Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Evan Amaral   March 27, 2021

Curating the Future: Programming a Virtual Film Series in the COVID-19 Era

by

Evan Amaral

Dr. Matthew H. Bernstein
Adviser

Department of Film and Media

Dr. Matthew H. Bernstein

Adviser

Dr. Anna Grimshaw

Committee Member

Dr. Nathan Lee

Committee Member

2021

Curating the Future: Programming a Virtual Film Series in the COVID-19 Era

By

Evan Amaral

Dr. Matthew H. Bernstein

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Film and Media

2021

Abstract

Curating the Future: Programming a Virtual Film Series in the COVID-19 Era
By Evan Amaral

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, film exhibition has been in a difficult
position: how do exhibitors, curators/programmers, and organizers foster the sense of community
found in a physical theater, but now in an online space? This points towards broader questions of
access, since audiences from outside of festivals' locales can now take part in them, but also to
questions of community in cinephilic spaces, which have historically been exclusionary in
attitude towards non-cinephiles. Research has shown that the anxieties facing cinephiles in such
a fraught time, one in which cinema's future is determined by adopting new technologies, have
plagued film culture since the dawn of cinema. However, due to the very recent nature of the
pandemic's disruption, few accounts of the shift to online programming exist. In this paper, I
describe and analyze my experiences programming and organizing a six-screening, virtual film
series through the Emory Cinematheque: New Cinematic Directions. This analysis pulls form
prior research, personal interviews conducted with other programmers from around the United
States, and the experience of the film series itself. Like it has in previous film-historical crises,
opening up the conversation to cinephiles and non-cinephiles alike, along with embracing new
spaces and technologies, created a feeling of camaraderie and community that I, and many others
I spoke to, did not previously find in cinephilic spaces and/or established film-cultural
institutions. Much of this had to do with eliminating as many hierarchies inherent in the space as
possible, and my experiences have pointed to these practices being ones that can address film
culture's problems of access and community moving into the future.

Curating the Future: Programming a Virtual Film Series in the COVID-19 Era

By

Evan Amaral

Dr. Matthew H. Bernstein

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Film and Media

2021

Acknowledgements

Thank you, first and foremost, to the Department of Film and Media for supporting my programming work for the past three years, including New Cinematic Directions, the series this thesis has been written about. These thanks extend to our benefactors from Friends of Film, as well as our amazing administrative team that made everything possible: Gary Fessenden, Mo Downs, and Clare Sterling. Thank you to Rizky Etika and Emma Yarborough from Arts at Emory for their help in promoting my programming, as well.

Thank you to the numerous Emory faculty who took up my invitations and were generous enough to share their thoughts with us at New Cinematic Directions' six Zoom conversations: Dr. Michele Schreiber, Dr. James Steffen, Dr. Nathan Lee, Dr. Anna Grimshaw, Dr. Ana Catarina Teixeira, Dr. Subha Xavier, Dr. Dianna M. Stewart, Prof. Jason Francisco, Dr. Meina Yates-Richard, and Dr. Justin Hoseby. Thank you, as well, to Prof. DeHanza Rogers for her support with our virtual logistics.

Thank you to my three wonderful committee members for all of your mentorship and support throughout this process. To Dr. Matthew H. Bernstein, thank you for providing me with all of the knowledge and access necessary to thrive as a programmer at Emory, as well as your confidence in me as a second-semester freshman who was angry enough about not being able to see Lucrecia Martel's *Zama* in a movie theater to pitch you a screening series. To Dr. Anna Grimshaw, thank you for being my guiding light these past three years at Emory, and for truly making me the thinker I am today with all of your warmth, openness, and generosity as a mentor. To Dr. Nathan Lee, thank you for being here for me over the past year, sharing your knowledge of our practice, and for engaging me in countless critical conversations about my programming.

Thank you to Dr. Tanine Allison, for your support all these years, and for being such an exceptional and kind Honors Coordinator during these difficult times. And thank you to my massively talented cohort — Alice, Alyson, Caitlin, Julien, Liz, and Sarah — without the conversations we've had, this thesis wouldn't be what it is today.

Thank you to my friends Adesola, Boris, Carlos, James, Lisandra, Marilyn, McKay, Minnie, Nate, Phoebe, and Rachel, for sharing in the joys of cinema with me in our quarantined cinema club this past year. Without all of you, I wouldn't have the faith in film I still hold onto dearly.

Thank you to Annouchka de Andrade, for sharing the life and work of your mother, the legendary Sarah Maldoror, with us. Getting to organize her celebration with you has been the honor of my short programming career, and the work of this series is dedicated to her.

And, most of all, thank you to my incredible, once-in-a-lifetime partner Margaret Greene. Without your fearless, unwavering love and support, none of this would have been a reality, and

I'll be spending the rest of my days with you thanking you for that. This page simply doesn't have enough room.

Table of Contents

"To Serge Daney, looking back, cinephilia seemed a 'sickness,' a malady which became a duty, almost a religious duty, a form of clandestine self-immolation in the darkness, a voluntary exclusion from social life. At the same time, a sickness that brought moments of immense pleasure, moments which, much later, you recognized had changed your life. I see it differently, not as a sickness, but as the symptom of a desire to remain within the child's view of the world, always outside, always fascinated by a mysterious parental drama, always seeking to master one's anxiety by compulsive repetition. Much more than just another leisure activity."

- Peter Wollen, ***An Alphabet of Cinema***

"And what if that were hell, insomnia, this desert of the poet.

This pain of living, this dying of not dying

The anguish of darkness, this passion for death and light

Like phalena moths at night on the hurricane lamps in the horrible

  rot of the virgin forests."

- Léopold Sédar Senghor, ***Midnight Elegy***

"If there's love, things must work out."

- Vitalina Varela, ***Vitalina Varela***

Chapter I. Searching for New Directions

I.   Introducing New Cinematic Directions

I programmed my first series with the Emory Cinematheque, Not Coming to a Theater

Near You, in Spring of 2019. The series emerged as my response to what I saw as a colossal gap

in the Atlanta film scene's theatrical offerings: largely experimental and art cinema from

filmmakers and parts of the world underrepresented by major distributors. These were the films I

wanted to see, and my provincial naïvete assumed that moving to the big city would open up that

world of possibility. The first edition was a success, bringing acclaimed filmmakers Ben Russell

and RaMell Ross to campus. The second edition, scheduled to take place in March of 2020 and

include in-person talks with filmmakers Jodie Mack and Khalik Allah, had to be cancelled at the

last minute due to an unforeseen complication: the explosion of the global COVID-19 pandemic,

and the shuttering of university campuses as a result. Packing my things after Spring Break of

2020, little did I know that I would never return to campus during the duration of my senior year

— but that my programming work would see some kind of redemption, as well.

The cancellation of Not Coming to a Theater Near You, after a year of hard work

organizing it, hit me like a shockwave. After two years of working with the Emory

Cinematheque, beginning with my successful first edition of Not Coming to a Theater Near You

in March of 2019, I had finally found a place in the world of film culture that felt like what I'd

been looking for: that of the programmer. Growing up in rural South Georgia, and finding my

only solace in online cinephilic communities for much of my adolescence, I craved a physical

film community that was engaged in thoughtful and considerate conversation. Programming

gave me a space to create that for myself, and for others. And now… it all felt lost.

After a turbulent summer of following the film industry's pandemic related travails, a sense of doom permeated the entire world of film culture. Most everything felt lost. It became immediately clear, to those it hadn't already, that the illusion of "access" undergirding the streaming turn was merely a smokescreen for perpetuating the barriers to access enforced by increasingly cannibalistic and despotic media entities. Years of built-up anxieties about cinema's future, along with the hammer-lock of monopolistic control from streaming and telecom giants forced by the pandemic, made almost everyone I spoke to feel completely hopeless. Like it, truly, was all just "content" now. And that extended to me. I even did something I once told myself I would never stoop to: taking the LSAT. I was in a mad scramble to make my immediate future "work," so to speak. In the process, I lost sight of what cinema and community meant to me, and much desire at all to do anything about preserving it.

Writing this reflection in March of 2021, all of this has changed for me. When the Fall semester of my senior year rolled around, it became time to start brainstorming how I would make a pandemic-safe version of my series work as my honors thesis project. Thus, New Cinematic Directions was born, a completely virtual series of six screenings and accompanying conversations. This series was an attempt to continue addressing the gaps I saw in Atlanta's programming (even still in virtual cinemas), while also addressing the ongoing crisis in film culture at large, as well as my own personal disappointment over the cancellation of 2020's series. On those fronts, especially the last, it was a success. Even the immediate community of repeat attendees that sprung up around New Cinematic Directions made me feel so much hope for the future of film and film culture, as racked with crises they both remain. There were still people, young and old, cinephiles or not, who craved a space to have honest, kind, and

thoughtful conversations about where cinema is, how it got there, and how we can build

something better and more inclusive for the generations of filmmakers and film lovers to come.

This reflection paper will discuss, in three chapters, the process of how New Cinematic

Directions came to be. This first chapter will function as more of a literature review, working

through the research I conducted from May through December of 2020. This included selected

readings and interviews with a wide range of film programmers, curators, and festival organizers.

The next two sections will outline my readings in two categories, "Models for Film Curation"

and "Film Culture in Crisis." The following two sections will summarize the interviews I

conducted. Five of those interviews all discuss "Exhibition in the COVID-19 Era," while the

remaining three concern alternative models for "Ways Forward" for film programming, all of

which existed years before the pandemic and continue to adapt to changing circumstances.

Chapter II describes, in detail, the process of organizing New Cinematic Directions,

taking place from September 2020 to February 2021. The first two sections will discuss the final

film selection, as well as the process of organizing our "Four Films by Sarah Maldoror"

program. The following three will discuss "Virtual Logistics," "Structuring the Series," and

"Scheduling and Promotion," respectively. These sections will outline a number of steps along

the way to the series' official run, including figuring out our streaming platform, negotiating with

distributors, planning talks and inviting participants, figuring out the order and dates of the

screenings, and, finally, promoting the series and communicating its format to our audience.

Chapter III reflects on the event of New Cinematic Directions, itself, which ran from

March 1st through March 19th of 2021. The first three sections will follow the events of the

series, one week (and two screenings) at a time, in chronological order. The fourth section, "New

Cinematic Directions: A Postmortem" will serve as a space for personal reflection, looking back

on what I felt failed and succeeded over the course of the series' run — especially in regards to

my evolving intentions for the project, as well as the inspirations I found in my research and

interviews. Lastly, the fifth section will conclude this paper with some potential "new directions"

that I see as possibilities for film culture in the immediate future, based on my experiences.

      All in all, this paper will serve as a document of my creative and research process as a

student programmer from 2020-2021, as well as reflection of where the many wonderful and

dedicated programmers, curators, and organizers I spoke to were at during this difficult time in

film history — and in human history, as well. I can only hope that, if this paper is read by

budding programmers of the future, curious about how to build communities of their own, that

they may find inspiration in its observations, reflections, and, ultimately, its willful optimism.

II.   Research, Part I: Models for Film Curation

      This section of Chapter I will serve as a literature review of two sources from my

research that have remained influential scholarship on Models for Film Curation: *Curation and*

Cinema by Andy Ditzler, and "Curating an African Film Festival in Scotland: The Recognition

of Difference" by Justine Atkinson. Important to note is that Atkinson's article has to do

specifically with screening African films, which I chose to research given my program's

concerted efforts to screen and contextualize the works of three boundary-pushing filmmakers

from the African Diaspora. Ditzler's dissertation is more of an overview of the history and (his)

practice of screening alternative cinemas in alternative spaces: something close to my own heart

as a programmer.

A. Andy Ditzler: *Curation and Cinema*

      Ditzler is one of the few mainstays of the Atlanta film programming scene: his ongoing

series Film Love has taken place for over a decade now with Ditzler organizing screenings of

avant-garde works at venues around the city. There is no schedule for this series beyond what Ditzler can pull off at a given time, since it is a one-man operation. He has been an invaluable mentor to me in terms of the practical skills needed to work as a film programmer, as well as its more conceptual questions, but his doctoral thesis *Curation and Cinema* is a thorough history and analysis of his practice.

In his introduction, Ditzler outlines the structure of his writing, which has been a major influence in how I plan my own: "This dissertation follows the earlier trajectory of curatorial studies — it is at times a first-person account of curating, on the way to discovering the meaning of the public activity of creating cultural experience. This give-and-take between the personal and the public merges with that between theory and practice. That is, in this dissertation I both practice curation and study that practice" (16). The major concept of his analysis is "minor history," which he asserts film programming can embody as a practice: ""minor history" is a mode of working that "must resort to certain familiar models of culture and history, in order to both critique and move outside these models"" (57). In this sense, programming must work within the confines of the industry it relies upon, but by highlighting alternative practices and spaces, it can challenge those confines as well.

