Duality, the Methodology of Shooting a Documentary as a One-Man Crew

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Duality, the Methodology of Shooting a Documentary as a One-Man Crew

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DUALITY, THE METHODOLOGY OF SHOOTING A DOCUMENTARY AS A ONE-MAN CREW

By

JAMES SCOTT MCMAHEN, Associate of Applied Science, Bachelor of Science

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

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May 2017
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ONE-MAN CREW

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APPROVED:

________________________________________
William Arscott, Thesis Director

________________________________________
Linda Post, Committee Member

________________________________________
Lauren Selden, Committee Member

________________________________________
Dr. Anne C. Smith, Committee Member

Richard Berry, D.M.A.
Dean of the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

This thesis will discuss Duality, a long-form documentary about artistic nude models who also create art involving the nude female form. This thesis will discuss the inspiration for the film, as well as the deciding factors that made me choose this as the topic for my thesis documentary.

This thesis will also cover the process and methodology of shooting a documentary as a one-man crew, beginning with the process of preproduction, then the principal photography of the documentary, followed by the editing and postproduction process, and finally premiering the final film.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my professor, advisor, and mentor, William Arscott. His knowledge, advice, and instruction over the last several years have helped me grow not only as an artist, but as a person as well. Under his guidance, I have gained the knowledge, skills, and courage to make Duality, and I can never thank him enough for that.

Thank you to all of the Kickstarter backers that decided this project was important enough of a film to part with their hard-earned dollars and help fund it. There is no greater show of support than that. This film would never have been possible without their help.

I’d also like to thank all of the model-photographers who appeared in this film – Jacs Fishburne, Sarah Voss, Bunny Luna, Stevie Macaroni, Sarah Achor, Sara Brams-Miller, Mikki Marvel, Kimber Beck, and Tasha. They opened their hearts, minds, and homes to me and allowed me to put a camera and microphone in their faces while they discussed their craft and showed me how they make their art. I am forever grateful for that.

Thank you to my fellow graduate students who have taught me so much over the years and helped make me the filmmaker that I am today. Specifically, Justin Herring, Peyton Paulette, Trey Cartwright, Ricky Kennedy, and Herbert
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Thank you to Rachael Yates for her constant encouragement while I filmed and edited this documentary.

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DUALITY, THE METHODOLOGY OF SHOOTING A DOCUMENTARY AS A ONE-MAN CREW

Nude Photography And Discovering The Guerrilla Girls

On an unusually warm evening in August 2011, I was unknowingly taking the first step on a very long journey that would culminate with the production of Duality. A year prior, I had bought a used digital camera from a friend and started taking portraits of friends and family, ultimately doing fashion photography in the summer of 2011. During that summer, at a group photoshoot with several local photographers and model friends, I met a model named Charlie who had previously done some nude modeling with a local art photographer. While taking portraits of her, our conversation drifted to nude photography and I expressed interest in wanting to take artistic nude photographs of someone at some point. Charlie, without my asking her to, kindly offered to model for me if I wanted to try it. Three days later, in the middle of a cow pasture in southeast Texas, I photographed my first nude human being. Between that moment and the completion of Duality, I photographed twenty-three other models, both male and female, nude.

In the spring of 2012, while looking at photography online, I came across an infographic that was distributed by an anonymous feminist art collective called
Guerrilla Girls (see fig. 1). According to their website, “The Guerrilla Girls are feminist activist artists. . . . We wear gorilla masks in public and use facts, humor and outrageous visuals to expose gender and ethnic bias as well as corruption in politics, art, film, and pop culture. We undermine the idea of a mainstream narrative by revealing the understory, the subtext, the overlooked, and the downright unfair” (Guerrilla Girls, “Our Story”).

This infographic consisted of an old daguerreotype of a reclining female nude lying on a couch, looking away from the viewer. In place of the head of the model, the head of a gorilla was superimposed on the body, along with this statement: “Less than 4% of the artists in the Modern Art sections are women, but 76% of the nudes are female”, with a small subscript stating that the statistics are from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and are from 2011 (Guerrilla Girls, “Naked Through the Ages”). This infographic made me realize, for the first time, that men have traditionally been the creators of nude art involving the female form; further, the decision of how to portray the female form was decided by the male artists and not the women depicted in their art. Looking back at this now, I can attribute the idea for Duality to seeing this infographic years prior.
In August of 2012 I moved to Nacogdoches to pursue my Master of Fine Arts in filmmaking at Stephen F. Austin State University. While studying art history as part of the degree, I slowly become aware of the way that artists portrayed the female body in their work. More often than not, the female body was portrayed by male artists for a male audience, often under the guise of mirroring myths, epics, or biblical stories. In the world of art nude photography, however, something interesting caught my eye around this time as well. Many female art nude models were themselves stepping behind the lenses of cameras and photographing the nude female form. Some of these models were academically-trained photographers who held degrees in photography, while others were self-taught and worked with point-and-shoot cameras. No matter their technique or past education, these models were doing something that I thought was incredible: they were crossing over from being the subject of nude art to being the creators of nude art. Their experience in front of the camera gave them a much deeper insight into the process of creating nude art, much like how an actor shifting over to the role of directing in Hollywood understands what it’s like being in front of the lens. These model-photographers were ultimately reclaiming the authorship of the nude female form from what was traditionally a male-dominated art industry.
Several years into graduate school, I decided to do a documentary for the thesis film that was required for my degree. While wrestling around with ideas on what to base my documentary on, I thought about the Guerrilla Girls infographic that I had seen in 2012. While in that statistic men were the predominant creators of nude art involving the female body, there were currently female models who were reversing that trend in the world of art nude photography. I felt that talking to some of these model-photographers about their work, ideas, and methodology would be a very interesting and important topic to focus on for my thesis documentary. Now with the topic of my thesis documentary decided, I had to figure out how I was going to make this film a reality.

Choosing Who To Interview

Out of all the moving parts of making a documentary like this, choosing who to interview is probably the most important decision that must be made. This is, after all, a documentary about people, so without anyone to interview, the documentary wouldn’t materialize. The main thing I had to consider in choosing who to interview was the subject’s accessibility. Their location, schedule, and willingness to be interviewed were all important things to consider. The most important factor that I would have to consider would ultimately be trust. If I had approached a model-photographer that I had never worked with and asked to
come to her city or town, interview her, and film her working nude (either by herself or with another model), that could appear very questionable.

