



Thesis Outline

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Thy Nguyen

Lens-Based Media

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2019 - 2021

I. INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 PREVIOUS WORKS

A. Desert's photo series and photobook - WHAT, HOW, WHY

Link to project: <https://www.thytrang.com/963327201704>

The Desert photo-series and Desert photo book depicting the body of my grandmother; from abstract angles - opening up perspectives that are beyond traditional nudes. Embracing the marks of time, the photo-series invites viewers on an excursion through a desert of surfaces and textures of the human skin through the design of a peephole photobook.

- A close reading of 'reflected reflexivity: Agnes Varda's Aging Female Body' (1) - analysing her filmic practices (her use of cameras, frames mirrors, and her own body).

B. From Home To Home - WHAT, HOW, WHY

This film was shot in the pandemic outbreak in Europe. At that time, Vietnam - my home-country also locked down the borders as well as restricted all flights, attempted to prevent mass contamination. All of a sudden, I was stuck in a state of limbo. Although I have been living away from home since the early adult years, it had never crossed my mind that one day coming home would be nearly impossible. Wanting to go back to Vietnam, I decided to travel as far away as I could, to feel "closer" to home. This film was made to capture my journey of looking for my own self and reaching serenity of mind.

Shooting in a vertical ratio, the film took inspiration from the phone's screen. Through which I daily communicate with my family and the world. It's an irony that through the mobile device screen we connect, but at the same time, disconnected.

Link: <https://vimeo.com/454031230>

Password: fromhometohome

HD, 12 mins

Experimental, sound, colour

1.2 TAKEAWAYS

- I have come to realise that writing helps me to reflect and to envision: by describing my work, reporting step-by-step in the making process as well as all reasonings behind each of my decisions, I was able to develop the artistic vocabulary needed to talk about my creative methodology and cinematic language. Moreover, writing enables me to contextualise my work, thinking about how it will contribute to a larger discourse (e.g. the process of ageing in female nude photography, homesickness in the time of pandemic in previous two projects)
- The discussion of my reflections on the two projects - the themes I have been exploring, its similarities, my methodology, and how I wish it to develop, helps me in the ideation and execution of this year's project which is a feature-length documentary film.

2. THESIS STATEMENT

My thesis documents and reflects upon the life story of my grandmother through the lens of I. By documenting the life of my grandmother and mother, I will reveal the development of my cinematic language in this docufiction, drawing on the theme of home, exile, the female body, intergenerational feminism and legacies of colonialism.

2.1 THE STORY

The return of an absent granddaughter (me) to the city where I was born, fearing my grandmother not recognising me anymore due to her memory loss, and her weakening health is the trigger for my family rapprochement. It is a story of myself as a daughter/granddaughter reuniting with my mother and my mother's mother, and the conversations between us. I want to explore how the memory loss of my grandmother impacts on her and everyone else. It is an intimate family portrait of intergenerational feminism.

The mother of my mother was born in 1932, in Vietnam. She has lived through the First Indochina War, as well as the Vietnam-American War. In 1975, when all wars officially ended, she was 43. My mother saw the Vietnam Liberation day at 12. Growing up, she was amongst the ones who had to work hard to rebuild the country after 30-years of wars and disputes. Then, I was born as the first generation of Vietnamese to be born in peacetime. The year I was born, the internet was born in Vietnam, too.

The three generations of women in my family represent the history of Vietnam in 100 years. And of course, there are gaps that cannot be filled between us.

2.2 WHY THIS STORY

I believe making this film would allow me to explore topics that I hold dearly and intimately to myself: home, exile, the female body, intergenerational feminism.

To study about family history would also help me move forward. It wasn't always easy being a granddaughter of a grandmother and mother who has to face unjust and stigmas throughout their life. I was a rebel, now as I grow into a woman of my own, I would like to reconcile, with the woman in my family, and with our pasts.

2.3 SET OF QUESTIONS

- Who my grandma really is? I have my own version of who my grandma is, but that is one dimensional, I don't know who she is before I was born. Therefore, how can I portrait my grandma through a multidimensional, most accurate way?
- What kind of society did she live in? Her life during the Vietnam War? What kind of standards are considered as 'traditional Vietnamese women'? What social class does my grandma family belong to?
- How can I and my family deal with loss (passing away process of their loved one)? How does my grandma deal with her lost memory? How is memory so permeable, unreliable and personal? Memory is complicated because, in a family, everyone is "committed" to their own version of the truth, including myself.

II. BODY

Part 1. THE PAST LIFE OF MY GRANDMA - HER LIFE DURING THE VIETNAM WAR

- My grandma's version of her early life
- My mom's version of my grandma's early life
- My grandad version of who my grandma is
- My version of who my grandma is

=> **Exploring different perspectives, conflicts between versions.**

- Vietnamese women during Wartime - Vietnamese women's museum (national archives)
- colonialism
- My grandma's life during the War - Going through family archives
- Conversation with other family members (My grandma has 15 siblings).

Part 2. CASE STUDY OF MY FILM - CREATIVE STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN MAKING THIS FILM

A. FORMING THE SCRIPT

- My memoirs - How I remember my grandma
- Memory conflicts as her memory fade
- My diary, observation of the last days of my grandma's life.
- Deciding which conversations/details will be included in the film
- My close readings of theoretical related topics - Works which deal with the difficult family relationship (A younger person dealing with an older family member), works which deal with ageing, works which deal with loss memories (Alzheimer):
 - _ I remain in Darkness by Annie Ernaux
 - _ My Mother Laughs by Chantal Akerman
- Deciding which visual (footage) used for the narrative

B. FILMING METHODOLOGY

- Slow cinema:
 - The employment of (often extremely) long takes, de-centred and understated modes of storytelling, and a pronounced emphasis on quietude and every day' (2008).
 - Living Daily, Working Slowly: Pedro Costa's In Vanda's Room
- Writing film script (turning my diary, memoir into a shooting script)
- My journey of forming cinematic storytelling, I will discuss the following topics in order to rationale my practice:

Frame (composition)

- Directing the eye
- Imbalance frame

Space

Time

- Time alteration within a scene
- Flashback and continual interweaving of different time periods throughout a movie.

Editing

- The storytelling potential of editing. Discussion of Vsevolod Pudovkin 5 editing techniques
- Scene transitions

Sound

- Dialogue
- Voiceover
- Sound Effects

Camera motion

Lighting

- Rembrandt lighting

Colour

and so on.

C. CLOSE READING OF WORKS/FILMS RELATED TO MY FILM

- Vitalina Varela (2019) by Pedro Costa - a docufiction film, using non-professional actors to portrait their real-life story. Vitalina Varela is rooted in concrete reality while building an intensified world that feels closer to dream than to the everyday
- Stories We Tell (2012) by Sarah Pollen
- 'Brussels, 2016' (2017) by Sera-Jin Chang
- Home (2019) by Leticia Simoes
- No Home Movie (2015) by Chantal Akerman

III. CONCLUSION

Reading list, references to use both in the research and in the making stages of the work (these are subject to change).

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