Much of the dissertation is spent working through and analyzing a number of Film Love programs that sought to recreate the spaces and experiences of historical avant-garde film screenings. A bulk of his focus is on Amos Vogel's legendary Cinema 16, from which he recreated an entire program. Two major points arise from Ditzler's engagement with this program, specifically: the first being the importance of juxtaposing films within a program in Vogel's programming strategy, which was often intended (as was Ditzler's) to confront his audience with challenging films, using juxtaposition as a means to make audiences consider *why*

exactly the films are so challenging (75). Secondly, he discusses how Cinema 16 became a community space: "Vogel so explicitly saw his function as social. In fact, Cinema 16 was not only a film series; it was itself a kind of cinema that brought about a community of people" (81). The necessity of this discursive relationship between programmers and audiences that challenge each other is visible across all of the other case studies discussed in this section.

In the conclusion of his dissertation, Ditzler is able to condense these and the many other strands of theoretical, historical, and personal analysis into his concept of minor history. "Curation, then, does not make whole what was fragmented, or restore something missing; rather, it preserves a process by which things (objects, events, occurrences) are continually lost and regained, in new forms" (283). In this sense, he is very much in tune with the ways programming functions as a way to mix-and-match both viewing and production contexts, allowing programmers and audiences to infinitely contextualize and recontextualize films through new (and hyper-local) lenses.

B. **Justine Atkinson, "Curating an African Film Festival in Scotland: The Recognition of Difference"**

Atkinson's piece focuses on her experiences working on the programming team of the Africa in Motion (AiM) Film Festival in Scotland. Writing from a personal perspective, she discusses the programming team's process of democratizing the audience and organization of the festival. As Atkinson is keen to point out from the beginning, AiM has been primarily intended for its local, overwhelmingly white audience, but the new tactics it has employed attempt to bring BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic) communities, audiences, and programmers into the conversation from the outset (683).

Atkinson criticizes the efforts on part of the British government to "democratize culture" by bringing BAME audiences into existing high class, high art spaces, which she argues, as a practice, continues to alienate and exclude the audiences it wants to bring in (683-4). Instead, she and her programming team adopted an oppositional strategy, which she defines as "cultural democracy": "cultural democracy is defined as a bottom-up or grassroots approach to film programming, ensuring the inclusion of BAME groups, social classes, and other excluded groups within the decision-making process, providing access to, and a stake in, cultural production" (684). The festival's approach to this is through what Atkinson calls "participatory programming," in which the festival's team reaches out to and collaborates with local BAME communities as a major part of their programming process (684).

Atkinson partially attributes the success of this strategy to public funds made available by the Scottish government to more small, minority and community-based arts organizations, rather than the usual "high art" spaces — this funding made AiM possible in the first place (688). For the first six editions of the festival, though, she points out how the audience grew, but did not grow *demographically* due to its booking within art house cinemas: so the first step was to "take a people-centered, place-based approach within its programming" (689). They moved festival screenings into spaces such as "community centres, bars, church halls, universities, libraries, art schools, and restaurants" (689), which dramatically expanded the demographics of the festival audience.

The second major step in their strategy was to move away from the traditional festival organization, led by an Artistic Director, to a festival "co-ordinated by a team of Festival Producers who have knowledge and expertise in the curation of African film, but work to programme and execute the festival alongside identified individuals, communities, and partner

organizations" (691). This has allowed their programming to become just as flexible and community-centered as their choice of screenings spaces. The festival also worked with BAME communities across Scotland (and year-round) to program special screenings of their own, so that individuals or local groups could communicate with the festival leadership about what they wanted to see and develop curatorial skills of their own (694). By doing all of this, the programming team has been able to "ensure that each film is placed within an audience that appreciates the story, that is most challenged by the film, and that most wants to watch the film" (696). At the end of the day, all of these developments have allowed AiM to take successful steps toward building a broader, more engaged audience and increasing the equity of its programming, simply by addressing its all-white leadership, diversifying its ranks accordingly, and reaching out to marginalized audiences that have not been included in the process before.

III.   Research, Part II: Film Culture in Crisis

This section of Chapter I will serve as a literature review of two sources from my research that have remained influential scholarship on a "Film Culture in Crisis": *Anxious Cinephilia* by Sarah Keller and *In Broad Daylight* by Gabriele Pedullá. Both of these books speak to the general sense of anxiety that has been endemic to cinephilia throughout its existence, an anxiety that tends to spike when the future of cinema feels to be at stake. They point to some kind of diagnosis for how these anxieties imperil the future of cinema even more, in how they inevitably constrict definitions of cinema out of nostalgic self-preservation, thus closing the door for a newer cinephilia that may be able to respond to a rapidly-changing media and cultural landscape — and for new, adventurous kinds of cinema to possibly emerge.

A. Sarah Keller: *Anxious Cinephilia: Pleasure and Peril at the Movies*

Out of all of the books I read for this thesis over the summer, this was the one that resonated the most. Keller's book argues that anxiety and uncertainty — around technology, around discourses, around community — have been the building blocks of cinephilia since its infancy. To her, cinephilia is "an affectively driven response to the cinema — itself a fleeting, ever-changing phenomenon based on movement — cinephilia is categorized, like love, by an attitude of volatility" (1). And cinema, by nature, is "predicated on constant change in its ontological bases, its technological realities, and its position as part of cultural, historical, theoretical, aesthetic, economic, and social networks, cinema is nought if not on the move… the volatile nature of cinema leads naturally to volatile *relationships* with cinema" (1). This logic extends into the "new cinephilia" pretty clearly, as it consciously "rings more utopian," but still "tends to be anxious" (Keller, 13), and as it interrogates the "old cinephilia" because of "the imminent feeling of its demise" (14).

Keller spends her first chapters working through the histories of cinephilia and spectator identification. She is keen to point out that, historically, there have always been more forms of cinephilia than are necessarily visible (37). She holds a similarly democratic view of spectator identification theories, pointing out how no one is totalizing since "not only do people love cinema differently, but they also watch it differently" (89). Next, she points to technological change as a source of cinephilic anxiety: "technology is an uneasy fulcrum balancing hope and fear for the nature of cinema as one has come to know it and as it has not yet fully revealed itself for the future" (136). Especially considering our moment, in which a plurality of media is changing at a more rapid pace than ever, she reminds us that "technologies do not develop in a smooth line but rather take root unevenly across related media and forms of expression such that

some film audiences feel that the whole vast media landscape beneath their feet is trembling or that everything is moving too quickly" (139).

After a discussion, in the final chapter, of how fears of cinema's demise are reflected in the digital spectacles of apocalyptic blockbusters, Keller ends the book on a pragmatic and hopeful note. One passage from her conclusion spoke to me the most, and summed up her points the most succinctly, so I will quote it in full here:

> Recognizing how much an anxious cinephilia has shaped every moment of cinema's history, pushing and pulling it in various directions and indelibly shaping the way people have come to understand cinema and to talk about it, forms an important touchstone for that media past and future. It suggests the necessity of taking into account diverse spectators' investments in moving images as a way of thinking through the nature of those images, the freighted relationships they compel, and the way multiple interests slow or speed their constant transformations. A relationship between desire and wariness, anxious cinephilia fuels cinema experiences and undergirds cinema's fluidity and multiplicity (227).

B. Gabriele Pedullá: In Broad Daylight: Movies and Spectators After the Cinema

Pedullá's book is a work of contemporary film theory in which he works through our relationship to moving images as an audience in the digital era. Pedullá makes his central assertion clear from the get-go: "when we stop going to the movies — or go feeling as if we are doing something exceptional, as when we get decked out for the opera — films will no longer be the same" (6). Once again, the scholarship confronts us with the reality that our spectatorial relationship to movies — as well as how we engage with and perceive them — is going to be vastly different depending on the context we see them in. Like Keller's assertion that audiences

identify with films in their own ways, Pedullá writes that "not every viewing experience is the same viewing experience, just as not every deception is the same deception — especially if we participate knowingly and willingly" (12). Pedullá also discusses the true function of the theater, here, as the enforcement of a specific context and spectatorial relationship: "from now on the auditorium will have to be studied first and foremost as an *aesthetic technology* designed to encourage the spectator's concentration" (16).

This is reflected in the way Pedullá describes the aura of a movie theater: "suddenly, going to the movies was like going to church: you sat composed, silent, immobile, completely committed to what happened onscreen" (38). Here we see the scholarship pointing to something really interesting: conceiving of the movie theater as both an artistic and disciplinary device, but one which dominant film producers imbued with its sanctimonious nature through the nostalgic qualities of cinephilia — and, naturally, this has come crashing down with the advent of digital viewing. Later on in the book, Pedullá points to how spectators now even have more control over the films they watch than ever, being able to fast forward, rewind, pause, or just change the movie or channel entirely (72-77).

Pedullá makes a concerted effort to try to dispel the existential anxiety described by Keller towards the end of the book. He's keen to point out that "viewing styles are never overcome, but live alongside one another, and at most lose the supremacy they enjoyed in a particular historical moment" (80). One of his strongest observations follows: "it is in fact likely that a considerable part of contemporary cinema's uncertainty is due to this need to compromise with the individual media's viewing style without completely betraying its own history" (84). This expands the question of movie theaters to a broader scope: how do we reconcile the collapsing of the individual and community presented by digital film culture? Perhaps his most

sober point comes at the end of the book, where he points out that these shifts in film culture that have caused so much paranoia and strife — the crumbling of institutions, the loss of tangible community — are, at their core, merely reflective of broader developments and anxieties in the contemporary Western world as a whole (126).

IV.   Interviews, Part I: Exhibition in the COVID-19 Era

The five interviews summarized here were conducted with film programmers, curators, and organizers that work at or for major festivals and exhibition outlets, which include Turner Classic Movies, the Atlanta Film Festival, and The New York Film Festival. The one exception is Abby Sun, curator of the online microcinema The DocYard, and my interview with her is discussed here due to its relevance to industry logistics for virtual screenings, cinemas, and festivals. This section will outline, in particular, the challenges faced by exhibitors <u>with substantial institutional and/or industry backing</u> during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A. Genevieve McGillicuddy, Turner Classic Movies

I interviewed Genevieve McGillicuddy, Vice President of Brand Management at Turner Classic Movies, on October 30th, 2020. Generally, we spoke about the challenges facing TCM as it adjusted its annual festival, The TCM Classic Film Festival, to the virtual sphere in 2020. McGillicuddy explained to me that what made them unique among festivals was their existing national platform: the TCM channel itself. "So right out of the gate, we were one of the first virtual film festivals this year. "We called it a "Special Home Edition" and we did a lot of social media, livetweets, and other interactive things based around our past programs and film screenings that paired with them. We got an amazing response from fans when we did that during the original dates planned for April," she told me, and elaborated that they would be creating new programming and materials for their planned 2021 virtual festival. She also pointed to the

convenience of having the national network as a platform to actually screen the films on, but pointed to how their goal was still to create "virtual events where people would interact with them in the ways you see them interacting with other virtual festivals right now, and that will be off of the channel." Here, she pointed to social media as an important avenue for connecting their virtual audience in a single space, as close to the festival "experience" as possible.

McGillicuddy, like many of the interviewees discussed in this section, spoke to the expanded audience she witnessed a virtual platform cater to: "Like many festivals right now we're seeing an amazing opportunity to bring in people who, otherwise, would not have been able to attend the physical events… So we're looking into tapping into the classic movie fan who hasn't gone to the festival and can sample it, check it out, and maybe want to visit the physical event in the future. But also fans who may have no interest in or ability to attend the physical event for various reasons, and they'll have an opportunity to do that as well." Like many other programmers of large-scale film festivals, she sees the virtual sphere as offering a platform for her festival that can reach people prohibited by cost, geography, or access, generally.

B. Brad Pilcher, The Atlanta Jewish Film Festival

I spoke with Brad Pilcher, the Associate Director of the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival, on two occasions: November 11th and 16th, 2020. Our wide-ranging conversations covered far more than just the festival world's response to COVID-19, so this recounting of the interview will be significantly condensed in order to remain germaine to the topic at hand.

Pilcher spoke to the fact that, in the beginning, no one in his organization quite believed how long we would be in some state of semi-"quarantine." Speaking to the process of figuring things out, he said: "We looked into everything: drive-ins, a big screen in a park that people could walk around and up to, and all sorts of stuff. But in the back of our heads, we always knew

it would be a primarily virtual experience, and the rest was going to be window dressing. Over the summer, we pivoted our year-round programming to existing primarily online, so that way we could think through what we could do and how we could make it work." He also spoke to the importance of looking at what other festivals and series were doing to adapt as the calendar year unfolded and more moved online — something we both agreed on as crucial in this process.

One thing I found particularly fascinating, and clear-eyed, in Pilcher's perspective came up with the topic of keeping things online after the pandemic. "The fact of the reality is, none of this is new. It makes it more accessible, it gives you a broader audience, and there are obvious advantages to a virtual component of the festival," Pilcher said, "To go back to normal, and give up all of those advantages, just seems silly to me. But at the same time, even if there were no advantages, the reality is, the commercial movie theater market is a huge question mark right now." Looking at the future of physical spaces for his festival, especially one of his size, committed to a certain quality of big-screen exhibition, I found his perspective even more refreshing. "Coming out of the pandemic," he said, "We have to try to prepare ourselves for the reality that commercial theater spaces may not be viable in the future, and to insulate ourselves from the damage as much as we can. At the end of the day, you're a nonprofit arts organization and that's great, but you still operate in a marketplace. There's still business considerations." He specifically pointed to how, as a nonprofit, the majority of their income came from donations and sponsorships. So upsizing, really, is out of the question to begin with. "For me," he said, "it's just a no-brainer that we continue to explore virtual programming, to keep thinking about how we can expand our reach in what is a relatively low-overhead distribution model that can reach far more people, who can then provide us with more earned revenue." In this sense, he points to something important: virtual programming offers a crucial lifeline for festivals of his size.