At this point, I decided that it would be best to reach out to models that I had either previously worked with or had spoken with in the past to ask them to be a part of this documentary. After all, trust is a dominant factor in documentaries where the filmmaker is working in close proximity to their subjects, and the fact that nudity would be involved only complicates the matter. Also, working with models that I already knew would make the interview process easier. The act of interviewing a person - with the lights, camera, and microphones – is enough to make anyone nervous, so not having to worry about talking to a stranger about their work would, in theory, put whoever I interviewed a little more at ease. While talking about her film, *Sound Business*, and the process that she used to gain access to Jamaican rappers in London clubs, documentary filmmaker Molly Dineen said that, “It taught me early on that you can’t expect just to walk into a room with a camera and capture the truth about anybody or anything” (38). Gaining rapport and trust with your subjects is paramount to creating a true documentary film. In Yuichiro Yamada’s analysis of the Maysles brothers’ documentary films, the point of trust and rapport is also brought up: “Specifically, they attributed the establishment of a rapport and a trusting relationship with the film’s subject to be the key to their success” (1).
In January 2015, I started corresponding with an art model named Bunny Luna on Instagram. Bunny is a model-photographer based out of Charlotte, North Carolina and was at the time in the process of self-publishing a book of her photography entitled, *Diplopia*. Bunny’s work centered around double exposures on medium format film. In one exposure, Bunny would photograph a model, reset the shutter on the camera, then allow the model to photograph her. This would overlay both images onto one frame of film, thereby making very interesting visuals where both individual photographs melded together into one ethereal amalgamation. After talking with Bunny for several weeks, I told her about my idea for *Duality* and she was very excited about the idea. I asked her if she would be interested in being interviewed for it and she answered with a resounding yes. I now had my first interviewee lined up.

The next month, I scheduled a photoshoot with Jacs Fishburne in Houston, Texas. It wasn’t my first time to meet Jacs, as she and I had worked together the previous March. Jacs was and still is an artistic monolith in the world of art nude modeling and photography who is world-renowned for her work ethic and for producing incredible art on both sides of the camera lens. Jacs did nude self-portraiture for several years before ever stepping in front of another person’s camera, thus giving her a special insight into her own art modeling as well as her interaction with other models when she photographed them nude. Despite having worked with Jacs before and talking to her frequently through email, I was still a
little hesitant to ask her to be a part of the documentary because of the reverence I held her in as an artist. A couple of weeks before our photoshoot, I finally told her about the documentary and asked if she’d like to be a part of it. Just like Bunny, Jacs was excited about it and said that she would love to be a part of the documentary.

Around this time, I also emailed Brooke LaBrie, another art nude model that I had previously worked with, and asked if she would like to be a part of the documentary. Brooke was also a very accomplished photographer in her own right, specializing in both medium format and collodion wet plate photography. After not hearing back from her for several weeks, I decided that having Bunny Luna and Jacs Fishburne in the documentary would be enough. My attention then shifted to the logistics involved with making this documentary.

The Logistics Of Making A Documentary Alone

After choosing the subjects to interview for Duality, the next matter to consider was how I was going to shoot the film. Due to my previous interactions and conversations with the models that I would be interviewing, there was already a level of comfort between us. If I were to introduce other crew members into the situation, the rapport that had been previously built could be jeopardized and the tone of the interviews would potentially be changed by a stranger’s presence. In addition to that, having crew members around while documenting
the model-photographers’ work would be both disrespectful and awkward. For this reason, as well as budgeting and logistics, I was adamant about shooting this film completely by myself. This created some difficulties when it came to shooting, but none of them were insurmountable.

During the time that I started thinking about shooting this documentary as my thesis film, I had a conversation about camera equipment with a friend of mine from Austin named Tyler Gorrell who had filmed documentaries in the past, mainly in crews of one or two people. A very popular camera at the time for shooting documentary work, as well as the camera that Tyler owned, was the Canon C300. It had all the necessary features that made shooting a documentary alone much easier than if you were using a cheaper DSLR-type camera. It had built-in Neutral Density filters to reduce the intensity of light coming into the lens, which could be changed with the turning of a dial instead of screwing additional filters on the front of the lens barrel. It also had two XLR inputs so that professional-quality sound could be recorded directly into the camera via an external source, like a lavaliere or a shotgun microphone. The camera was also ergonomically built to be comfortable to use, so that a single camera operator could use it without any impedance to the production. Several months prior, Canon had released the C100 Mark II, which was the baby brother to the C300. While several features like file format and bit depth were different, the overall build of the camera was the same. The C100 Mark II was well within
my price range, so I decided to purchase this camera. The conversation with Tyler gave me reassurance that it was possible to film this documentary by myself with equipment that I could afford.

Another source that I consulted at the time for ideas on lighting equipment, microphones, and camera cases was AlaskaVideoShooter.com, a website that was run by a documentary filmmaker from Alaska named Slavik Boyechko. Slavik worked for a PBS affiliate in Anchorage and would also travel around the country making documentary films. His advice on using lightweight, portable gear and packing efficiently really helped me to envision how to fit the necessary equipment into my car and travel across the country to make this film. I would also have to set up this equipment for interviews, tear it down afterwards, and haul it up and down stairs in hotels and shooting locations. Traveling with more equipment than necessary would make packing and unpacking harder, not to mention slowing down the process of filming. Because I only had limited time with each model, I needed to be as efficient as possible. Slavik’s advice helped me not only with making decisions on what lights to use and how to pack my gear, but also with how to quickly get the footage and content I needed for my film while being pressed for time.

After doing months of research, I compiled a list of equipment that I needed for the documentary and took out a loan to purchase it. Opting to purchase equipment rather than rent it was based on two factors. The first was
that if I rented equipment, there would be a potential that it could fail at any point. While that’s the case with new equipment as well, rental equipment would have a higher tendency due to the wear and tear on it. If something were to happen to a piece of equipment on the road, that could throw the filming of the documentary into disarray and I wanted to mitigate any possibilities of that happening due to the importance of this film. The second factor was that I would, ultimately, be investing in equipment that I would need anyways after I graduated. I wanted to get the highest quality video and sound for my film that I could reasonably afford, and my ultimate decision to purchase the Canon C100 Mark II, microphones, lights, and support equipment was not one that I regretted.

Funding This Project

The last major thing to figure out was how I was going to pay for this film. At this time, a lot of filmmakers were using Kickstarter to crowdfund their films. Kickstarter allowed you to make a pitch to the public about your film and offer them certain incentives in return for them backing your film and helping you fund it. While not all films can make their goal and receive their funding, I figured that Duality had a chance because it was about a unique topic that hadn’t been covered before in a full-length documentary. In May 2015, I started the Kickstarter campaign for my film. One month later, I had successfully raised $5,720 for my film, surpassing my original goal by $720. After several large
donations failed to go through and after Kickstarter's 10% fee was taken out, I was left with $4,575.14. Working alone would minimize my costs for food and lodging, so making my documentary within this budgetary framework was achievable. Not only that, but friends, family, and even complete strangers from the art modeling and photography community had put their money behind my idea to make *Duality* and that was a good feeling.

**Inspirations**

In addition to figuring out who to interview and how to fund *Duality*, I was also simultaneously envisioning how I wanted the documentary to look and what information I wanted to convey in it. At this time, I was also looking at the work of three other filmmakers and photographers whose work was similar to the style I was envisioning for *Duality*: Diane Arbus, Ingmar Bergman, and Georges Franju.

Diane Arbus’ portraiture has always inspired me as a photographer because of both its content and simplicity. I wanted the imagery of *Duality* to have this same aesthetic of refined simplicity, where the subject was in a natural state and it was as if my camera wasn’t even there. This immersive aspect of documentary filmmaking and photography, in my opinion, leads to a more objective portrayal of the subject. Arbus’ work often focused on marginalized and fringe cultures and showed parts of society that most people weren’t familiar with. She also had to gain the trust of her subjects in order to photograph them, often
in their homes, much like an anthropologist would have to gain the trust of a native tribe in order to be accepted into their fold. Diane Arbus’ work was not only inspirational to me because of how simple and natural her portraits were, but also because of the methodology she undertook to gain the trust of some of her vulnerable and marginalized subjects.

