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I am  
(the Life of a Girl)  
by  
Nancy G. Ghertner

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree in  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MFA Imaging Arts/Film  
School of Film and Animation  
Rochester Institute of Technology

September 1999

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**(the Life of a Girl)**

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September 9, 1999

## Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to accomplish this thesis project without the help of my dear family, friends, and the support of my thesis committee: Cathleen Ashworth, Chair, Pia Cseri-Briones, and Howard Lester. Additionally, the tireless efforts of my crew and cast over the eleven months of the project's creation cannot go without my recognition. Their names are inscribed in the visuals of the media.

This project is dedicated to my mothers and grandmothers: Ruth Esser, Jane Gottlund, Zoë Gottlund, and Jean Ghertner.

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# Thesis Report

*"That's the way things are, they start as fragments."*

Jean Cocteau

To know where one is going, to understand one's journey, is constantly altered by the progression of new information one receives in the process. My personal understanding of this thesis project, "I am (the Life of a Girl)," continues to be in transition, as what I know is influenced by the dissection, analysis and synthesis in preparing this report. Despite this fluid state of knowing, a single truth can be stated. The thematic and aesthetic strands for "I am (the Life of a Girl)" were active in all aspects of the project: in its script development; in its production; in the editing process and in the final installation in the SPAS Gallery at Rochester Institute of Technology.

Prior to the time when I formally began the thesis treatment, I traveled with my husband to Rome, Florence and Venice, Italy. During this trip ideas and images were added to the narrative and installation concepts which I was developing. While in Rome, the daily experiences of passing through spaces filled with architecture, language, art and food infused my senses with an intense array of information both emotional and factual. At first the ideas that were nurtured in this Roman experience seemed to collide with the narrative idea I was exploring which was centered on a female heroine, the Girl, and her search for her self. In time the visual, narrative, and contextual fragments which I experienced in Italy found a place inside the narrative and structure of the installation project. Several specific fragments or elements influenced the thesis project: the arch, prevalent in Renaissance architecture, the avant garde ballet, "Parade," the mask, as a designated character type in the *Commedia del' arte* of the 1500's, and the concerto form of baroque music with its theme and variations.

### *The Arch*

The design of the installation space in the SPAS gallery was particularly influenced by the architecture I encountered in Rome and Florence. The homes, whether grand or common, present a vertical facade towards the street side without a yard, front porch or other element which in America provides for interaction between the public street and the inside home. Instead an archway acts as a passage from the street into a courtyard. This archway is an area of transition from the outside world to the private inside world of the home. I used this concept of transition space in the entrance design to the heroine's House in the installation set with the arch separating the Girl's interior life in the House from the public Gallery area. It also provided an area to project the slide images from Sequence One. Under this archway, the heroine was born to the audience's eyes as they passed into her home.

In addition to the structural significance of the Roman arch in the Installation House, its curved form gave meaning to the plot structure. The first dictionary definition describes the function of the arch as a doorway or gateway having a curved head. Other meanings resonate different purposes such as the arch as the chief, the most important, or the verb form of arch "to span with an arch." The arch's parts, its vault, its keystone, its span, became a metaphor for the story. Elements from each sequence build towards the keystone, the turning point in the Girl's life when she is unmasked. The grouping of all the individual sequences makes a bridge or connection among the parts of the Girl's life.

### *Parade*

The idea of stylizing the central character of my story in order to add



a layer of visual information and meaning to her figure was inspired by my viewing of an exhibit of Pablo Picasso's set, costume drawings, notes and paintings for the 1919 ballet, "Parade." The exhibit in Venice, focused on the collaborative efforts of four artists: Jean Cocteau, who wrote the scenario; Eric Satie, who composed the music; Serge Diaghilev, the choreographer of the Ballet Russe; and Pablo Picasso, who designed the set and costumes. The costumes designed for the main characters of the ballet covered the dancers entire body including an elaborate mask and head gear. I was stimulated by this use of the costumed figure to convey another personality or layer of meaning for the characters. Also included in this exhibit were paintings which Picasso completed during this same period (1919 -1921). There were drawings and paintings of masked figures, a Harlequin, street clowns, and a Pulcinella. Picasso's introduction of these characters created for me a curiosity about the Commedia del' arte, remnants of which are found in the masks, marionettes and street performers of Venice. If my character wore a mask, could an additional layer of meaning be communicated to the audience ? Or would the viewer have to research the meaning thus making the mask a hollow device ?

### *The Mask*

Commedia del' arte was a form of theater in the baroque and Renaissance periods in Italy. It is distinguished by actors improvising their speeches and actions from a loose plot structure, the sogetto. The actors and actresses represented stock character types: a lover, a beloved, old men, servant maids, and the zanni or comic servants. The actors and actresses were famous for their unique representations of these types, their improvisations, their speeches and their lazzi or tricks. The most

influential stock types for me were the zanni, especially Harlequin and his opposite, Pedrolino. Harlequin, either very clever or very stupid, is an acrobat and trickster. Pedrolino is the wise fool character who evolves into the 19th century French pale faced clown called Pierrot. These character types although not directly found in “I am (the Life of a Girl)” are important to the development of the Girl’s character in the sense that a masked figure could be both clever and stupid, wise and a fool.