C. Abby Sun, *The DocYard*

I spoke to Abby Sun, curator of the online documentary series The DocYard and

co-curator of the series My Sight Is Lined with Visions, on November 21st, 2020. Sun's view, as

a graduate student at MIT studying the economic landscape of regional film festivals, was a

much more critical one than Pilcher's. She pointed me towards several pratfalls of working with

major online platforms like Eventive, Vimeo, and others, due to their exorbitant fees for partners,

as well as how major festivals (like NYFF) moving online has reset the terms for negotiation to

their standards — which smaller outfits cannot meet. "I'm interested in how distributors now

have gained more and more power in negotiating the rights to screening films," she told me,

"Then you look at all the European festivals, like CPH:DOX was the first major one to move

online, and their geoblocking process has since spread to other festivals across the globe. It's

interesting to see how these conventions spread, less so than programmatic choices." In this

sense, she points to something crucial: even though the virtual space has opened up the abilities

for different audiences to participate in festivals, the process of adapting to a virtual space has

allowed entrenched hierarchies in the exhibition world to become even more dramatic (since

major festivals have begun to set the new terms for negotiation).

One other fascinating thing I learned from Sun involved another way distributors have

gained even more power in the online screening world: through audience data. Since her

explanation was fairly lengthy, I will quote it in its entirety here:

> Now it's like Eventive is $1000 if you want to get your theater on it. So a lot of
>
> theaters can't afford that, having their own platform, so you have to go through the
>
> distributor's screening platform in a virtual cinema agreement, like VHX (which is
>
> owned by Vimeo). The way box office receipts used to work is that the theater would

export the box office report for each film at the end of the week, and they'd negotiate a split depending on the revenue that week. And then the distributor invoices you or just pulls from your account. But now since all of the ticket sales and viewings are taking place on the distributor's *own site*, now the distributors are the ones sending the box office reports to the theaters, who then invoice the distributors. So even just in the power relationship of moving money around, everyone is dependent on distributors. Distributors own all of the information about who is purchasing tickets, and only some of them share that because it's a lot of work. So now theaters don't even know who's watching the films at their own theater! Distributors were reliant on theaters for accessing the audience before, but now that it's online and it's run through the distributors, they are gaining this information that used to be the reason why art house cinemas were so valuable to them.

Here, Sun points to the increasingly important role that distributors will play as more and more film exhibition moves online. She especially pointed out to me the fact that Trump's Department of Justice had let the Paramount Consent Decrees lapse, which opens the door for even more distributor power in the physical theater space in the years to come. Her interview was a bit of a wake-up call for me, and I would eventually come to see — albeit in a much less affecting way than if I were running a commercial theater — this power dynamic play out in booking my own titles for my series.

D. Chris Escobar, The Plaza Theater and The Atlanta Film Festival

I spoke with Chris Escobar, owner of The Plaza Theater and Director of the Atlanta Film Festival, on November 25th, 2020. Escobar spoke with me extensively about the community partnerships and reopening measures taken by the Plaza and ATLFF. In particular, he outlined in great detail the negotiation process of partnering with Dad's Garage and Pullman Yard in Atlanta

for drive-in screenings. In our previous interview, Pilcher had noted the logistical and expense

nightmare that was setting up a drive-in from scratch, and Escobar confirmed that. However, he

noted how it produced a mutually-beneficial relationship for the Plaza with other Atlanta

exhibitors. He especially spoke to the experience of working with a food festival in order to

organize a drive-in screening of *John Lewis: Good Trouble*, which opened up the possibility of

using Pullman Yard for ATLFF screenings in exchange for converting it into a drive-in. In this

sense, Escobar noted the importance of community cooperation, whether they be between small

or large venues, in keeping each other alive during the pandemic. Speaking particularly to the

Plaza's longstanding partnership with the video store Videodrome, he said: "It's not about "we're

an important institution that deserves to be helped" — if you go around with that mindset, you'll

be waiting a long time, no matter how true that statement is — it's more about "I've got some

things to offer, but I have some needs you could meet too, so how about we work together to do

things we couldn't do on our own, and we both survive"."

Escobar pointed to how establishing these kinds of partnerships, and building even more

throughout the Atlanta community, would be essential to the Plaza's future post-pandemic. The

Plaza's partnership with Videodrome has been particularly fruitful for both organizations — their

collaborative monthly screening Plazadrome (programmed by Videodrome staff, with the ticket

revenues going to Videodrome's overhead costs) regularly brought in packed houses before the

pandemic, and Videodrome has even been selling Plaza candy with their rentals to help support

the theater. After speaking with me about the practical work of juggling these kinds of different

audiences with differing tastes and schedules, he said:

> Then, it's the question of: can we build more of an audience for this, or do we
>
> need to bring on some programming partners, like Videodrome or *WUSSY MAG*. This

model is new in the movie theater business, but it's not new in the club or bar business, where you essentially have a promoter who has a "night" and they get a cut of the door or the bar or whatever. It's the same idea, but they're not just promoting, they're much more involved form a curatorial standpoint. They're bringing their brand, and their brand might be film-oriented or not. So we're looking to grow that, having more programming partners.There's criteria of course: they have to have a distinct brand and a sizable enough following (which isn't hard, it matters more how deeply engaged they are than how many people they have). Having these kinds of partners who are local and have a distinct following for a distinct reason and its sizable enough to make a difference… that's a huge part of the future for us.

Also speaking to the future, Escobar pointed to the importance of expanding their programming and offering more unique cinema experiences, in particular their new ability to project 35mm and 70mm film. For the time being, he and the Plaza will be emphasizing these kinds of "premium" experiences in order to offset the costs of their demanding safety measures, which have included installing a new air ionization system and UVC lights in the aisles, as well as setting up a "pod" system that allows attendees to sit in fresh, clean chairs that swa after each screening. "It's all a pain and the ass and complicated and took a long time to figure out, but we're confident that on the safety side we're blowing things out of the water," he said, "The idea is: the whole thing is a premium experience, because until it's safe enough to get back to the regular Plaza, that's what it is."

E. Maddie Whittle, Film at Lincoln Center and The New York Film Festival

I spoke with Maddie Whittle, from the programming team at Film at Lincoln Center and The New York Film Festival, on December 9th, 2020. It was especially fascinating to talk to

someone coming from an institution as world-renowned and well-funded as NYFF, which completed an incredibly successful virtual edition in early November of 2020. Like Sun, Whittle spoke to the numerous difficulties of meeting distributor demands. In her case specifically, these came in with working with larger distributors especially: "And some distributors had other concerns about availability windows, so we had to have a few appointment screenings that you had to watch at a certain time. Which is more difficult to achieve on our end, since the customer service needs are different. Some companies had different watermarking needs, like most distributors are okay with a visual watermark, but some want a forensic watermark, which is not visible but easier to trace electronically." This echoes what Sun said about large entities and distributors setting the terms for everyone else, but also speaks to the unique difficulties faced by an event of NYFF's stature moving into the uncharted online realm.

Like all of the other programmers, as well, Whittle expressed a real pride in expanding her festival's audience, despite how, in her words, she conceives of NYFF as a "local festival." "From a philosophical standpoint," she said, "I do what I do because I want to put out good movies to a good audience, and good audiences aren't just in New York, Chicago, LA. Good audiences are all across the country. I think, moving forward, we're all just desperate to get back to our theaters right now, but I think there definitely is a consensus, now that we've crossed into the virtual space, that we won't be shutting that down anytime soon."

In particular this year, Whittle was involved, with her colleague Devika Girish, in curating the first dedicated Talks section in NYFF history. She explained that this was in the works pre-pandemic, with new festival heads Eugene Hernandez and Dennis Lim, but became especially important as the festival moved online. She said: "I think it was especially valuable to have the Talks this year, because they were the only live part of the festival, and one of the few

ways we had of recreating that feeling of attending a spontaneous, in-the-moment, exchange between two people. Which is one of the perks of being at a film festival, as opposed to watching a film on a screener, on your computer." She echoes something I heard from all of the programmers featured here: the importance of figuring out what made the festival experience unique and engaging — the answer always being face-to-face interaction — and how to adapt that to the virtual space. As an attendee of some of her talks, I can confirm that they did deliver on this front, even if they were limited by only allowing audience participation via the Q&A function on Zoom.

One talk in particular, called Outside the Canon, proved especially influential to me, as it focused on programmers working outside of major institutions. Through Maddie, I met four of the participants in that talk, who all became interviewees: Sun, from this section, and the three programmers discussed in the next section: Thomas Beard, Rooney Elmi, and Ajay Ram. In that way, the talk Whittle organized spawned a continuing conversation (which will unfold in the following pages) about these alternative modes of conceiving of film exhibition and culture.

V.   **Interviews, Part II: (Three) Ways Forward**

The three interviews summarized here — with Thomas Beard, Rooney Elmi, and Ajay Ram — provide a window into alternative, more community-centered programming practices. Spanning in age and radicalism from Beard's 13-year-old, NYC-based microcinema Light Industry to Elmi's "underground, nomadic microcinema" No Evil Eye, which was founded in 2019 in Cleveland, Ohio, these three examples offer their own diagnoses for the crises plaguing cinephilia and film exhibition — as well as their own models for trying to dismantle and reimagine our current conception of film culture.

A. **Thomas Beard,** *Light Industry*

I spoke with Thomas Beard, the cofounder and co-curator (along with his friend Ed Halter) of the New York City-based microcinema Light Industry, on November 17th, 2020. Despite coming up alongside a boom in New York City's film culture, Light Industry was able to stick out precisely because of its unique approaches to cultivating an audience and alternative programming models. Beard pointed out to me how New York City may have a very diverse filmgoing audience in terms of age, interest, etc., but they do tend to be stratified within their own circles: a common phenomenon in cinephile circles that he and Halter sought to address. He said: "The hope was — and I think this has happened — that by allowing all these different kinds of work to share space on a single calendar that these different communities (that maybe didn't overlap much, even in New York) would start to come together and cross-pollinate." Part of how they achieved this was my programming a wide range of films, along with bringing in representatives of different New York City film communities to introduce the screenings. One example he gave of this was having Jonas Mekas come to introduce a blockbuster screening of Peter Emmanuel Goldman's 1965 film *Echoes of Silence*, (which Beard had programmed on its own years before — much to his own failure). Another example of the type of programming Beard champions can be found in one of Light Industry's other early events: a screening of Jean-Marie Straub and Daniéle Huillet's 1981 film *Too Early, Too Late*, which was introduced by none other than Pedro Costa! In this sense, "We wanted to have an audience for contemporary art, we wanted to have an audience that was interested in adventurous international cinema, and also people who were interested in documentaries," Beard told me, "We wanted to bring the interesting new work in film history, film theory in the academy to a general audience."

Another practice Beard and Halter partake in — and in which I will partake later, in Section IV of Chapter III — is a "Postmortem" in which they "scrutinize each screening

ruthlessly" and go over what they thought did and did not succeed. Though there's no institutional funding or profits coming in for Light Industry, they trade that consciously for the ability "to do whatever we want, whenever we want, on whatever terms we want. Which is not something you can do if you work at a big institution." Though they began Light Industry as more of a traveling microcinema, it has settled into its own space in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Part of what makes this all possible, too, is their unique programming structure: they are an ongoing "series" that organizes *one* show per weekend. He explains this process to me as follows:

> With Light Industry having everything be a single event means, for one, Ed and I
> can lavish all of this attention onto a single event and make it very special. And I think
> that is an issue of some consequence at a time when repertory film exhibitors are
> competing with tons of home viewing, and you're in New York City and there's tons of
> other things going on. By having the event be a really special and unique thing, that's a
> way to draw people out. So if you're showing a film that's been lost, unavailable on
> video, and it's introduced by some amazing interlocutor, these are all different ways of
> bringing people to the work, of delivering the audience to the cinema.

He also notes that this format allows he and Halter to advertise each screening individually, essentially sending out one email invitation and advertisement per week to audiences. This way, they open Light Industry up for audience members who may be unfamiliar with their work — it doesn't carry the pressure of a screening calendar. Additionally, it allows he and Halter to dedicate more time to program notes: "Since every program note is an argument, every program note is an effort to argue why you should leave your apartment on Tuesday night and see this film you've never heard of, you can't do that if you're MoMA and you have two screens and two screenings in each per day. You just can't devote that kind of attention to all of those individual

screenings, but we can because our scale is a lot smaller." I found Beard to be particularly inspirational, in this sense, for conceiving of how I could establish myself as an independent programmer in Atlanta, but his efforts to establish individual events with rich contextualization that can bring in a diverse audience spoke to me for New Cinematic Directions.