Stylistically, the work of Ingmar Bergman has always inspired me because of the simplicity of both the visuals and camera movement in his films. While his films are about topics such as love, life, and death, the composition of his shots are simple and pleasing to the eye, often providing an antithesis to the swirling complexities of what is unfolding on the screen at the time. The simple yet dramatic imagery of the knight and Death playing chess in *The Seventh Seal* is one of the best examples of the aesthetics of Ingmar Bergman’s work. Every camera movement in his work serves a purpose and the composition of each shot is thought-out and intentional. Even though *Duality* is about the complex subject of the nude female body in art, I wanted the visuals in it to be simple and intentional, much like Bergman’s work. Looking at his films helped me to recognize the beauty of simplicity and enabled me to envision how I could incorporate that style into my documentary.

The last major inspiration I looked to during the preproduction of *Duality was Blood of the Beasts*, Georges Franju’s 1949 documentary about Parisian slaughterhouses. While the macabre subject matter of this film was nothing like
Duality, I still looked to it for inspiration due to its simple visual style and because of the similar immersive techniques used to film it that were very akin to Arbus’ approach to capturing her photographs. Much like how Franju’s documentary pulled back the curtain on a part of society that usually stayed hidden from plain sight, I intended to do the same with Duality and educate the public about the work of these model-photographers that they were most likely completely unaware of. The inspiration I gained by looking at these artists’ work enabled me to formulate a vision for the visual style of my film and figure out how to achieve that within the constraints of shooting this documentary alone.

Initial Vision For The Film

In my initial vision of how the documentary would be structured, I wanted the film to be broken up into separate interviews with each model-photographer. While they all had different stories and paths, the common thread connecting them together would be the fact that they are all artists who worked on both sides of the lens.

In terms of visuals, I wanted to interview the model-photographers and use the footage and audio of their interviews as the base to build the documentary off of. I would also film them creating art and working on whatever unique project they were pursuing at the time. This b-roll would go over the interviews and bridge together any jump cuts in the audio and would also visually
illustrate what the models were talking about in terms of their work. In addition to the b-roll, I also wanted to incorporate photographs of their work into the documentary. I knew that the b-roll that I was going to capture while in their respective towns wouldn’t be enough to encapsulate everything about the interviews, so the photographs would allow me to illustrate other aspects of their work, as well as show off some of their previous artistic endeavors. It would also add variety to the visuals that accompanied their interviews.

While the interviews would consist of mainly the same questions, I also wanted to focus on certain things that were unique to the individual model-photographers. I segmented the questions together by topic in an attempt to have some homogeneity to the tone and demeanor of their responses. If I went from a question about their photography work into one about the sexualization of the nude body and then back to questions about their photography, it would throw off the flow of the conversation. To fix this, I broke up my questions into these main categories: photography, modeling, self-portraiture, their individual projects, and gender/sexuality.

In most interviews that appear in documentaries or on the news, the person being interviewed usually looks off to the side of the camera when talking and not directly at the lens. In Duality, I wanted the model-photographers to look directly into the lens of the camera for several reasons. First, I wanted the film to come across as a conversation between the person being interviewed and the
viewer. In my opinion, having them look directly into the lens would engage the viewer more and make the model-photographers’ message more direct. Second, it would be easier for me to interview the subjects and keep eye contact while I talked to them. If I positioned my head right on the side of the lens, the parallax between my eyes and the camera lens would be indiscernible in the film due to the large distance between the camera and the subject. That way, the model-photographers would be having a conversation with me while virtually looking into the camera lens as well. Third, having the model-photographers look into the camera lens maintained the agency and authorship over the words that they spoke to the viewer. They were looking directly at the viewer when they spoke about their art and their autonomy as artists depicting the female nude, and that was incredibly important to me.

Films never turn out the way we initially envision them and that was something that I had learned throughout graduate school. While I had this initial vision of my film, it was important for it to be malleable and for me to be able to adapt this vision to any unforeseen roadblocks along the way.

Adding Additional Subjects To Interview

In early May 2015, about six weeks before I was scheduled to start filming Duality, Brooke LaBrie emailed me and apologized for not responding sooner and offered to be interviewed for the documentary if I was still interested in her
being a part of it. I was ecstatic that she would now be a part of the film. My single trip had now doubled: One trip would go to Columbus, Ohio and Charlotte, North Carolina to interview Jacs Fishburne and Bunny Luna and the second trip would go to Minneapolis, Minnesota later in the summer to interview Brooke LaBrie.

Two months prior in March, I had photographed Bunny Luna when she traveled through Texas with another model from North Carolina named Stevie Macaroni. Stevie was also a model-photographer that did nude portraits of other women on 35mm film. Shortly after Brooke agreed to be in the documentary, I emailed Stevie and asked her if she would be interested in being interviewed for the documentary as well and she agreed to. Stevie lived right outside of Raleigh, North Carolina, so interviewing her would only deviate my original path of travel by approximately two hundred miles and would only add another night on the road. That was a fair tradeoff in my mind for securing another interview for the film.

In early June 2015, with less than two weeks left before I was scheduled to leave to start filming, I started talking to another model-photographer on Instagram named Sarah Voss. Sarah was from Lynchburg, Virginia and specialized in self-portraiture in personal settings like bedrooms and kitchens, often on antiquated digital and 35mm cameras. She was excited that my Kickstarter had gotten funded and told me that she’d love to be a part of the
documentary if I would be going through Virginia at any point. With minimal changes to my itinerary, I would be able to pass through Lynchburg and interview Sarah, only adding a couple of days to my trip.

On June 19, 2015, after meticulously planning my trip, scheduling interviews with the models, booking hotels, and prepping my equipment, I was ready to hit the road. I loaded up my car and set out towards Columbus, Ohio on what would be the biggest solo endeavor that I had ever attempted in my life (see fig. 2). The outpouring of encouraging words from friends, models, and photographers on social media that day helped me to overcome my anxiety about the trip and reassured me that people had my back, despite being alone on the road. Encouragement from friends throughout the trip was one of the biggest morale boosters that I could have ever asked for. Two days later, I would arrive in Columbus, Ohio for my interview with Jacs Fishburne.

Interviews: Jacs Fishburne

After arriving in Columbus and getting settled in my hotel, I got into contact with Jacs to talk about our interview. She was in the midst of a nationwide tour and Columbus was one of her last stops before going back home to New York. Jacs had gotten her Bachelor of Fine Arts in nearby Granville, Ohio at Denison University, so Columbus was like a home away from home for her. We met up the next day and had lunch and planned the schedule of when we could shoot
her b-roll and interview. After deciding on the time and place to film on the following day, I went back to the hotel, grabbed my camera, and headed to downtown Columbus to try and get some interesting b-roll of the skyline. That afternoon, standing on the West Main Street pedestrian bridge over the Scioto River in downtown Columbus, I hit the record button and captured the first bit of footage for the documentary. While this b-roll would ultimately not be used in the film, the process of filming had started. I was both ecstatic and incredibly nervous.

