unresolved soundscapes, such as voiceovers cutting off mid-sentence or repetitive, unresolved audio, will evoke obsessive thought patterns. The film will also include the process of its creation, embracing mistakes and abandoned ideas to reflect the vulnerability of incompleteness. This approach will convey the raw, fragmented experience of eating disorders while challenging traditional cinematic forms. I will seek to visualise the repetitive and consuming nature

³⁶ Kori D. Miller, "What are mental health theories," Positive Psychology, September 2, 2019, <https://positivepsychology.com/mental-health-theories/>.

³⁷ Miller, "What are mental health theories."

³⁸ Sarah Pucill, *Milk and Glass*, Stanislaw Was, Arts Council of England, 1993, 16 mm, col, sound, 10min, <http://www.sarahpucill.co.uk/films/milk-and-glass/>.

of an eating disorder and produce dialogue in a feminist discourse to challenge the lack of transparency. From this viewpoint, feminist filmmaking can challenge deeply rooted societal expectations and shed light on their impact on mental health in contemporary culture.

Conclusion

The introduction's question of how two specific artistic methods can explore societal conditioning perpetuating mental illness finds its answer in the transformative power of repetition and transparency. These methods reveal how societal norms are internalised and passed down, enabling feminist artists to disrupt these cycles through self-expression, awareness-raising, and critical inquiry.

Through the practice of Anne Charlotte Robertson, it becomes clear how transparency can create space for dialogue and challenge the silence surrounding mental health. Robertson's *Five Year Diary* transforms deeply personal experiences into communal narratives. She is breaking stigmas when she uses her mental illness to make art. Annette Arlander's practice demonstrates the potential of repetition to offer new perspectives, challenging time constraints and societal expectations of care. Both artists employ these methods to resist the constraints of societal norms, embodying the feminist ethos of personal storytelling and reflective examination. Building on their legacies, my proposed "bulimic film" employs repetition and transparency to interrogate the persistence of eating disorders within my family, connecting personal experience with broader societal critiques. By layering archival storytelling and experimental techniques, my work addresses how patriarchal-driven capitalism perpetuates harmful beauty standards, resulting in profound psychological and generational impacts.

There is a capacity of feminist art to question systems of power and enable resistance. By investigating the repetition of mental illness within a familial and societal context, I propose that mental illness itself can be a functional artistic method, offering a lens to examine and disrupt these cycles. Through artistic interventions, I aim to confront the visual obsession with idealised body image and advocate for change by creating dialogue. I aim to create an artwork with the combined layers of complexity of what an eating disorder can be, what it does to its career, and what it can create.

Ultimately, the artistic methods of repetition and transparency explored in this essay demonstrate their potential to document and disrupt societal conditions, offering pathways toward reimagining reality, mental illness, and feminist art.³⁹

³⁹ Newman, 1.

Bibliography

- Arlander, Annette. "Beyond the Saturation Point." *VIS - Nordic Journal for Artistic Research*, no. 5 (2021): 1-7. Accessed May 10, 2024. <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/857358/913275>.
- Asbell, Bernard. *The Pill: A Biography of the Drug That Changed the World*. New York: Random House, 1995.
- Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Broude, Norma and Garrard, Mary D. *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994.
- Chaudhuri, Shohini. *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Cook, Benjamin and Bárbara, Rodríguez Muñoz (ed.). *Five Year Diary*. London: LUX, 2014.
- Crabbe, Megan Jayne. *Body Positive Power: How Women Can Reclaim Body Image*. London: Unbound, 2017.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Forte, Jeanie. *Women's Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism: Performing Feminism: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Ed. Sue Ellen Case. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- Fournier, Lauren. *Autotheory as feminist practice in art, writing, and criticism*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2021.

- Lake, Kaitlin. "Incomplete: the Feminist Possibilities of the Unfinished Film, by Alix Beeston and Stefan Solomon." *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 27 (2024): 293-297. Accessed December 1, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.27.29>.
- Maté, Gabor. *The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, and Healing in a Toxic Culture*. London: Ebury Publishing, 2022.
- McKenzie, Shelly. *Getting Physical: The Rise of Fitness Culture in America*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013.
- Metzinger, Thomas. *Phenomenal Transparency and Cognitive Self-Reference*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003.
- Miller, Kori D. "What are mental health theories." *Positive Psychology*. September 2, 2019. <https://positivepsychology.com/mental-health-theories/>.
- Newman, Emily L. *Female Body Image in Contemporary Art: Dieting, Eating Disorders, Self-Harm, and Fatness*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Pollock Seid, Roberta. *Never Too Thin: Why Women Are at War With Their Bodies*. New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1989.
- Pucill, Sarah. *Milk and Glass*. Stanislaw Was. Arts Council of England. 1993. 16mm, col, sound, 10min. <http://www.sarahpucill.co.uk/films/milk-and-glass/>.