B. Rooney Elmi, *No Evil Eye*

I spoke with Rooney Elmi, co-founder and co-curator (along with her friend Ingrid Raphael) of the Cleveland-based "underground, nomadic microcinema" No Evil Eye, on November 23rd, 2020. Elmi's words can describe the mission and purpose of No Evil Eye much better than my own, so I will quote them in full here:

> We do half radical film programming, half accessible workshops. Like educational workshops around politics and the moving image, and sometimes we partner up with political organizations to figure out what's going on in the world and what people in our position can do. Like, we do some zine letter writing, we did a three-part screenwriting workshop for writing films that didn't follow the three-act story structure. The whole point is, people come here and we want them to build connections with each other in a physical space. We really hone in on the importance of face to face contact with other people, which is really difficult for us right now. And we don't have our own physical space, so we almost consider ourselves as a public theater that takes up residence in different spaces. Sometimes it's at an institution, sometimes it's at a DIY space, or even a film festival. Whatever the case is, we just bring our people into the space and share a healthy discourse and critique, and to see what we can do around discussing the radical possibilities of the moving image, period.

As for the programming and organizing workshops, Elmi and Raphael have their own programs in mind, but are always open to suggestions from their audiences and participants. They also offer a space in which participation can take whatever form an individual wants, whether that be an active member of the conversation or someone there to listen and learn — something I sought to emulate, as well. Like Beard, she feels freed by her program's lack of institutional funding and a permanent physical space. In her words, they can do "Whatever the hell we want." Describing how their programming process occurs, Elmi said:

Our programming is based on themes, specifically, and we've toured with just one program so far. It's been like, mixing and matching films that follow… it's called *Sequence 1: Diasporic Reckoning*... So with that theme we're specifically highlighting films that cover memory, landscape, and migration. Through this prism of landscape and lyricism, it allows us to curate so many different films and from around the world. We've had people from Brazil, Somalia, Ghana, The Philippines, Afghanistan, we've had African American filmmakers… there's just so many diasporic filmmakers and films from all around the world, where some are narrative, some are documentaries, some are experimental. You would never expect them to be in conversation with each other, but they are, and that's where the foundation of the theme we've laid out comes in. You keep building it out.

A large part of how Elmi and Raphael have created the kind of space they have, which travels from location to location in and around the Cleveland area (including such venues as the Wexner Center for the Arts, an early sponsor) is through how they structure their Q&As (which would become especially influential to me). Elmi, once again, described her unique format to me at length, which I will quote here:

The Q&As we have aren't like Q&As. It's always one of us is onstage, and one is in the audience with a microphone. We want to activate the space, since we want the discourse to stay in the theater. When we had our first program, I remember saying to Ingrid, you know, "we need to have an idea of what we want to do with this space." In a traditional multiplex, it is a truly capitalist structure. You walk in, you literally have to pay the price of admission to enter the space, the concession stand is the most prominent public space in the theater. You walk into the auditorium, and it's littered with posters asking you to come back, it's always an enticement for you to stay in the space. You sit down, and you're met with all the commercials beforehand, some of them for the theater, then you go straight into the trailers, which are, once again, just trying to lure you back in a few months. Then you get the beginning credits, the film plays, roll end credits, and then you have to get out so that the next film can start. There is literally no place in the traditional cineplex or movie theater that allows you to talk about movies. It does not build any type of rapport with other audience members at all, it's a bizarre structure and it all has to do with how, unfortunately, the camera and technology, as tools, were commercialized immediately after they were made. There was no space to play around with film. For us, with this microcinema, we wanted to create a space where even before you enter the theater, there's some kind of a linkup in the space where people form all over town — organizers, artists, everyday people, cinephiles, who cares, anybody is welcome since all our programs are free or low-cost — people get to hang out, to sell things they've made, it's almost like a little kickback where you get to support your community. Then, you go inside the venue, you go sit down, there's some kind of introduction where we contextualize the space and what the program is, we introduce

what No Evil Eye is as well, and then we play the film program. And then, afterward, if

we're lucky enough (and, *luckily*, we always have been), we'll have people involved in

the films there to be a part of the post-screening conversation. You are open to talk

amongst yourself, talk or ask questions to the creatives, or you can ask Ingrid and I

whatever. People always ask us, like, "how the hell did you do this?," and we get to

explain ourselves. We want that dialogue to stay in those seats, we want people to be

asking these questions.

While, as Elmi noted, their model has struggled in the COVID-19 era due to its

face-to-face nature, the vision she painted of a living, breathing, welcoming film community —

one in which radical, challenging cinema can be discussed as casually as it can be thoughtfully

— spoke to me on a profound level. This was especially the case when Elmi and I bonded over

our shared experience of loving cinema "in secret" as young people, which drove us to try to

create these kinds of communities on our own. If anything, the way she outlined the functions of

Q&As within No Evil Eye, my mind went to work trying to come up with a Zoom-based

discussion format that would approach something relatively close to it. I just knew that I didn't

want people to feel alienated or "below" anyone in attendance. As my next, and last, interviewee

would come to note as well, I wasn't alone in finding the cinephile communities established near

me (and online) very unwelcoming and stifling, either.

C. Ajay Ram, *Upside Film Festival*

I spoke with Ajay Ram, co-founder and co-curator (with their friend Suzy Swygert) of

the Harlem-based pop-up screening series Upside Film Festival, on November 24th, 2020. One

of the first things we discussed was how deeply problematic and exclusionary the figureheads of

the cinephile community — often tastemakers or programmers themselves — can be. "There

needs to be this, kind of, dismantling of the cinephile community," they said, continuing: "As a kid, my mom had this wide and varied palette for films. We'd watch Spike Lee films, we'd watch Hitchcock films. Like, my mom's a huge fan of 1940s espionage movies, but we'd also love to watch Nora Ephron films, and she also loves big budget action movies. There's this wide spectrum, and I've always felt like "film is film."" They spoke with me about how this has wormed its way into the mainstream through genre films, and into avant-garde circles through personal and documentary forms of filmmaking: "It's damaging in all forms of genre cinema because you're erasing what came before you and you're reconfiguring the brain of the normal film audience. Eventually, it's gonna come to this point where movies don't make us feel things we want to return to, where they aren't enriching and are these mean-spirited pranks on the audience."

Of course, Upside seeks to address this, as well as many other barriers to access. After all, Ram and Swygert decided to found Upside together after sharing in their alienation and displeasure working with the aforementioned types of cinephiles at Film and Lincoln Center — at the time they were working there, there was only one programmer of color on the team for them to look up to. Ram found the lack of effort on Lincoln Center's part to reach out to communities of color or include them in the process "maddening." In their words: "It tells me what kinds of people you want at your theater." Moving onto Upside, "We talked to everyone we knew, the connections that we did have, and what we did find out was that… Black filmmakers we knew, no matter if they had shown with us at NYFF or Sundance or TIFF… they wanted to come back home," they said, "We had to find this out along the way, since the imposter syndrome tells you "these filmmakers look like us, but they made it to the other side." But it's

lonely on the other side as well. And it's enriching for both the community and the filmmakers who are coming to speak to people who look or feel like them."

Among the spaces Upside has inhabited for screenings include community gardens and brownstones in Harlem, as well as the very church Ram was baptized in. Just like Elmi, Ram sees a lot of freedom in being able to take up these spaces and move the cinema experience into more familiar realms — along with the freedom that comes with that. They outlined their organizational style to me at length:

All of the screenings we've had, we've seen crowds that are intergenerational, which is a huge problem when you think about the ageism you see in cinephile circles, especially younger ones. Just having those diverse crowds in these intimate spaces, where we have a DJ beforehand playing music, there's food… I believe in feeding people. Feeding people is so important, and having music and having someone to greet them when they come in. These little things make all the difference. That was our vision of having the festival meet the cookout, and it's always warmth, and that's so important. Because the cinephile community isn't really a community in a lot of ways. We want the opposite: human beings communing with each other, and the film is the centerpiece of the night, but it's not like you go to the movie and then go home and talk to your friends about it, who have the same thoughts as you. Some people might leave being like, "that was some weird shit," but they were happy to be there with their friends and with other people. And then they're not shitting on the director, either, it's almost this appreciation of, like, "hey, that shit was weird, but I like what you did there." Because you're seeing someone on this human level, and you see the person behind the art. They're not this wizard behind the curtain who's making themselves inaccessible. No matter how

inaccessible you thought the film was, they're staying behind and talking to you about why they made it the way they did. So there's so many things being deconstructed at once, and the core question is "why do we go to movies?": because it's a human experience.

Just as was the case for Elmi, Ram saw opening up the space of the cinema into a true community space, one in which community took precedence over the sanctity of the films (while still respecting their central role in the events), as essential to continuing to build film culture and bring new audiences in, especially as circumstances force us in the industry to become more flexible in our practices — and as cinephiles are confronted with the fact that their medium of choice no longer sits on the pedestal it once claimed, often at the expense of forming a welcoming community. Of course, all of this is, like in Elmi's case, much more difficult with the requirements of the pandemic, but I still kept Ram's example in mind as I formulated my own ways to try to break down barriers and host a safe, engaging, and open conversational space.

In this chapter, I have described all of the preparatory work and research that went into formulating New Cinematic Directions, its goals and philosophy, and its structure and approach. Going into planning the series, I wanted, above all, to address the barriers to conversation present in cinephilic and film programming spaces: mainly, this kind of clique-ish, exclusionary formation that feels unapproachable to wide swaths of people who may be interested in different, more challenging kinds of films. While appealing to audiences who may have been familiar with the work prior to my series was important, bringing those in who have not felt welcomed before was a major priority, as was creating a space where audiences could talk about their *experiences* with the films just as much as their content, form, and politics.

Chapter II. Building New Directions

I.   **The Film Selection**

The final program of New Cinematic Directions consisted of six screenings and nine

films, total. Those screenings were as follows: *Too Late to Die Young* (Dominga Sotomayor,

Chile, 2018), *To the Ends of the Earth* (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Japan/Uzbekistan, 2019), *Vitalina*

Varela (Pedro Costa, Portugal, 2019), "Four Films by Sarah Maldoror" [*Monangambée*

(Angola/Algeria, 1968), *A Dessert for Constance* (France, 1980), *Léon G. Damas* (Guyana,

1994), and *EIA pour Césaire* (France/Martinique, 2008)], *Black Mother* (Khalik Allah, 2018),

and *The Inheritance* (Ephraim Asili, 2020). The screenings were presented in the order just

listed. Over the period from May of 2020 to January of 2021, this program grew and evolved as

some films became unavailable and others became available, and as some changed hands in

terms of who owned the rights. In the U.S., Sotomayor and Kurosawa's films were released by

KimStim, while Costa, Allah, and Asili's films were released by Grasshopper Film. Maldoror's

four films were screened in collaboration with her daughter (and their current

rights-holder/distributor), Annouchka de Andrade.

New Cinematic Directions began with three of the films from the final program: *Too Late*

to Die Young, *Vitalina Varela*, and *Black Mother*. These three films were all slated to be a part of

the cancelled 2020 edition of *Not Coming to a Theater Near You*, with *Black Mother* especially

carrying the distinction of being that series' closing night selection. I started with these films,

since I did not want to leave all of the films from 2020's edition unscreened. That edition was

eight films in length, and our preliminary discussions for New Cinematic Directions narrowed

the number of screenings down to six. Therefore, it was a no-brainer to me to split the selection

in half: start with three of the 2020 edition's films, and add three screenings to it. That way, we

could still screen films from the canceled series, but without simply moving the selection forward to 2021.

The 2020 series included five films, aside from the three previously mentioned: *The Grand Bizarre* (Jodie Mack, 2018), *I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians* (Radu Jude, 2018), *Varda by Agnès* (Agnès Varda, 2019), *3 Faces* (Jafar Panahi, 2018), and *An Elephant Sitting Still* (Hu Bo, 2018). These five were not selected to be screened in 2021 for a variety of reasons. *Too Late to Die Young* and *Vitalina Varela* were my personal favorite films of the 2020 program, and we already reached verbal agreements for eventual virtual screenings with their distributors, KimStim and Grasshopper. From the beginning of the fall semester onward, I knew that, after the uprisings of the summer of 2020 in the U.S., I wanted to focus the bulk of my programming, this time, on filmmakers of color, and films coming from areas of the world affected by Western Imperialism and Capitalism. At least as much as I could. So, out of the 2020 selection, Allah's film was the obvious choice.

From this point, I achieved contact with the assistant of Sky Hopinka, the Ho-Chunk experimental filmmaker whose debut feature, *małni - towards the ocean, towards the shore* (2020), had premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January of 2020. Hopinka's film had been on my radar, and I'd long wanted to screen one of his films. Since the film was distributed by Hopinka himself, an arrangement was made in October 2020 to screen it virtually in the series. Around this same time, I saw Asili's *The Inheritance* at the New York Film Festival, which ran virtually in October. I was so blown away by the film — it was exactly the kind of film I'd been looking for: engaged in Black Radical politics and aesthetics and their history onscreen and off, while still feeling fresh and of-our-moment — that I knew I wanted to screen it. I reached out to Asili directly on two occasions, through his faculty email at Bard. Neither of

the attempts yielded a response, and I even tried (unsuccessfully) to get in contact with him via an old friend, who, as it turned out, was one of his students. However, news broke in early January that Grasshopper Film had purchased the rights to not only *The Inheritance*, but also *małni*. In talks with Nick Newman, my contact at Grasshopper, it became clear that we would no longer be able to screen *małni*, as its release date was pushed back, and they had worked out an exclusive streaming premiere with New York City's Metrograph's Virtual Cinema (making Abby Sun's point about larger exhibition entities re-setting the terms sting a little more personally). But we were able to screen *The Inheritance*, as it would premiere in virtual cinemas in early March. Thus, a trade-off was made, and *The Inheritance* was officially slated to screen with us, after all.