The next morning, I met Jacs and Sarah Achor, the model she would be photographing, in a grocery store parking lot in Granville, about forty minutes east of Columbus. I followed them to the Denison Nature Reserve, where I would get b-roll of Jacs photographing Sarah. It was a very warm and humid morning and the sky was peppered with dark rainclouds and intermittent lightning in the distance. While keeping an eye on the storm clouds, I followed Jacs and Sarah into the nature reserve with my camera and its case in tow, just in case the weather turned on us. After walking for about ten minutes, Jacs and Sarah decided on a spot to shoot at.

In situations where you are filming for a documentary like this, there usually isn’t a “Lights, Camera, Action!” moment where you ready everyone for the beginning of filming. Events start happening and you roll your camera and try your best to capture them in the truest and most objective way possible. There
are types of documentaries where the filmmaker directs the people that he is
filming, but I didn’t want my film to be like that. I told Jacs and Sarah that I was a
fly on the wall and to just ignore my presence. They did just that, so before I
knew it their shoot had begun and I started rolling my camera.

Jacs photographed Sarah in a mixture of both nude and clothed modeling,
and even incorporated smoke bombs into their photoshoot. This provided some
very beautiful and interesting visuals that ultimately looked great on screen (see
fig. 3). After filming their photoshoot for about forty-five minutes, we walked back
out to our cars, signed relevant model releases, and I packed my equipment up.
We narrowly missed a torrential downpour by about ten minutes. We celebrated
the conclusion of the photoshoot with coffee, and Jacs and I decided on a place
to shoot her interview. She gave me the directions to the house of Kate Sweeney
back in Columbus. Kate is a former art nude model who has segued into
photography and is renowned for her work. She works primarily in diptychs with
very vivid and rich color schemes. Address in hand, I made my way back to
Columbus to meet Jacs at Kate’s house for the interview.

Arriving at Kate’s house, the first order of business was to figure out where
to shoot Jacs’ interview at. I wanted Jacs’ interview footage to have visual depth
to it, be composed properly, and be lit well. Luckily, after arriving at Kate’s house,
I saw an entire wall of Polaroids that she had taken of other models. I asked if it
would be alright if I shot Jacs’ interview in front of it and she said it wouldn’t be a
problem. The juxtaposition of Jacs sitting on a couch by a wall of countless Polaroids of other models was incredibly interesting to me (see fig. 4). After taking about forty-five minutes to set up my camera, lights, and microphones, we were ready to start the interview.

Due to the breadth of Jacs’ body of work, it was difficult to pare down the list of questions I wanted to ask her about her journey as a model and photographer. Jacs told me about her formal training in photography and the arts, her nonstop touring across America and the globe, as well as her early self-portraiture and its influence on her becoming a nude model for other photographers. Jacs also explained to me about the importance of women taking photographs of their own body as an act of reclamation to take back their own identities. She also spoke to me about the lewd comments that she and other art models face when they post their work online and how that language reduces the female body to objects that are often likened to pieces of meat.

After interviewing Jacs for approximately seventy-five minutes, we wrapped up the interview. After saying my goodbyes and thanking Jacs for her part in the film, I made my way back to the hotel to back up the footage to several hard drives and prepare for my trip to Virginia. The first interview was completed and my nervousness was finally starting to subside.
After leaving Columbus, Ohio, I made my way through the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia on my way to Lynchburg, Virginia. This was the first time that I had ever seen mountains in my life, so to say that I was in awe of them would have been a complete understatement.

I got into Lynchburg at around sunset and immediately met Sarah Voss at a Starbucks near the campus of Liberty University. Sarah and I had only communicated through digital means up to this point, so we both thought it would be a good idea to meet in person prior to the interview to not only discuss our shooting schedule, but also to break the ice so that the interview would be more natural. After deciding on a location and time to shoot the interview and b-roll the next day, I headed back to the hotel to get my equipment ready.

The next morning, I picked Sarah up and drove to her mother’s house where we would shoot her part of the documentary. Due to Sarah’s work schedule, the time that was available to shoot her part of the documentary was very limited. I had to keep this in mind and be very efficient with the time that we had available. We decided to shoot the interview in the living room where there was plenty of window light available (see fig. 5).

Sarah and I spent about forty-five minutes talking during her interview and she made some very important points about feminism and how viewers tend to
automatically assume that a nude body signals that it is sexualized, even when that’s not the intent of the artist. Her work tends to be in very personal settings like bedrooms and we talked about how that affects the viewer’s interpretation of her photographs. Sarah also tours the eastern part of the country frequently to work with photographers, so she spoke about the trials she faces while on the road as a touring freelance model. After a very productive interview, we went outside into the backyard to shoot Sarah’s b-roll.

Because she lives in a very conservative city, Sarah has limited access to places to shoot self-portraits, so the choice of shooting her b-roll in her mother’s backyard was a product of this constraint (see fig. 6). While the footage I shot for her b-roll perfectly illustrated her self-portraiture work, it wasn’t as creative and visually appealing as I would have liked. Part of that was due to factors that were out of our control, like the time we had to shoot and the location that was available, but ultimately the footage worked out for its purpose in the documentary.

After shooting the b-roll, I tore the equipment down that was still set up from our interview and loaded it into my car. After driving Sarah back home so that she could go to work, I returned to the hotel and backed up the footage and started reviewing it to make sure that the sound and picture were good and that I had everything that I needed to get.
On my way out of town the next day on my way to Charlotte, North Carolina, I tried to get b-roll of the Liberty University logo that is on a mountain in the middle of Lynchburg. It was raining that day and I sat in the parking lot of a shopping mall for about a half-hour waiting for the rain to subside. Realizing that the rain wasn’t going to stop, I decided that I needed to get on the road for the four-hour drive to Charlotte. My time in Lynchburg was productive and I was excited to get to my next interview.

Interviews: Bunny Luna

Later that day, I arrived in Charlotte just in time to get caught up in rush hour traffic. Bunny was very adamant about me staying with her and her husband in a spare bedroom in their apartment so that I would save money on hotel costs. I arrived and unpacked my gear and got settled in. That evening, Bunny and I figured out the specifics for her interview the next day. We would shoot the interview at her parents’ house in another part of Charlotte because the house was roomy and there was a large backyard with a high fence that would offer her and Mikki Marvel, the model who Bunny would photograph, privacy to work in.

The next morning, we arrived at the location and got ready to shoot Bunny’s b-roll first so that we could avoid the heat. One of the topics I wanted to cover in Bunny’s interview was her book, *Diplopia*, and the process that she went through while photographing models for that book. In order to have relevant b-roll
to illustrate this process, Bunny photographed Mikki just as she did the models that appeared in the book (see fig. 7). This was an interesting process to film because I had seen Bunny’s double exposure work for years on the Internet and had always loved the end results. After filming Bunny and Mikki working together for about an hour, we went inside and I set up the camera, microphone, and lights for Bunny’s interview (see fig. 8).

Bunny was the one model in the documentary that wasn't primarily a touring art model who traveled around the country working with other artists for a living. Bunny had a day job and she talked briefly about how that affects her nude art. She went into great detail about how she came up with the idea for Diplopia, how she executed that idea, and how she would like to expand upon it in the future.