To the Ends of the Earth became a part of the selection in a similar manner. By the time December rolled around, the sixth film I had slated to screen was Taiwanese slow cinema luminary Tsai Ming-liang's 2020 film *Days*, marking his return from retirement and latest collaboration with lead actor Lee Kang-sheng. *Days* was also acquired by Grasshopper Film, and they pushed its release date back with *małni* when that film was acquired. Thus, I had a hole to fill quickly before we locked all of the choices down. I first saw *To the Ends of the Earth* in 2019 at the New York Film Festival, during my first (and only) visit to the physical festival to date. Seeing that KimStim had given it a belated U.S. release in December of 2020, I reached out to my contact there, Mika Kimoto, who worked out a deal to screen it as well. Though the film did not exactly fit the loose criteria I was applying to the rest of the films in the selection, its portrait of a young woman at a turning point in her life resonated with the other films in the program involving young people trying to figure things out — *Too Late to Die Young*, *Black Mother*, and *The Inheritance*. Moreover, its story of someone navigating the space of a new country drew connections between it, *Vitalina Varela* (with which it also shares the quality of a

closely-collaborative director-lead actress pair), and *A Dessert for Constance*. Therefore, *To the Ends of the Earth* brought even more of the series' common themes to the fore with its inclusion in the program.

Lastly, something else that came up at this point was coming up with the title for the series: New Cinematic Directions. Due to the fact that, well, most movie theaters have been closed, Not Coming to a Theater Near You didn't make sense anymore. My initial idea, Radical Directions, carried a much more outwardly political bent than the festival did as a whole, though almost all of the films espoused or engaged directly with radical politics. New Cinematic Directions adhered to the overall theme I wanted to stick to, which was screening films that would be "new" to the Atlanta public. All of the contemporary films screened did not even receive virtual screenings through Atlanta theaters, and Maldoror's films, despite their age, were most certainly "new" to the audience. After all, anything that you haven't seen or heard of before is, ultimately, "new" to you. Many participants, in their messages and comments to me, expressed that they were thankful for being exposed to new kinds of films through the series. To me, that speaks to the series' success in its programming aims.

II. Organizing "Four Films by Sarah Maldoror"

At this point, I have held off on discussing the process of planning and organizing what would become the centerpiece of the series, our program of "Four Films by Sarah Maldoror." Compared to the rest of the series, this event was totally unique to organize, since I worked directly with Maldoror's daughter, Annouchka de Andrade, to not only select the films, but to help craft her presentation *and* make the films available in the first place. Therefore, this section of Chapter II will be dedicated to the planning of this event.

The origins of this event took place in summer 2020. On April 13, 2020, Sarah Maldoror passed away from COVID-19 complications. Sadly, I was unfamiliar with Maldoror's work up until this point, when tributes to her started pouring in from around the world wide web. The online feminist film journal *Another Gaze* hosted a tribute to Maldoror, on May 12, 2020, titled "The Legacies of Sarah Maldoror." Around this time as well, a number of Maldoror's films began popping up on places like YouTube, Vimeo, etc. These two events created a perfect storm for me to properly "discover" Maldoror's work, and I was instantly blown away. Immediately, I knew I wanted to organize something along the lines of a similar tribute to Maldoror.

One of the organizers of the *Another Gaze* event, Yasmina Price, is a graduate student and researcher at Yale, working in the Film/Media Studies and African American Studies departments. I reached out to her in late October about getting me in contact with whoever had the rights at that point. A few weeks later, she, via email, introduced me to de Andrade. Thus, de Andrade and I began our correspondence, and we met for the first time in late November. de Andrade proposed we organize a selection of films to screen, as well as a presentation where she could share her mother's story. We began negotiations from this point, and, after we met with the Film and Media chair and my advisor, Dr. Matthew Bernstein, a deal was worked out.

de Andrade provided us with a selection of short and medium length films by Maldoror, none of which were previously available in the U.S.. These films were: *Monangambée*, Maldoror's debut short film; *A Dessert for Constance*, an hour-long satire she made for French television; and *Léon G. Damas* and *EIA pour Césaire*, two documentary portraits of the titular négritude poets, whom she was able to call close friends and collaborators. These are four of the five films de Andrade currently has the rights to that are 1) restored and 2) subtitled in English, though she did have new subtitles made for *A Dessert for Constance* specifically for this event.

Maldoror's debut — and only surviving — feature, 1972's *Sambizanga*, was finally acquired by de Andrade after a 10+ year battle in French courts for the rights. She sent it off in January 2021 to be restored at the Cineteca di Bologna, funded by Martin Scorsese's World Cinema Project. We arranged to organize a future Emory screening with her, of *Sambizanga*, to kick off a tour of the film's restoration at U.S. colleges and universities — once conditions allow for in-person screenings, of course.

From there, de Andrade provided me with a shareable link of *Monangambée* to send out to participants, as well as hard files of the other three films. I uploaded these to Emory's OneDrive system, and Professor DeHanza Rogers (Film and Media) assisted me in uploading them as private, temporary links to the department's Vimeo account. These would be shared, along with the link for *Monangambée*, with participants once the screening began.

Lastly, de Andrade shared her powerpoint presentation with me a week before it would be held, and we met over Zoom to iron out any technical difficulties we could predict. We worked out a system in which she could read a text she wrote, translated into English, while I screen shared the powerpoint. It was also shared, at the event, with participants, so that they could all follow along individually if desired. The format of the event, we decided, would be that she would present for the first 40-50 minutes, then I would loop in faculty participants to ask the first few questions, and, finally, we would open up to audience questions until two hours elapsed.

III.   Virtual Logistics

In this section, I will discuss the logistics of planning New Cinematic Directions as a virtual series. This involved negotiating access with different distributors, as well as streamlining the entire process for our audience.

As my November 21, 2020 interview with Abby Sun taught me, I could not rely on building our own streaming platform or a virtual ticketing system, like Eventbrite. As she noted: "Eventive is $1000. Plus a dollar or two a stream, plus $25 per film you upload. This summer, five genre festivals banded together to make that affordable for themselves, for example." For a series of our size, this would, obviously, be untenable. And there was no such other series or festival that it made sense to team up with — AJFF, ATLFF, and the other major festivals in Atlanta all have a much wider audience and necessary bandwidth then we do. Setting up our own platform, whether that would be through a familiar platform like Vimeo or building one from scratch, would have been even more costly.

Thus, the approach I ended up using developed over the course of conversations with our distributors. The Maldoror films were the easiest to sort out here — from the beginning, de Andrade wanted to go with the "send private Vimeo links out to the audience" approach. Each of the films had its own password-protected link that would be deleted after the screening period elapsed (in this case, three days). For Grasshopper, they agreed to give us a finite number of links, according to our usual auditorium size of 200, that would self-destruct after a two-day viewing period elapsed. They would create these on their platform, VHX, and send them to us to distribute when the viewing period began. I went to KimStim, finally, with this approach in mind. I pitched that they, like Grasshopper, could create a finite number of links for us, then send them to us to distribute. This was an easy arrangement to organize, since they ended up preferring the same exact approach as Grasshopper. The only difference was that their platform of choice was a private Vimeo link that would self-destruct after the viewing period, similarly to de Andrade. Thus, we were able to negotiate an approach that would accommodate our audience size and please all three of the distributors we worked with, all without requiring us to build our

own platform or rely on a ticketing system. In total, de Andrade received $1500 for her participation and screening Maldoror's films, while each of Grasshopper's films (*Vitalina, Black Mother, The Inheritance*) cost $500 to license and screen, while KimStim broke things up for us: $200 to screen *To the Ends of the Earth*, and $160 to screen *Too Late to Die Young* (since it was a less recent release for them). The Department of Film and Media covered all of these costs.

In order to distribute the links, we needed to come up with a sign-up system. I created individual Google Forms for each screening (images of which are in Appendix B of this thesis). These forms asked that participants include their name and email, as well as answer a few questions: if they were currently college students (noting which one they attend), if they were currently based in Atlanta, and if they were planning on attending the screening's accompanying Zoom conversation. The structure of these conversations, in relation to their screenings, will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. However, the purpose of inducing these questions were to 1) allow me to keep track of the kinds of attendees we had, for research purposes, and 2) to alert me to how many participants to expect at the talks.

The links to these forms, as well as links to the Zoom conversations and video introductions to the films (which I wrote, recorded over Zoom, and uploaded to YouTube the week before the series began), were included on the series webpage, which can be accessed at http://filmandmedia.emory.edu/events/film-series/new-cinematic-directions-series.html. On this webpage, the press release — outlining the conception and organization of the series — was included with a photograph of Maldoror at the top. Each screening received its own drop-down box at the bottom of the webpage, in which all of its accompanying links — signup form, Zoom conversation, and introduction — were included. All of these links, compiled together for each individual screening, were also included in the emails I sent out the first morning of each

viewing period. Audiences could use those emails as their first point of access, this way, and the webpage could serve as a hub for *all* of the information that they would need.

IV. Structuring the Series

Here, the structure of the series began to solidify in place. In conversations with my advisors and honors program cohort, I worked through several different structures for the series before landing on the final one. The first question was: how long do we want the films to be available, and when? Initially, I considered the structure my cancelled 2020 series would have followed: having the films be available, three at a time, over two weekends. We also considered having all six screenings be available at once. In these cases, the series would have been bookended with themed panels, bringing together Emory faculty to reflect on the broader themes of the series with me.

However, I ultimately decided to go with something pretty different. During my first edition of Not Coming to a Theater Near You, which took place over one weekend in March 2019, one suggestion I got from a lot of participants was to spread the films out so that they could participate in the entire series, or just as much as they could. Combining this with my talks with Brad Pilcher and Maddie Whittle, in which both spoke to the necessity of maintaining the social environment of a film festival or series in the virtual realm, I began working on a new structure for the series. In the final structure of the program, the films played one at a time in the following order: *Too Late to Die Young* on March 1st and 2nd, *To the Ends of the Earth* on March 4th and 5th, *Vitalina Varela* on March 7th and 8th, "Four Films by Sarah Maldoror" from March 10th through 12th, *Black Mother* on March 14th and 15th, and, lastly, *The Inheritance* on March 17th and 18th. These dates were chosen because they were the only unbroken, 20-day period in which we had no major conflicts with university breaks/events and other local film festivals in

the Spring semester (ATLFF, AJFF). The third week of the series, including the screenings of *Black Mother* and *The Inheritance*, was also scheduled to take part during Emory college's "No Assignments Week."

With this structure, participants could choose which and how many films they wanted to participate in, and they would have ample time to participate in all the screenings if they chose. As for the social element, some kind of live talks needed to happen. Initially conceived of as an experiment in taking down the barriers of a traditional Q&A or panel (the success of which will be discussed in Chapter III), the Zoom conversations I organized all took place the following evening after each screening period elapsed, at 6:00 P.M. EST. The only exception was the Maldoror talk, which took place at 4:00 P.M. EST to accommodate de Andrade's six-hour time difference from Paris. Other than her presentation, the conversations were structured to be open, organically flowing conversations. One to two Emory faculty members were invited to share their thoughts on the film at the start of each conversation, to get things rolling.

For the first three, due to our quick turnaround, only Film and Media faculty were able to make it: Dr. Michele Schreiber for *Too Late to Die Young*, Dr. James Steffen for *To the Ends of the Earth*, Drs. Anna Grimshaw and Nathan Lee for *Vitalina Varela*, and Prof. Jason Francisco for *Black Mother*. They were all invited due to their research interests overlapping with some element of the films — for example, Dr. Schreiber was invited due to her research in coming of age films made by and about women. For the last two conversations, faculty outside of Film and Media were able to attend: Dr. Dianne M. Stewart (Religion) attended *Black Mother*, and Drs. Meina Yates-Richard (African American Studies, English) and Justin Hoseby (Anthropology) attended *The Inheritance*. They were invited for similar reasons — for example, Dr. Stewart's studies of Jamaican history and religion gave important context for our discussion of *Black*

Mother, and Dr. Yates-Richard's knowledge of radical Black literature enriched our discussion of *The Inheritance*. For the Maldoror presentation, I invited two faculty members familiar with her work — Drs. Ana Catarina Teixeira (Portuguese) and Subha Xavier (French) — to ask one initial question apiece and get the Q&A portion flowing. Both were instrumental in advertising the event to their students, departments, and colleagues.

This way, each conversation would take place long enough after the screening period to let attendees and invited faculty mull over the film, while not taking place so long afterwards that they would forget the film. The invited faculty could provide fascinating and/or crucial context for discussing the film at the beginning, so that a cold open would not be necessary. For the first two conversations, I opened up the conversations to other attending Emory faculty before opening them up to everyone in attendance, though this step would be skipped in later conversations due to being a bit unnecessary after that point — we had enough frequent attendees comfortable with sharing at that point in the series. Again, the success of this strategy will be discussed further in Chapter III.

V.   **Scheduling and Promotion**

As stated in the previous section, the dates for the series were chosen due to them being the only unbroken 20-day span in the Spring semester we could inhabit without causing overlaps with other events. We also deliberately avoided any religious holidays, thus allowing for maximum possible participation within our reach as an institution. The dates of the conversations were planned according to their proximity to the screening periods, and the times at which they took place were chosen according to when, in our minds, the majority of audience members would be free. I decided this would be in the early evening, at 6:00, which we used for all but the Maldoror presentation.

On February 19th, 2021, Dr. Bernstein and I, after getting everything booked and all of our deals solidified, finally began the promotional process. This included a number of steps: getting the press release out, sending out advertisements, and participating in interviews for the press. The press release and webpage were launched on February 19th, 2021, and we began reaching out to our contacts at Arts at Emory, Rizky Etika and Emma Yarborough. Etika and Yarborough organized adding our event to the Arts at Emory calendar, and arranged to send out Facebook and radio ads (on Atlanta NPR's station, WABE) for us in the two weeks leading up to the start of the event. The Department of Film and Media put $1000 toward these ads, as well as $400 for Facebook ads. Thus, the total expenditure, on the Department's part, for New Cinematic Directions was $4760.

Throughout this process, and even during the duration of the series, I was able to reach out to a number of organizations successfully, who shared the event details in their newsletters: The Center for Women at Emory, The Emory RACE Office, Emory's student group Feminists in Action, Andy Ditzler's series Film Love Atlanta, and The BronzeLens Film Festival, to name a few. All of these organizations were instrumental in spreading the word for our event beyond Emory's reach, as was Dr. Bernstein's efforts in spreading the word to our department contacts at Morehouse, Spelman, and Howard Universities, as well as Georgia State University and its screening program Liquid Blackness.

As for interviews, Dr. Bernstein and I were both interviewed by two outlets, WABE and The Emory Wheel. The interview for WABE, conducted by City Lights host Lois Reitzes, took place on February 26th, 2021 and aired on March 2nd, 2021. Dr. Bernstein and I were interviewed together, answering questions about the project's conception and each of the films. I saw a significant daily uptick in signups during the week the interview aired on WABE, from

March 2nd through March 5th, literally doubling the number of participants in some of the

screenings. The second interview was conducted by The Emory Wheel, who spoke to Dr.

Bernstein and I separately. I was interviewed on March 3rd, 2021, and my interviewer, Isabel

Packard, asked me similar questions. The profile on *New Cinematic Directions* was published on

the Emory Wheel's website on March 10th, 2021 Both interviews can be found in Appendix A of

this thesis.

But now, onto the show…

Chapter III: Cultivating New Directions

I.   **Week One: *Too Late to Die Young* and *To the Ends of the Earth***

On the morning of March 1st, 2021, New Cinematic Directions officially took flight. That morning, the 36 participants signed up to participate in the screening of *Too Late to Die Young* received an email from me including the following: 1) the link and password to view the film, 2) a link to my video introduction, and 3) a link and schedule for the accompanying Zoom talk (a screenshot of one of these emails is in Appendix B of this thesis). This would be the email format that I would use at the beginning of each screening series for the remainder of *New Cinematic Directions*. I also note that participants can reach out to me with any issues or questions, and, throughout the duration of the series, I received several questions (usually from non-student participants who were having tech issues) and answered them as promptly as possible (additionally, screenshots of one of these exchanges are in Appendix B of this thesis).

This first screening allowed me to work out one thing in particular: what would I do for signups taking place after the screening period began? After I sent out the initial email fo*r Too Late to Die Young*, I closed the signups on the film's form, figuring that no one would want to sign up after the two-day viewing window began. That was wrong. I promptly received a few emails about accessing the film late, even on the last day of its viewing window. Thus, I took on a different approach when sending out the links for *To the Ends of the Earth*: I closed the form, but noted that we had a limited number of links to still give out, asking that late coming participants email me with a request by Noon EST on the second day of the screening. This format worked for the remainder of the screenings, as I consistently had between five and ten late-comers trickle in via my email.

The first conversation, held on March 3rd, got things off to a swell start. Only one faculty member could make it to kick off the conversation, Dr. Schreiber, and I had her share her thoughts at the top. From here, I gave the rest of the attending faculty an opportunity to introduce themselves and share some brief thoughts. I did this in order to give attending faculty a platform to introduce themselves to the audience, out of respect for being there and to provide a little more context. I continued this practice for the *To the Ends of the Earth* screening, which took place March 6th, and once again only had one invited faculty member: Dr. Steffen. It seemed to go over well each time, though I definitely felt like having faculty take up half of our hour we'd allotted for conversation wasn't totally working. People felt welcome to participate from the beginning and shared their thoughts openly, but the conversation didn't feel as open as I'd wanted, and it contributed to some kind of hierarchical feeling I wanted to avoid.

However, despite this, both conversations and screenings went incredibly well, with no major technological issues on either front. Participants and faculty alike engaged in two lively discussions, and I made an effort from the very beginning to address each person who spoke individually and to thank them for their contributions, adding my own thoughts and questions to the audience in between, when appropriate. Another practice I adopted from the get-go and continued throughout the series was making myself available for five to ten minutes after each conversation, to answer any questions from participants who wanted to stick around. Almost always, at least two or three people stuck around to ask questions or simply offer their thanks. One participant, who came to two of the conversations, told me afterward in a private conversation that both practices, on my part, made them feel included and respected, and that I felt even more accessible to them than exclusively via email. As for my partnerships with faculty during the rest of the series, I took a similar approach, offering to meet with them individually or

visit their classes: both of which occurred. I met with Drs. Stewart and Yates-Richard, even

providing Dr. Yates-Richard with an early screener to fit her needs, and also visited Dr. Teixeira's

PORT 302 course to speak to her students about Maldoror, whom they were reading about. Thus,

the process of making myself available to all participants in the screenings and discussions really

came into clarity during this first week, as the environment of the festival took shape. As would

be the case for every participating faculty member, they each received thank you emails

following the conversations they took part in, as well as many thank yous during the

conversations themselves.

II.   **Week Two: *Vitalina Varela* and "Four Films by Sarah Maldoror"**

The morning after the discussion of *To the Ends of the Earth*, the second week of *New

Cinematic Directions* kicked off when I sent out the links for *Vitalina Varela*. I awaited the

discussion for this film with baited breath, since it was the one that seemed, to me, the most

challenging. When I screened it for the Honors Methods course in my Fall semester, taught by

Honors Coordinator Dr. Tanine Allison, my cohort and I had a lengthy discussion about how to

make the film's consciously slow and dour aesthetic and pace register for the audience. I paid

especially close attention to my introduction for this film, since I wanted to strike a balance of

getting viewers acquainted with Costa's working method (at least *some* knowledge of which is

essential to appreciating the film, in my view) and setting them up to succeed with watching it —

I instructed viewers to watch the film in total darkness, letting the images and sounds wash over

them in the form of an "encounter" with the film, and with Vitalina. I didn't want, in Ram's

words, for the film to feel like "a mean-spirited prank on the audience" when it was actually

intended to allow them to engage more deeply on their own terms (abiding the limits of what

Vitalina shares with the film's audience, of course). This was immediately apparent to me as a

success, since multiple participants in the discussion shared that it helped them get over their own hump of engaging with the film. One in particular shared that she had gone back and listened to it three times, eventually taking my advice and shrouding herself in darkness, where she was finally able to let the film envelop and, eventually, deeply move her.

When we reached the discussion, people came ready to talk through the film, and, to my surprise (given how crushing the film can feel at times), most seemed to enjoy the experience, even if they found it challenging. Drs. Grimshaw and Lee spoke to the film's slowness, as well as the collaborative relationship between its filmmaker and subject. Much of this elaborated on what I shared in my introduction, so it got the conversation flowing well. An important shift to notice here is in the format of the discussions. As I did the previous two times, I opened things up for other attending faculty after Drs. Grimshaw and Lee took their turns. The attending faculty suggested we just open things up, which worked wonders. It gave everyone more time to talk and broke up the discussion more evenly, and everyone felt much more like equal participants in the discussion than they had before. Afterwards, Dr. Bernstein and I corresponded and agreed to take on this approach, which was also suggested to us by Dr. Lee, for the remaining two conversations.

Leading up to the Maldoror screening, Prof. DeHanza Rogers and I worked together to get the films uploaded to the department's Vimeo account — if I had uploaded them myself, it would have been cost-prohibitive, since I did not have a Pro account with the requisite storage. We got all of the links to the films sent out on time, and viewers had an extra day (three total) to view the four films.

de Andrade and I met a half-hour before the presentation began to iron out as many technology issues as we could. Neither of us are particularly tech-savvy, by both of our

admissions, so we were both in good company. The talk began, boasting our largest Zoom audience yet of around 30 attendees (out of 106 signups, our most well-attended screening in that sense as well). Between de Andrade reading from her script and directing attendees to follow along with the slides, it took me a while to not mess up sharing *my* screen, since I would switch too early or too late, or would accidentally close the window. But eventually, things smoothed out, and her 50-minute presentation was an absolute success. Everyone in the audience, myself included, learned so much about Maldoror. de Andrade powerfully asserted, wherever she could, that her mother's work was not strictly militant in its aims, and that her lack of recognition in her lifetime was not something to feel sad about. Between unfinished project notes and family photos, she painted a vivid, fierce, and wide-ranging portrait of her mother. Before opening up the floor, Drs. Teixeira and Xavier got to ask their questions, which got things off to a solid start. We had two hours total booked for this event, and questions went until the very end. I was even able to get de Andrade in touch with two attendees, with whom she began correspondences: Françoise Pfaff, an old family friend and retired professor of African Cinema at Howard (with whom de Andrade had not been in touch with since her adolescent years), and Deidre MacDonald, the Artistic Director of the BronzeLens Film Festival.

Out of all of the events in New Cinematic Directions, this talk with de Andrade left me feeling the most proud and energized. In fact, I cannot think of a single screening I've ever programmed that felt special in the same way. If this screening is able to be *even a blip* on the map to getting more eyes on Maldoror's films, then I feel blessed to have organized it. Prof. Rogers and I got the talk recorded and uploaded in its entirety on Vimeo, and it is now available for anyone to watch and learn from (and linked in Appendix A of this paper).

III.   **Week Three: *Black Mother* and *The Inheritance***

Going into the last week of the series, I was riding high on the waves from our conversation with Annouchka de Andrade. The next morning, I sent out the links to our penultimate screening, *Black Mother*. Viewing the film for a third time during its run, I was once again struck by how visceral and often disturbing an experience it was. I started to question the discussion coming up: was *I* the one to, really, unpack this?

Thankfully, my two guests, Dr. Stewart and Prof. Francisco, did a wonderful job getting the conversation off the ground. Though the two spoke for a combined half hour, everyone visibly appreciated their contributions. Dr. Stewart gave us some extensive background information on the intertwined histories of colonialism, slavery, and religion in Jamaica, as well as some observations from her own experience as an American immigrant from Jamaica. Prof. Francisco brought a lot of astute observations about the film's photography and Allah's background, but he also brought a number of reservations about the film into the conversation. At this point, I opened the conversation up and sat back — and was amazed with what happened. The combination of Dr. Stewart's contextual information and Prof. Francisco sharing his reservations seemed to open up the conversation on both ends, resulting in participants reflecting on how the context made them better appreciate the film *and* some participants bringing up reservations of their own, particularly regarding the inarguably macho point-of-view taken up by Allah. I let the conversation run, and we soon reached an hour and a half before things started to slow down. At this point, we had gone a half hour over, but everyone felt enriched by the conversation we had. After spending much of the past year talking to others about movies online and on social media, this kind of space — one in which people felt comfortable to question the film and work through their own reservations without being cruel to each other — felt like a

miracle of sorts. It gave me a plan for the last conversation: I would run it the same way, letting things flow until they came to a close on their own, and stepping back some more.