In the latter part of her interview, while discussing the potential for viewers to interpret her art nude photography as pornographic, Bunny responded with a mantra that every other model in the documentary would state in one way or another: “I really don’t see what the big deal is about nudity.” One of my hopes with making this documentary was to have the viewer realize that there is nothing inherently wrong or sexual with nudity and that it is a cultural norm that is projected onto the nude body – especially the nude female form.

After interviewing Bunny for about an hour, I packed my gear and we made our way back to her house where I reviewed and backed up the footage.
from that day. While the footage was transferring to various hard drives, I made sure that all my camera batteries were charging so that I would be ready for the next interview. The following morning, I would have to be on the road by 8:00 a.m. to make it to the Raleigh, North Carolina area for my interview with Stevie Macaroni, so I wanted everything to be ready for my departure. My time in Charlotte was fruitful and I was very happy with Bunny’s interview and b-roll and knew that it would add a lot to the documentary.

Interviews: Stevie Macaroni

Stevie Macaroni lives in a very small town close to Raleigh, North Carolina that she asked to go unnamed for privacy concerns. After arriving around noon, I brought all my equipment into her house and we quickly decided where we would shoot her interview. I would only be in her town for about twenty-four hours, so I again had to be very efficient with my time. After deciding on a nice corner of her bedroom to film her interview in, I set up my equipment and we started the interview (see fig. 9).

One of the topics I wanted to focus on in the interview was a thirty-day project that Stevie was currently working on. For this project, Stevie was taking a self-portrait every day for thirty days with her cellphone instead of a regular camera. The last day of this project would be the following day, which lined up nicely with me being in town. Stevie also spoke about body positivity and how
nude modeling helped her to accept her own self-image, despite being unhappy with her body earlier on in life. I thought this was an incredibly important topic because of the prevalence of body dysmorphia in society today.

The next morning, I loaded up my gear into my car and followed Stevie to a secluded creek bed about thirty miles away to shoot her b-roll. After hiking through trees for about five minutes, we arrived at the creek and started shooting. I filmed Stevie finishing up her thirty-day project, as well as her taking self-portraits with a 35mm SLR camera (see fig. 10). One of the things I regret was that I didn’t get enough variety of angles while filming the b-roll of Stevie. We were on a stone creek bed that had water flowing over parts of it, so I was very cautious with my equipment and tended to stay in the central dry area while Stevie photographed herself in various places surrounding it. The footage that I captured adequately illustrated what she talked about in her interview, so I was ultimately happy with what I filmed.

Afterwards, I loaded my car and started my journey back to Nacogdoches, with several stops along the way to visit friends. It had been almost two weeks since I left Texas and I was anxious to get back home. It was an amazing experience to be out on the road by myself doing something that I loved, and that feeling of accomplishment is something that I haven’t forgotten to this day.
Initial Postproduction And A Change In Plans

When it comes to the process of editing a documentary film, much like in narrative filmmaking, there is no right or wrong way to approach it. Some editors can comb through interviews, b-roll, and photographs on a computer and decide how to edit the film on the fly, while others will transcribe interviews, make footage logs for b-roll, and even make a paper edit of the film using notecards to represent major ideas or events in the film. The length of the project has a profound effect on how editing is approached, and the longer the project is and the more footage that has been shot, the greater the need to have a plan laid out prior to sitting down at your computer to edit. With Duality, I chose to go with a more pragmatic and methodical approach when it came time to edit, mainly due to the fact that I had approximately six hours of footage to go through.

Upon getting back home to Texas, I took a few days off to recuperate before diving into work on postproduction for Duality. My first order of business was to transcribe all the footage so that I would have a written record of the interviews, which would enable me to easily find key topics by searching through a text document instead of having to comb through hours of footage to do so. The transcription process took a couple of weeks to complete and the total word count for these four interviews came out to be approximately forty thousand words. Because the interviews would make up the base of the film and were the
most important aspect of it, I wanted to tackle this process first before logging the b-roll.

After I finished transcribing the interviews, I looked at all the b-roll that I filmed and made notes of important events or shots that happened in each of the clips. While I knew of specific bits of b-roll that I wanted to use, I marked ones that I was unsure about, just in case. That way I would know where to find them if I ended up needing to use them. I made a spreadsheet that listed the clip name, the unique timecode of the bit of b-roll that I marked, and a description of what was happening in the clip so that I could look at the spreadsheet and quickly find a bit of footage by its description. While approaching postproduction this way made the initial process more time-consuming, it ultimately made editing easier and more streamlined once cutting the actual footage together started.

During this time, I found out that my interview with Brooke LaBrie was not going to happen due to scheduling conflicts with her job. This was very disappointing because I knew that she would have added a lot of depth to the documentary. With all my interviews now complete, I started the editing process by using the transcripts and footage logs to make my first cut of the film.

Over the next two months, I started editing the film as I originally envisioned it, with small, individual sections that focused on each model-photographer. While the segments all told a unique story, I was only able to edit together sections on each subject that lasted about five minutes each using their
interviews and b-roll. While talking about certain topics, one model-photographer might have made a good point that another didn’t make in her answer and vice versa. Or in another case, one model-photographer’s answer might have perfectly complimented the answer of another, if they were only joined up together. At this point, I started to question my original intent of partitioning the documentary into different segments for each model and realized that intercutting all the interviews would help to bridge the gaps in topics that I previously noticed. By intercutting the documentary, much like assembling a giant puzzle, small parts from different interviews could be put together to form a larger picture that is greater than the sum of each individual part and would tell the story in a much more powerful way.

I also realized that even with all the footage that I had from the interviews with Jacs, Sarah, Bunny, and Stevie, I still wouldn’t be able to hit my goal of a forty-minute documentary nor tell the story that I intended to with this film. With approximately $1,500 left over from my Kickstarter, I made the decision to try and set up two more interviews to round out the documentary. Because I had tried to edit the film already, I knew exactly what footage I needed to get and what questions I needed to ask the remaining models to be able to make the documentary work. The experience and confidence I gained on the road several months prior would play a large role in how I planned the next trip and how I approached the filming of the remaining interviews.
Planning A Second Trip

After deciding that more content was needed to round out the film, I needed to decide who I would ask to be a part of the remaining interviews. Because the documentary was something that was talked about on social media, by both myself and the model-photographers involved in it, it wasn’t as difficult to approach other model-photographers because the idea of the film had already been established. After much thought, I decided to ask Sarah Achor and Sara Brams-Miller to be in the two remaining interviews for *Duality*.

Sarah Achor was the model that Jacs Fishburne photographed in Granville, Ohio earlier on in the production of the documentary. After getting to know Sarah in the months after the shoot, I became familiar with her photography work and realized that she was an incredibly gifted photographer in addition to being a talented model. Sarah only shot on film and did most of her work on medium and large format cameras. The fact that Sarah considered herself a photographer first and a model second only added to what her interview would bring to the film. While chatting with Sarah online one day, I asked her if she would be interested in being interviewed for the documentary if I was able to make my way back to Columbus, Ohio and she said yes. We spoke about tentative dates and locations to shoot at, as well as ideas for her b-roll. I was very excited that Sarah was on board to be interviewed because I knew that including
her perspective on both modeling and photography would be an interesting addition to the film.

The next person I asked to be a part of *Duality* was Sara Brams-Miller, who was a model and photographer from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Sara and I had been friends on social media for almost a year and both her self-portraiture and modeling work had always been something that caught my eye. Sara has a bachelor’s degree in photography so she, much like Jacs, had a more structured and classical background when it came to her work behind the camera lens. In addition to being a talented photographer, Sara also had a very diverse modeling portfolio and regularly worked with many prominent photographers in the northeastern United States. One of the most intriguing aspects of Sara’s work was her self-portraits in abandoned houses, which were eerily similar to the work of Francesca Woodman. I decided to ask Sara if she would like to be interviewed during this second leg of filming for the documentary and she agreed to with absolutely no hesitation.

After talking to both Sarah Achor and Sara Brams-Miller about their availability, I finally had a concrete schedule in place for the second leg of my documentary. Because this was in the middle of the semester, I had to secure time off from my graduate assistantship at the time so that I could make this ten-day trip to the Northeast and back.
On this trip however, I wasn’t flying blindly as I was back in June. I knew what equipment was needed, how to pack it, how long to stay in each town that I was filming in, and how to be efficient with what I shot for the film. A week-and-a-half later, with my car packed full of equipment once again, I started my journey back to Columbus, Ohio (see fig. 11).

Interviews Part II: Sarah Achor

The trek back to Columbus, Ohio was familiar this time around and the road didn’t seem as lonely or as daunting as it did in June. Whereas my first trip was filled with uncertainty and fear, this trip was filled with excitement and confidence. After two days on the road, I finally got to Columbus late in the evening. Sarah, much like Bunny and Stevie, had offered to let me stay with her and her boyfriend while I was in town to save money and I was very grateful for her generosity. Sarah lived in an old elementary school that was being renovated into lofts for artists and she highly recommended that we shoot her b-roll and interview there due to the space and beautiful natural lighting. I loaded my equipment in, talked to Sarah about our plan for the next day, and tried to get some sleep so I would be rested for the busy day we had planned.

The next morning, I set up my camera equipment in Sarah’s loft for her interview. Due to the large windows and beautiful natural light, I only had to use one small light behind her for this interview in addition to a small reflector to
bounce light onto her face. It was not only the simplest lighting setup of this film, but also the most aesthetically pleasing in my opinion (see fig. 12).

With this interview, I wanted to highlight the fact that Sarah considered herself a photographer first and a model second. This would add a nice contrast to my previous interviews, as well as having the story of a model-photographer told from the photographer side of the equation. One of the main topics that Sarah’s interview focused on was her photography work and why she only shoots on film, unlike the vast majority of photographers today that mainly shoot digital photographs. She explained to me about how shooting large and medium format film really slows down the speed of her photoshoots and makes her concentrate more on each single image instead of snapping hundreds of photos like is possible with digital photography. When the interview shifted to her work in front of the camera lens, Sarah explained to me that one of the biggest reasons that she models is to help her photographer friends create their own artistic visions with their work.

One specific topic I wanted to cover regarding Sarah’s modeling was her shoot with Jacs that I had filmed earlier in the year. Having Sarah discuss their shoot would not only give me insight into the general way she approaches her work in front of the camera lens, but it would also give me voiceover that I could use with the footage that I had shot earlier in the year of her and Jacs in the nature reserve. Because this voiceover was one of the pieces that I identified
during editing that would make the film stronger, I made sure that Sarah and I covered this topic during her interview. After we wrapped up the interview, Sarah and I got ready to shoot her b-roll.

For her b-roll, Sarah photographed Tasha, a local model, in an empty loft on the second story of her building. They focused on fashion-type portraiture, and this was the only photoshoot for the documentary where nudity wasn’t involved. Sarah had previously photographed another model in this loft, so she knew the exact time for us to work in order to have the best natural light. Sarah used a large format 4x5 camera for the majority of the shoot and the methodical process she went through to take a single photograph was incredibly interesting to watch. This was a process that I had not witnessed in person before and it made for great visuals in the film. Sarah also did double exposures of Tasha on a medium format camera, as well as some portraiture with an old Polaroid camera. One of my favorite bits of footage from the entire documentary was of Tasha lying on an old piano in the loft while Sarah showed her a Polaroid that she had just taken (see fig. 13). I could not have been happier with the b-roll of Sarah and Tasha that I shot that day and it added interesting and contrasting visuals to the film because of the lack of nudity in their shoot.

The next morning, after taking a small trip to the Columbus Camera Exchange with Sarah to purchase some expired Polaroid film for myself, Sarah took several portraits of me on her 4x5 camera. This was the only time during the
entire film that I formally stepped out from behind my camera and in front of the lens of someone else’s. While there were snapshots taken of me along the way by other models while I was behind my camera or setting up equipment, the formality and posing of these photos really gave me an idea of what it would be like to be on the side of the camera lens that these model-photographers often inhabit. With all my equipment packed, I left Columbus, Ohio and made my way towards Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I stayed overnight in Pittsburgh to make up for an extra day in my schedule between the two interviews and used that opportunity to rest and relax for a night. The next morning, rested and rejuvenated, I made my way down the Pennsylvania Turnpike towards Philadelphia for the last interview of *Duality*.

**Interviews Part II: Sara Brams-Miller**

I arrived in Philadelphia that evening and met up with Sara at her friend’s house where we would be shooting the next day. Sara introduced me to Kimber Beck, who she would be photographing for the documentary. Sara and Kimber frequently modeled together, in addition to modeling for each other. For Sara’s b-roll, she had the idea of photographing Kimber within a large group of roses that were suspended from the ceiling by fishing wire. Prior to my arriving, Sara and Kimber had already started to hang the roses from the ceiling and I was very excited about how this would look on camera for the film.
The next day, I set up my equipment at Sara’s friend’s house and we started her interview (see fig. 14). Much like in Sarah Achor’s interview several days prior, I wanted to focus on Sara’s history as a photographer in her interview. Sara has a formal education in photography and she told me about how that affects the way she approaches photoshoots with other women. She also told me about the camaraderie she feels when working with other model-photographers because of their work on both sides of the lens as well. This camaraderie and empathy between model-photographers was a topic that appeared in every single interview I recorded for this documentary and its prevalence really showed me how important that bond was to these artists.

Sara also talked about a project she had been working on at that time where she would take self-portraits in abandoned houses and structures that were very reminiscent of Francesca Woodman’s work from many decades prior. Sara also explained to me how her self-portraits were empowering and gave her the ultimate control over how her body image is portrayed in a photograph.

After the interview, Sara and Kimber put the finishing touches on the suspended roses while I got my camera gear ready to shoot their b-roll. The room that we would be filming in was a small, empty bedroom, so staying out of their way while filming would be a challenge (see fig. 15). Like with all previous photoshoots, my main objective was to be a fly on the wall and not direct the action or get in the way of what Sara and Kimber were doing. Using a mixture of
both analog and digital photography, Sara photographed Kimber for approximately an hour. Because this was the sixth time I had filmed b-roll for this documentary, I had become keenly aware of what footage would look good and what would cut well in editing. I did lots of camera movement and rack focuses to give myself a variety of footage to use in editing, and this gave the b-roll a more professional feel compared to what I had shot earlier in the year on my first trip. This was the last bit of footage I filmed for the entire documentary and I am quite happy that the visual language used in it had evolved over the course of its production.