The next morning, I sent out the links for *The Inheritance*, and the final screening was finally on the horizon. BronzeLens sent out the screening information in their newsletter the morning of the second screening day, with a note to email me for access, so I did receive a last-minute bump in participants. In total, just under 100 people received links to view the film, and we had our largest turnout for the non-Maldoror discussions yet at nineteen participants. Upon the discussion beginning, I handed the floor to Drs. Hoseby and Yates-Richard. Dr. Hoseby talked about the stylistic elements of the film in detail, bringing Godard into the conversation and framing the film as less a stylistic homage to Godard, but a political one in the ways it engages head-on with the radical politics and textual sources of the film. Dr. Yates-Richard opened up the discussion by bringing Nicole Cliffe and Toni Morrison into the conversation, comparing Asili's approach of pulling from the vast wealth of Black literature, politics, and culture to both of those writers. From there, I did as I did with *Black Mother* and opened the floor. As usual, I tried to make each participant feel thanked for sharing, but tried to not butt in as much as I did in the earlier discussions. This worked for the discussion, more participants than ever (including repeat participants and new ones) spoke up to share their thoughts. The conversation ranged from talking about the aesthetics and character relationships in the film to Dr. Hoseby asking participants to reflect on the MOVE bombing discussed in the film — were they alive when it happened, and how did they respond to learning about it? This yielded an incredibly rich discussion, one that stretched to two full hours and spent its last half hour on discussing the film's limitations as a piece of representation, as it was made by a straight cisgender man. One participant asked me how I felt about this from my position as a White programmer working

with Black films, and it gave me an opportunity to talk about my own limitations due to my privileged position to the films I was screening from an institutional context — and how putting *Black Mother* and *The Inheritance* in conversation with Maldoror's films points to how little progress we've made in making space for filmmakers who aren't straight, cisgender men.

This conversation, near the end, also gave myself and the few other industry involved attendees an opportunity to reflect on where the exhibition world was in regards to equity, and how far we still have to come. One participant pointed out, just like Ram, that this problem begins with films being distributed in the first place, and not having enough distributors dedicated to films by people of color, Queer people, etc., and I echoed this point. However, despite the limitations we'd considered in the final stretch of the conversation, we all left feeling slightly optimistic about the prospects for the future — and a little sad that these conversations, and this series, had to come to a close just as they kept getting better.

 IV.   **The Exit Survey**

On Monday, March 22nd, 2021, I sent out an anonymous exit survey to all participants in the series via email. Images of this exit survey and its questions can be found in Appendix B of this thesis, but participants were asked to share their thoughts on such topics as: the film selection itself, the communication and signup processes, the openness and fairness of the conversations, and my accessibility to them as a programmer. To this date, twenty participants have sent in responses. Generally, the responses were very positive: there was nothing negative to say about the conversations or my accessibility as a programmer. Several participants noted that they felt welcomed and engaged despite their lack of formal knowledge in film, which is a success in terms of my goals for the project, as was the note that the majority of respondents attended more than one screening and appreciated the opportunity to do so.

A few questions on the survey noted some really interesting results. The question which asked "How did you find out about New Cinematic Directions?" yielded an extraordinary array of responses, ranging from email to word of mouth to, well, NPR. This tells me that our promotional efforts reached a wide audience, and that the numerous strategies we employed were all, ultimately, worth it. Many respondents did also note, when asked if the film selection felt "new" to them, that it did — and that they felt challenged and appreciative of being exposed to such films. In that sense, I would call the aim of the series' title a success.

As for constructive feedback, I want to note a few comments here. Two respondents offered some criticism about the heavy faculty presence at the conversations, which is a valid concern on their part. One stated that they felt that the conversation they took part in was "50 minutes of faculty talking to each other" — which tells me they likely attended one of the earlier conversations. However, moving forward, I do think that finding a way to include people with specialized knowledge (like professors) in an even more casual context would be productive to experiment with. One respondent noted that even the way I organized things this time did, inevitably, reproduce a hierarchy of knowledge, which is entirely correct.

The other constructive notes involved the film program itself and the technology aspect of things. One respondent noted that they felt the selection of films was a bit too depressing, which, while I don't necessarily agree with, is certainly appropriate feedback to give here. Considering that my experience with the series was finding a renewed hope in cinema and what it can teach us about the world, all of the films screened dealt with heavy subject matter in one way or another. So the fact that someone would come away from the experience feeling this way is not at all surprising, and something to keep in mind about balancing tones in programs in the future. A few respondents also noted that things on the technology end were a bit confusing,

despite the majority noting that they had no problems with it (or that I could quickly address any they had). One even noted that they refused to sign up for screenings after the first one, despite wanting to, because they did not want to have to sign up for them individually. In the range of responses here, it became clear to me that this comes with the territory of organizing live events. While you have to consider barriers of access regarding getting to the location of a physical event while planning one, that's much harder to prepare for with a virtual event, since every participant will have different technology they're working with — and thus different problems. Online events will inevitably end up being a frustrating experience for some in that department.

V.   **New Cinematic Directions: A Postmortem**

Looking back, there was much to be proud of in New Cinematic Directions, just as there were things that could have been improved upon. Perhaps the detail I'm proudest of is just pulling it all off to begin with: between just myself and the helpful hands we had on deck in the department, I managed to successfully plan and run the Emory Cinematheque's first entirely virtual series. That it all happened without any major technology hiccups, and with good responses from participants on the logistics front, is a major success.

In terms of the conversations, I would call them a success with limitations. In terms of creating spaces that felt open, safe, and welcoming for participation, I am comfortable saying that the conversations were a significant success. I could visibly see, especially with the repeat participants, a growing feeling of security and openness at each subsequent conversation. However, the inclusion of faculty, even just two getting the conversation started, still emphasizes a hierarchy of knowledge that I'm sure some audiences felt. This strategy was an experiment in that regard, and was also chosen (on my part) in order to try to bring more faculty members into the conversations, and thus more students. Students were often absent at the conversations, but

that could be due to any number of potential reasons, most obvious among them Zoom fatigue. My inspirations in Ram and Elmi came into play here in critiquing my own approach: I could not find a way to create, over Zoom, the kind of truly-open, "mingling" space that they could achieve physically. They, themselves, were in the process of figuring that out as well.

This limitation also extends to the institution I worked within: Emory University. If I were to try to come up with a program that eschewed *all* boundaries of access and hierarchies of knowledge, it would not take place in such a university setting. As Atkinson pointed out in her article, the Africa in Motion Festival addressed this by adopting the strategies of "cultural democracy" and "participatory programming," bringing in audiences of color and underserved audiences by working directly with them *in their communities* (684). Ram and Elmi achieved the same thing with Upside and No Evil Eye, going directly to communities with their programming. Of course, an event by a university will draw a largely university-educated crowd, because that's who they reach. Could I have made a more concerted effort to make connections with non-institutional audiences? Absolutely. However, as Atkinson is keen to point out, bringing a non-institutional audience into an institutional setting can feel incredibly alienating, as it is immediately clear that the "high class" space is not their own (683-4).

However, I want to make one last point in this "Postmortem" space, which is about one area in which New Cinematic Directions lacked representation wise — Queer filmmakers. This truly sank in for me when we began discussing it at the conversation for *The Inheritance*, since after *Days* had to be dropped from the lineup, I did not have a backup option that would ensure a Queer filmmaker's work was programmed (I would also point to not having another film by an Indigenous filmmaker to replace *maɬni* as a similar oversight). Of course, time limitations and access to distributors and films that fit the bill were factors, but I do find that there is an inherent

limitation to my view as a White programmer who, at least currently, identifies as a heterosexual, cisgender man. As long as programmers and audiences who represent other identities are not a direct part of my programming process, I will always have those limitations. Just as Atkinson pointed out, for the Africa in Motion Film Festival in Scotland, none of these limitations were properly addressed until they quite literally went out into communities and brought audiences of color into the process, ensuring that "each film is placed within an audience that appreciates the story, that is most challenged by the film, and that most wants to watch the film" (696).

One other note regarding these programming choices, I will also say that this series' definition of "New" is inherently limited, since it stuck to films that had premiered in major festivals and had distribution from (albeit small) U.S. distributors. The only exception to that was, of course, the Maldoror program. But other than that program, I may have been showing films that were new to Atlanta audiences, but they had been previously vetted by established voices in the industry and made readily available in centers of film culture (major cities and major festivals, galleries, etc.). In this sense, an entire world of possible new cinematic directions exists untouched by this program, and that is its other major limitation as a series.

After this experience, I find it best to be humbled by those limitations, and to wrestle with them critically as I inevitably program more films by underrepresented filmmakers in the future. Bringing in voices to speak about the films from personal perspectives, such as Dr. Stewart's reflections on *Black Mother*, and on their own terms, is important. And I do feel that, with this series, I at least did a decent job of that. But, until a more equitable infrastructure exists for co-operative film programming, one in which underrepresented films and filmmakers can flourish in all of their radical possibilities, there is little I can do outside of creating that

infrastructure from scratch. Perhaps I'll take up part of that mantle in the future, but myself *alone* could never achieve such a thing. It takes a village. A dedicated village. A loving village.

VI.   Conclusion: New Directions Found?

Going back to two of the texts discussed in Chapter I, Andy Ditzler's *Curation and Cinema* and Sarah Keller's *Anxious Cinephilia*, I want to trace all of the threads I've discussed in this paper back to a single question: if the goal of this series was, for myself and for others, to gesture towards new directions for not only cinema but film culture, was it successful in *that*?

Considering the limitations posed by my privileged point-of-view as a programmer, the nature of the institution I worked within, and the selection of films I screened, I find *New Cinematic Directions* to be a model of the working mode that Ditzler deemed "minor history." ""Minor history", he writes, "is a mode of working that "must resort to certain familiar models of culture and history, in order to both critique and move outside these models"" (57). Given my resources and platform, I worked within an institutional setting that could never reasonably achieve the much more radical, much more grassroots aims that I one day hope to have for my programming. However, I did take a familiar model (the film series) and a familiar setting (the Emory Cinematheque) and do something novel with them. I was able to critique the institution by proxy of organizing this kind of event within it, as well as the other institutions that ripple out from the event (i.e. the festivals and distributors that gave the films a platform previously) and the films themselves. This, combined with the more open approach to conversation I applied and the audience-expanding nature of a virtual event, helped me move outside of this model wherever I could.

Thinking about our moment in film history and film culture, fraught with outside pressures and a rapidly-changing media ecosystem, Keller's words ring in my head:

Recognizing how much an anxious cinephilia has shaped every moment of cinema's history, pushing and pulling it in various directions and indelibly shaping the way people have come to understand cinema and to talk about it, forms an important touchstone for that media past and future. It suggests the necessity of taking into account diverse spectators' investments in moving images as a way of thinking through the nature of those images, the freighted relationships they compel, and the way multiple interests slow or speed their constant transformations. A relationship between desire and wariness, anxious cinephilia fuels cinema experiences and undergirds cinema's fluidity and multiplicity (227).

Here, I can tell myself: cinema has *always* been anxious, *always* been in flux, *always* been a considerable source of love and passion and obsession for its acolytes. This is why we have to have more open spaces to just see and talk about different, "new" kinds of cinema. As the ground beneath our feet changes day by day, cinema will change with it, and it's up to us to keep up with it — lest we lose sight of it entirely. Film culture will cease to be adaptable if it refuses to open up the conversation, and to open it up to all kinds of people. And sometimes, that may take more outreach than your average cinephile, or even film programmer, is used to doing. I certainly could have done even more of that myself. But New Cinematic Directions feels, to me, to be a step in the right direction, personally. It gave me a platform upon which to try to build this kind of space, and, in many respects, I succeeded in that. The process of putting this series together and sharing it with our audiences has put me back in touch with that primal feeling that fueled my love of cinema as an adolescent, one I had long since lost touch with in the weeds of online forums, cinephile cliques, and social media discourses: that hunger to share movies with others, to gather with them, and to talk, to share our experiences. Such challenging

films as *Vitalina Varela* or as underseen a filmmaker as Sarah Maldoror deserve nothing less. *We* are the crucial element here, in that *we* can share them with each other. Without us, they cannot be "new," and they cannot point us to new directions for cinema. At the end of the day, making this possible is the film programmer's job, is it not? I feel content to have done mine.

Works Cited

Readings:

Another Gaze, "Another Gaze Presents: The Legacies of Sarah Maldoror." *Another Gaze*,

https://www.anothergaze.com/another-gaze-presents-legacies-sarah-maldoror-1929-2020-12-may-2020/. Accessed 29 October 2020.

Atkinson, Justine. "Curating an African Film Festival in Scotland: The Recognition of

Difference." *Third Text*, vol. 34, nos. 5-6, 2017, pp. 681-98.

Ditzler, Andy. *Curation and Cinema*. ProQuest, 2015.

Dovey, Lindiwe. "Through the Eye of a Film Festival: Toward a Curatorial and

Spectator-Centered Approach to the Study of African Screen Media." *Cinema Journal*,

vol. 54, no. 2, Winter 2015, pp. 126-32.

Keller, Sarah. *Anxious Cinephilia: Pleasure and Peril at the Movies*. Columbia University Press,

2020.

Pedulla, Gabriele. *In Broad Daylight: Movies and Spectators After the Cinema*. Translated by

Patricia Gaborik, Verso Books, 2012.

Senghor, Léopold Sédar. "Midnight Elegy." *Poetry Foundation*,

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?volume=103&issue=3&page=36. Accessed 25 March 2021.

Wollen, Peter. "An Alphabet of Cinema." *Verso Books*,

https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4533-an-alphabet-of-cinema. Accessed 25 March

2021.

Interviews:

Beard, Thomas. Personal interview. 17 November 2020.

Elmi, Rooney. Personal interview. 23 November 2020.

Escobar, Chris. Personal interview. 25 November 2020.

McGillicuddy, Genevieve. Personal interview. 30 October 2020.

Pilcher, Brad. Personal interviews. 13 and 16 November 2020.