Early the next morning, I loaded my car and started my long journey back home to Texas. After two separate trips, spending approximately twenty-five days on the road, traveling almost seven thousand miles, visiting thirteen states, and filming six interviews, the principal photography for Duality was officially over.

Postproduction: Transcription And Paper Edit

After arriving home, I approached the process of transcribing interviews and logging footage just as I did after my previous trip in June. After my previous attempt at editing, I now knew that I wanted to intercut all the interviews together so that it felt like one big flowing conversation with six different model-photographers participating in it. This was a daunting task because I had to figure
out how to organize all the relevant sound bites into separate topics that told the story that I wanted to tell. This would take a great deal of organization prior to editing the footage and I needed to figure out the best way to approach this task.

The first step was to identify the major topics that I wanted the film to cover. After much thought, I settled on the same topics that I focused my questions on during the interviews: photography, modeling, self-portraiture, their individual projects, and gender/sexuality. While there are many subtle topics that were discussed that could fit into more than one of those sections, I would need to do my best to put them in the most relevant category.

After deciding on the main topics for my film, I needed to find the parts of each person’s interview that would fit into those categories. I made a spreadsheet for each interview and noted the individual timecode of each important thing that the model-photographer said, a brief description of the information in the sound bite, and what category that it would fit into. This was a very time-consuming task, but it allowed me to figure out where all of the parts of the interviews were that I intended to use. Now that the location of the information was organized in an accessible manner, I could start working on my paper edit of the documentary.

One of the more popular ways of doing a paper edit of a documentary is to put the main topics or events that happen in the film onto individual notecards and arrange them on a corkboard or table in the order that they will be edited in
the film. This makes it much easier to shift cards around and reorder them to see how they would play out once the scenes are edited together. The problem that I ran into with *Duality* is that I had several hundred sound bites that I wanted to place together to make my paper edit. I knew that writing the timecode, a summary of the sound bite, and what category the sound bite fell into on each notecard would take a long time, so I decided to find an alternative method to do this using my computer.

I found a computer program called Scrivner that was geared towards novelists and screenwriters that allowed you to make digital notecards within the program and organize their order on a virtual corkboard on your computer screen (see fig. 16). One of the best features of this was that it allowed you to print out the notecards onto normal paper, allowing you to print a large number of notecards out without needing to write all of the information on them by hand. After making a notecard for each sound bite from my film, I organized the virtual notecards by model-photographer and printed out each person’s notecards on a different color paper, with several notecards being printed on a single page. I then cut out all the notecards by hand using the corresponding hash marks that showed their outline on the paper. Using these notecards, I started to lay out the format of my documentary.

Over the next month, I built the format of my documentary using these colored notecards. By using different colors for each model-photographer, I could
quickly see how much of one topic or section was dominated by each person. It also allowed me to easily assess whether or not I had too many sequential clips of the same model-photographer, thereby allowing me to spice up the sections by alternating viewpoints. To keep a tab on the order of hundreds of these cards, I took a photo on my phone at the end of each work session so that I had a visual record of the structure of my documentary.

During this process, I noticed that some model-photographers said the exact same things in their sound bites, but I erred on the side of caution and decided to choose which clip to use after I started editing the video. Deciding which clip to use based off a description wouldn’t be as much of an informed choice as if I looked at the actual video clips when I started editing. In that regard, I would need to refine the first cut of my film after I assembled all of these clips together.

Another issue that I had to be aware of was the b-roll and photographs that I had available to me to illustrate what the model-photographers said in their interviews. There were several great topics or stories that several of the model-photographers talked about in the documentary that I ultimately could not use because I did not have the adequate b-roll or photographs to illustrate their point. While assembling the notecards into the paper edit, I had to keep this in mind so that my film would have the necessary visuals to go along with the various interviews.
After taking several weeks to construct the structure of the documentary, I now had a final paper edit of my film. The next step would be to take this sequence of notecards and use it as a guide to assemble the video clips together into the radio edit of my movie. The process of doing a paper edit took a little over a month to do, but in retrospect, it laid the groundwork for the structure of my film and made the process of editing the film much easier. I was now ready to start cutting my film together.

Postproduction: Radio Edit

By using the information on the notecards, I was able to easily find the location of the footage for each sound bite via the unique timecode that was listed for the clip on each card. This made the process of assembling the clips into a coherent documentary much easier than if I had tried to edit it without having done the paper edit. Using Adobe’s Premiere Pro video editing software, I sat down with my notecards and started assembling my documentary together. This was a rote process because the heavy lifting of assembling the documentary had been done earlier on paper. After meticulously finding all the video clips and putting them in sequential order, I now had a fifty-minute radio edit of my film to show my filmmaking class for critique.

Because radio edits do not contain any b-roll or photographs and are comprised of only the segments of the interviews, they can be boring to an
uninitiated audience. This made me a little nervous showing such a rough version of the film to my advisor and fellow graduate students, but this step was necessary to make sure that I was on the right track. Just as an architect doesn’t erect the walls of a building before its foundation is stable, a filmmaker must first make sure that the foundation of their documentary is in good standing before worrying about additional visuals like b-roll and photographs.

My fellow graduate students and advisor gave me their honest opinions about my film and many of the problems that I saw when putting it together were echoed in their critique. Several of the segments were too long in general and others had several of the model-photographers repeating the same points over and over. I made notes of their suggestions and went back to refine my radio edit. I spent several weeks refining the cut of the film and trimmed off approximately twelve minutes of extraneous clips. I showed my advisor and fellow graduate students the thirty-seven-minute version of the documentary and the feedback was very positive. At this point I decided that I was happy with the structure of the interviews and that it was time to move on to the next step in editing, where I would place the b-roll and photographs over relevant parts of the interviews.
Postproduction: Inserting B-Roll And Photographs

Now that the radio edit of *Duality* was complete, it was time to start putting the b-roll and photographs over the interviews to make the film more visually interesting. The main purpose of putting b-roll and photographs over the interviews is that it allows the filmmaker to illustrate what the person being interviewed is talking about in an interesting manner.

While filming the b-roll for my film, I had put thought into how it would fit over certain parts of the interviews, which gave me an idea of what I needed to shoot for b-roll and what would be extraneous. This also ensured that the b-roll that I had for each model-photographer was relevant to things that they spoke about in their interviews and would be a visual illustration to show the viewer how they approached their work.

After finishing the radio edit of the film, I put the b-roll of the model-photographers over the parts of their interviews that corresponded with the footage that I had filmed of them. In several instances, I also showed the actual photographs that were taken during the photoshoots, thus showing the viewer the finished products of these artistic endeavors.

In addition to the b-roll of the model-photographers working, I also used a large number of their photographs throughout the rest of the film. The photographs not only gave the viewers examples of the type of work that these
model-photographers produce, but they also helped to illustrate specific points being made during the interviews. While many of the photographs used in the documentary were ones that I had personally taken of these model-photographers throughout the years, the vast majority of them were supplied by either the model-photographers themselves or by other photographers. This not only gave me a large variety of photographs to use, but it also allowed me to show the photography and self-portraiture that the model-photographers created themselves.

At this time, I also put in a brief narration into the beginning of the film to introduce the concept of the documentary, as well as the model-photographers that I interviewed. I was very adamant about not putting my voice in any other part of the film because I wanted the model-photographers to have their own voice in how their thoughts were expressed. Interrupting the interviews with occasional narration was not only unnecessary for this film, but would also detract from the conversational aspect of the documentary that I wanted to maintain.

Postproduction: Rough Cut And Final Critiques

After spending approximately a month-and-a-half putting the b-roll and photographs into the film, I now had a rough cut that was ready for one last round of critiques by fellow graduate students. Because it was summer and classes
were not in session, I had to figure out another way to show my film to my colleagues for critique. I uploaded the rough cut of my film onto a password-protected page online and sent the link and password to my fellow graduate students. After receiving positive critique on the minor changes made in the film from the radio edit, as well as the inclusion of b-roll and photographs into the film, I decided to not do any further editing to the film beyond cleaning up the sound and putting in the credits.

Postproduction: Sweetening The Audio And Compiling Credits

I spent the next month cleaning up the audio in the film and normalizing the sound levels from each interview so that there wouldn’t be discernable volume jumps between each clip. These volume jumps would have distracted the viewer from what was being said as it cut between the various interviews. The cuts between each clip had to be seamless as well, so I used tiny crossfades between virtually every cut in the film to ensure that the audio flowed smoothly throughout its entirety. Occasionally, I had to use small bits of ambient sound to patch up holes in the transitions between one clip and the next. Ambient sound, also known as room tone, is usually recorded after an interview in each physical location that you film in. Each room has its own unique sound to it and this allows you to patch up audio with the natural sound of each location. After cleaning up the audio, I also added music to the beginning and end of the documentary.
After finishing the audio, I compiled the credits for the film. I included the names of everyone who appeared on camera, as well as all the photographers who contributed photographs to the documentary. I also made sure to list everyone’s portfolio information so that viewers would be able to pursue their work online after watching the film if they so desired. Because so many photographs by various artists were used during the film, I wanted to make sure the viewer knew which artist took each photograph. To do this, I showed small thumbnails of each photo used and sorted them by the name of the artist that took them. None of these artists were required to let me use their photographs in my film, so I wanted to make sure that their work was adequately cited and recognized in this manner.

While I was finishing the credit sequence, I handed the raw footage that made up the film to Justin Herring, a former graduate student, for color correction. I didn’t want my film to have a stylized look to it, so Justin and I collaborated on making small adjustments to the contrast and tones of the image that maintained the overall look of the original footage. My goal with the film was to represent this story in the most objective way possible and I didn’t want the overall imagery to take the viewer out of that reality by being too stylized or oversaturated. After receiving the corrected footage back from Justin, I placed it in the timeline and exported the project. After almost a year-and-a-half since I hit the record button on my camera for the first time, Duality was now finished.
Premiere Of *Duality*

On Saturday, November 12, 2016, I premiered *Duality* at the Cole Art Center in Nacogdoches, Texas. About sixty people showed up to watch it and the audience was comprised of friends, family, fellow filmmakers, faculty, and even some complete strangers. It’s a harrowing experience to sit back while an audience watches your film for the first time because of the uncertainty of how they will react to it. Even though the film might make perfect sense to you as the filmmaker, there’s a chance that the audience won’t see things in the same way or your message might not resonate with them as much as you had hoped. Thankfully, the audience responded well to my film and I got some great feedback from them as they left the gallery. It is hard to describe the sense of accomplishment I felt after premiering my film, but it made the countless days and nights that I spent working on it completely worth it.

On the same day that I premiered the film, I also put it up online on DualitytheDoc.com for the public to watch for free. I immediately sent the link to everyone that was associated with the film so that they would be able to see the finished product. I was very pleased that many of the model-photographers involved in the film had positive things to say about the finished documentary. While I intended for this film to educate the public about the work that these model-photographers are doing, I also felt a great obligation and reverence to
those who appeared in the documentary and I wanted to represent them accurately and tell their story in the most objective manner possible. Hearing their praise let me know that I accomplished that goal.

Final Thoughts And What Is Next

Making *Duality* was, without a doubt, one of the most difficult tasks that I’ve ever attempted. I cannot put into words how proud I am of the final product and the sense of accomplishment that I feel for completing this film, but just because I’m proud of this documentary doesn’t mean that I wouldn’t change several things about it. In retrospect, I would have gotten a wider breadth of b-roll to make the film more visually appealing. While around the model-photographers, I had to be careful to respect their privacy, as we were filming in or around their homes. That, coupled with how I worked by myself and how I only had a short amount of time with each person, made it incredibly difficult to get very creative with the footage that I shot for the film. I also think that focusing on fewer model-photographers while spending more time with each of them could have made the film more interesting. That way, topics could have been delved into a little deeper and the whole process wouldn’t have seemed so rushed. This would have required a larger time commitment from the model-photographers and that would have ultimately made it more difficult to find ones who would commit to being a part of the film. Most importantly, I should have tried to interview model-
photographers of different ethnicities and body types so that *Duality* was a more accurate reflection of both the artistic nude modeling community and of society as a whole. This is ultimately my biggest regret about my film.

My initial vision for *Duality* shifted during the process of filming and editing as well. As filmmakers, we tend to have a grandiose and unrealistic vision in our heads when we imagine how we want our films to look. Even in the more controlled world of narrative filmmaking, where you have time to light and rehearse each scene, the initial vision of your film ultimately changes as time and production goes on. This is even more prevalent in documentary filmmaking where we have little or no control over where we will shoot at and our subjects are ordinary people and not trained actors. Adapting this vision in the face of problems that arise teaches documentary filmmakers to think on our feet and to come up with interesting and creative solutions to the problems that we face while making our films. By facing these problems and limitations, I learned how to adapt to changes that will inevitably arise on other professional documentary shoots. Despite the difficulties I faced during all aspects of making *Duality*, from the initial idea until the premiere of the documentary, I can say without a shadow of a doubt that this was an enriching and enjoyable experience that helped me to grow immensely as an independent filmmaker and has given me the knowledge, experience, and confidence to tackle whatever project comes next.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Figure 4. Jacs Fishburne, Interview
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Figure 10. Stevie Macaroni, B-roll
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Figure 12. Sarah Achor, Interview
Figure 13. Sarah Achor and Tasha, B-roll

Figure 14. Sara Brams-Miller, Interview
Figure 15. Sara Brams-Miller and Kimber Beck, B-roll

Figure 16. Scrivner Interface
VITA

James McMahen received his Associate of Applied Science degree in Process Operating Technology from Lamar Institute of Technology in 2005. In 2012, he graduated from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas with a Bachelor of Science in Communications with a concentration in Film Studies.

Due to a desire to pursue teaching, James started graduate school at Stephen F. Austin State University in August of 2012 and began working toward his Master of Fine Arts in filmmaking.

In addition to Duality, James has worked on two other feature films while at Stephen F. Austin State University.

Permanent Address:  8031 Chimney Rock Ct

              Port Arthur, TX 77642

MLA Format

This thesis was typed by James McMahen