Ram, Ajay. Personal interview. 24 November 2020.

Sun, Abby. Personal interview. 21 November 2020.

Whittle, Maddie. Personal interview. 9 December 2020.

Films:

Black Mother. Directed by Khalik Allah, Grasshopper Film, 2018.

A Dessert for Constance. Directed by Sarah Maldoror, 1980.

EIA pour Césaire. Directed by Sarah Maldoror, 2008.

The Inheritance. Directed by Ephraim Asili, Grasshopper Film, 2020.

Léon G. Damas. Directed by Sarah Maldoror, 1994.

Monangambée. Directed by Sarah Maldoror, 1969.

To the Ends of the Earth. Directed by Kiyoshi Kurosawa, KimStim, 2019.

Too Late to Die Young. Directed by Dominga Sotomayor, KimStim, 2018.

Vitalina Varela. Directed by Pedro Costa, Grasshopper Film, 2019.

Appendix A: Links

Black Mother Video Introduction:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pLxvSXhAzM&t=1s

Four Films by Sarah Maldoror Talk:

https://vimeo.com/525330459

Four Films by Sarah Maldoror Video Introduction:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8-YvxRxXwo

The Inheritance Video Introduction:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VK5w3xJFQPw

Interview with The Emory Wheel:

https://emorywheel.com/making-nontraditional-cinema-accessible-with-new-cinematic-di

rections/

Interview with WABE:

https://www.wabe.org/emory-cinematheque-showcases-six-films-of-radical-filmmakers-n

ever-screened-in-atlanta/

To the Ends of the Earth Video Introduction:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0CtFM2B3U8

Too Late to Die Young Video Introduction:

https://vimeo.com/517920647

Vitalina Varela Video Introduction:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oBb-FPVdpA&t=3s

Appendix B: Images

New Cinematic Directions

Press Contact: Gary Fessenden, gfessen@emory.edu
Program Contact: Evan Amaral, evan.amaral@emory.edu

ATLANTA (February 11, 2021) — The Emory Cinematheque is proud to present our new free virtual film series, "New Cinematic Directions," which runs Monday, March 1st through Friday, March 19th, 2021. The series is composed of six screenings as a testament to the generations of filmmakers who push the medium forward into uncharted radical new directions. All of the screenings and conversations in New Cinematic Directions are free and open to the public.

Sarah Maldoror (1929-2020) | © Bildjanst H Nicolaisen

Featured in "New Cinematic Directions" are three films held over from the COVID-cancelled March 2020 "Not Coming to a Theater Near You" Series: Pedro Costa's VITALINA VARELA (2019), Dominga Sotomayor's TOO LATE TO DIE YOUNG (2018), and Khalik Allah's BLACK MOTHER (2018). Joining the lineup are two new releases, Kiyoshi Kurosawa's TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Film Series

New Cinematic Directions

Not Coming to a Theater Near You - 2020

Not Coming to a Theater Near You

A Screening of the Work of Avi Nesher

Emory Cinematheque Spring 2020

Embodied: Human Health on Film

Nitzan Gilady Film Series

Forging Cinematic Identities: Eran Riklis

Screenplay by Harold Pinter

Martin Scorsese Presents: Masterpieces of Polish Cinema

Shakespeare on Film: Outstanding Adaptations

News

Campus Visitors

Past Events

Statement on Racial Justice and Equity

Featured in "New Cinematic Directions" are three films held over from the COVID-cancelled March 2020 "Not Coming to a Theater Near You" Series: Pedro Costa's VITALINA VARELA (2019), Dominga Sotomayor's TOO LATE TO DIE YOUNG (2018), and Khalik Allah's BLACK MOTHER (2018). Joining the lineup are two new releases, Kiyoshi Kurosawa's TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH (2019) and Ephraim Asili's THE INHERITANCE (2020).

The centerpiece of the series is a four-film mini-retrospective of the work of Sarah Maldoror, the legendary Angolan filmmaker-activist who became the first woman of African descent, globally, to write and direct a feature film. Four of Maldoror's short and medium length films — MONANGAMBÉE (1969), A DESSERT FOR CONSTANCE (1980), LÉON G. DAMAS (1994), and EIA POUR CÉSAIRE (2008) — will be screened in this block, in new restorations with newly-translated English subtitles. Maldoror's daughter, Ms. Annouchka de Andrade, will be joining us for a presentation on the films and her mother's body of work following the screening. The rest of the screenings in the series will be followed by open Zoom conversations with faculty and students.

"New Cinematic Directions" is made up of these six films — three by pioneers at the cutting edge of contemporary cinema (Sotomayor, Allah, Asili) and three by established masters whose works have been underrepresented in terms of local theatrical screenings (Maldoror, Kurosawa, Costa). Combined, their works explore our shifting definitions of home, of struggle, of facing an uncertain future with the tools provided by a rich cultural heritage. This goes for the lives of the characters and filmmakers, but also for the grand trajectory of film history. At this crossroads of that history, where its future is as uncertain as ever, we must look to the ways radically-minded filmmakers have pushed the medium and its discourses into uncharted and underrepresented territories.

How it works: This virtual series will offer each film for viewing for 2 days before its accompanying Zoom conversation by a panel of Emory faculty.

> **Audience members will sign up for each screening individually, at the links provided in the films' entries below.**

Here, they will provide their email to Emory's Department of Film and Media. A private link will be sent to each audience member on the first day of its viewing window. "Attendance" is limited so please sign up early. Only the Sarah Maldoror films and program have unlimited capacity.

Details on faculty participants in the Zoom conversations are forthcoming. "New Cinematic Directions" is a student-run series, programmed by fourth-year student Evan Amaral as his honors thesis project. He is supervised by department chair Dr. Matthew H. Bernstein. This series is made possible by the Department of Film and Media and Friends of Film.

For more information, visit the Emory Film and Media website at www.filmstudies.emory.edu, our facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/EmoryFilm, or call 404-727-6761.

Lastly, "New Cinematic Directions" is dedicated to the memory of Sarah Maldoror, who passed away from COVID-19 complications on April 13th, 2020. May she rest in power.

Screening Dates: 3/1 & 3/2 - TOO LATE TO DIE YOUNG »

Screening Dates: 3/4 & 3/5 - TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH »

"*To the Ends of the Earth* emerges as [Kurosawa's] most gracefully assured work in a while, though his natural gift for building tension is still made subtly manifest"- Justin Chang, *The Los Angeles Times*

Japanese travel TV host Yoko (played by former J-pop star Atsuko Maeda) makes a journey to the nation of Uzbekistan to film the latest episode of her series. Slowly but surely, she and her crew's inability to navigate the culture and customs of Uzbekistan punctures her happy-go-lucky onscreen persona, revealing her deepest fears and desires in all their complexities. An intensely moving character study combined with a sharply funny travelogue, *To the Ends of the Earth* is a rich study of a young woman's inner life. A KimStim release.

Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Japan/Uzbekistan, 2019, 121 minutes

- *Screening Dates: 3/4 & 3/5*
- *Conversation Date: 3/6*
- **WATCH THE TRAILER**
- **INTRODUCTION by** Evan Amaral

- **SIGNUP FORM**
- **CONVERSATION at 6PM:** (ID: 983 4987 1769)

New Cinematic Directions: TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

The screening dates for this film are 3/4 and 3/5. At the email you sign up with, you will receive a link and password to view the film on the morning of 3/4. You will have until 11:59 p.m. on 3/5 to view the film before your access expires.

The open Zoom conversation about the film will take place on 3/6 at 6:00 p.m. EST. You can find the link for it under the film's entry at http://filmstudies.emory.edu/home/events/film-series/new-cinematic-directions-series.html

If you have any further questions or issues, please reach out to evan.amaral@emory.edu

* Required

Name *

Pre-fill responses, then click "Get link"

New Cinematic Directions: TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

PLEASE READ: The screening period for this film has begun, so responses to this form have been locked as of 3/4. We still have a very limited number of links to send out, so if you reach this late and would still like to participate, email evan.amaral@emory.edu with an inquiry BY FRIDAY, MARCH 5TH AT NOON EST

Resume collecting responses (Only form editors can see this link).

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google. Report Abuse - Terms of Service - Privacy Policy

Google Forms

[External] Re: New Cinematic Directions: VITALINA VARELA   📎 1 ∨ ⊞

MS   Margaret A. Stephen <masteph@bellsouth.net>   👍 ↩ ↩ → ⋯
         Mon 3/8/2021 4:56 PM

To: Amaral, Evan

It is asking me to enter a password.
Thanks.

Margaret A. Stephen
770-992-0308
masteph@bellsouth.net

⋯

[External] Re: New Cinematic Directions: <mark>VITALINA</mark> VARELA

📎 1 ∨ ⊞

Amaral, Evan
Mon 3/8/2021 5:01 PM
To: Margaret A. Stephen <masteph@bellsouth.net>

👍 ↶ ↩ → ⋯

Margaret,

If by "password" you mean a code, that would be FONTAINHAS. But the link should autofill that for you when you click it.

Like I said in the original email, you do have to make an account in order to view the film, so this could be where the misunderstanding lies. Once you click the link, it will ask that you provide an email and password, which will create your account. Once you do that and click "redeem," the film will be available to you to watch.

The reason it works this way is because <mark>VITALINA</mark>, as well as the last two films in the series, are distributed by Grasshopper Film, who hosts them on their own streaming platform (rather than Vimeo). The code FONTAINHAS allows you to "rent" the film for free and participate in our screening specifically. Thus, all you have to do is make an account with your email and chosen password in order to access the film.

Does all of that make sense?

Best,

Evan D. Amaral
Emory 2021 / BA in Film Studies and Anthropology

[External] Re: New Cinematic Directions: <mark>VITALINA</mark> VARELA

📎 1 ∨ ⊞

MS **Margaret A. Stephen** <masteph@bellsouth.net>
Mon 3/8/2021 9:22 PM
To: Amaral, Evan

👍 ↶ ↩ → ⋯

Yes, thanks. It worked fine. Are the other movies still available?
Amazing cinematography.

Margaret A. Stephen
770-992-0308
masteph@bellsouth.net

⋯

NEW CINEMATIC DIRECTIONS: Exit Survey

If you've received a link for this form, that means you were signed up to participate in the Emory Cinematheque's virtual film series, NEW CINEMATIC DIRECTIONS, which ran from 3/1-3/19, 2021. If you wish to do so, please take a few minutes to fill out this anonymous survey about your experience. Your answers will be used for constructive feedback for the programmer, Evan Amaral, and for potential virtual events from Emory's Department of Film and Media in the future.

Thank you so much for your participation, and we hope to see you at the movies again soon!

If you would like to receive information about future events from the Department of Film and Media, please visit this link: https://eventactions.com/eventactions/arts-at-emory-film-studies#/subscribe?filter=%3Fsearch%3DEmory%2BCinematheque%2B

Still from Khalik Allah's BLACK MOTHER, courtesy of Grasshopper Film.

* Required

How many screenings did you take part in during NEW CINEMATIC DIRECTIONS? *

○ 1

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4+

How many of the accompanying conversations did you take part in? *

○ 1

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4+

IF you took part in any of the Zoom conversations, please do consider including your feedback here: did you feel welcomed, comfortable, and that it was an open space for you to participate however you preferred? Was Mr. Amaral a fair moderator? Were the conversations clear and accessible technology-wise? Was having faculty members present helpful in adding context to the discussion?

Your answer

IF you took part in the FOUR FILMS BY SARAH MALDOROR presentation by Annouchka de Andrade, please do consider including your feedback on that event in particular here: was the presentation formatted and presented clearly, were you able to get your questions answered, etc?

Your answer

Was the programmer, Evan Amaral, available and helpful with any questions/issues you had throughout the duration of the series? *

Your answer

Was the layout of NEW CINEMATIC DIRECTIONS easy to follow and well-communicated? *

Your answer

How did you find out about NEW CINEMATIC DIRECTIONS? *

Your answer

Based on the film(s) you viewed in the series, what was your overall impression of the film selection? Were any of the films particularly "new" to you, or did any of them make a particularly strong impact? *

Your answer

Overall, would you participate in an event like this again from Emory and/or Mr. Amaral? Please include any additional comments here. *

Your answer

If you would like to be in the loop for future events/projects from Mr. Amaral, please include your email here.

Your answer

OPTIONAL: If you participated in the screening of TOO LATE TO DIE YOUNG, please feel free to share some of your thoughts on the film and/or discussion here!

Your answer

OPTIONAL: If you participated in the screening of TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, please feel free to share some of your thoughts on the film and/or discussion here!

Your answer

OPTIONAL: If you participated in the screening of VITALINA VARELA, please feel free to share some of your thoughts on the film and/or discussion here!

Your answer

OPTIONAL: If you participated in the screening of FOUR FILMS BY SARAH MALDOROR, please feel free to share some of your thoughts on the films here!

Your answer

OPTIONAL: If you participated in the screening of BLACK MOTHER, please feel free to share some of your thoughts on the film and/or discussion here!

Your answer

OPTIONAL: If you participated in the screening of THE INHERITANCE, please feel free to share some of your thoughts on the film and/or discussion here!

Your answer