### *Concerto*

The musical form of the concerto conveys a parallel with the working process for the thesis project. The concerto introduces a theme, perhaps as a simple melody, which is then transformed through variations, either by a single instrument or a group of instruments. In the early stages I wrote the script for the sequences as if they were parts of a concerto. The main character enters and introduces her theme, a search for a way through the thicket. She then sets out to define who she is through interactions with other characters. The stages of the heroine’s search directly correlate to the progression of her life. Even though I chose to use this linear procession I wanted to create layers of meaning in the heroine’s search by intertwining themes from her youth, middle age and old age. This interweaving of the narrative would develop in a way similar to the varied instrumental voices of the concerto.

### *The Script*

While in Italy I had written a collection of absurd scenes which were composed immediately after waking. They were a surreal mixture of poetic stanzas which placed a heroine with one arm in situations throughout her

life. On the plane trip back across the Atlantic, the plane's atmosphere created a sort of heightened frenzy in which I wrote several new scenes. The sounds in the jet environment, coupled with my hearing loss, initiated the sound disturbance in the heroine's consciousness. This disturbance, the ROAR, becomes a defining element in the story, a sort of mental block which bothers the heroine from her teen years to her unmasking and revelation.

In the RIT Spring Quarter I attempted to make sense of these first absurd scenes and to give them a more structured shape. I was anxious for them to communicate directly, but I did not want to sacrifice their initial energy. I began by defining the heroine. I knew that she was young in spirit, open and in touch with her surroundings, but as she grew older was plagued by indecision and an inability to confront her true self. She would need to endure some amount of discomfort and conflict in order to reveal her inner self.

Upon the advice of my thesis advisors, Cathleen Ashworth, Howard Lester and Pia Cseri-Briones, I researched traditional folk and fairy tale content and structure. This would allow the story to take advantage of the viewer's own relationship to fairy tales. In the classic tale of the quest, the hero overcomes trials and surmounts adversity to win the prize: the throne, wisdom, or the woman. The hero in this quest is decidedly a masculine figure and the repressed figure within the quest narrative is the woman. When a tale has a feminine counterpart to the hero, like Sleeping Beauty or Snow White, the plot typically includes courtship and seduction. The energy of the heroic quest is replaced by choice of marriage partner or an amorous adventure as in the story of Rapunzel. In either of these female quests, the heroine finds her place in the masculine order. As a child I had

always identified with the male hero, because it was more exciting and interesting. Instead of being the pursued, the heroine of my tale would be a singular figure, in charge of herself, even when uncertain of who she was. The influences of fairy tales, of girls in trouble, of domestic activity, of magic entrances, and of danger all provoke a parallel in my heroine's quest. Using the folk and fairy tale structure, the problems for the Girl became easier to define. She had to stop the ROAR and find her own voice.

At this stage of the script development the plot mirrored the stages of the Girl's life. In Sequence One the heroine is young and reveals her natural inquisitiveness in crossing the thicket. In Sequence Two turning endless cartwheels, the Girl is unmindful of the world around her and is content to master her cartwheel skills. In Sequence Three she enters the world of her peers in high school and sees herself through the eyes of her friend. In Sequence Four she dreams of a new identity by changing her dress. But the pressures of family and her emerging social life provide an internal conflict in Sequence Five. When the Girl reaches Sequence Six her family conflict results in her masking and hiding her true self behind the mask of her mother's creation. In the middle Sequences, Seven and Eight, the Girl has become a young mother and is confronted by the cycle of her life. In the final Sequences Nine and Ten, in her mature motherhood, she meets the wise woman and resolves her conflict by taking off her mask. In the first draft these outlined sequences existed independently as they had in my dream notes. That is, the script was not developed with transitions between the individual life stages. The sequences would echo the arch metaphor in their contribution to the story as a whole, but would narrate self contained plots. In this way the viewer interpreted the story's total experience as they combined the emotional information of each sequence.

My personal history with installation art also influenced this approach to the sequence structure. In installation art, audiences have viewing styles which function with short and long attention spans determined by their interest level. In a practical sense, choosing to present the story in ten parts allowed the viewer's physical participation in making of the story.

In early April of 1998, I read the thesis treatment to the Thesis Preparation class. The feedback on the emotional impact of the story was positive. There were some questions about the length of the script in terms of the the feasibility of such a complex set of scenes. A major concern for several classmates was the condition of the Girl. At this point she was portrayed as physically disabled, having only one arm. They were concerned about my ability to create a realistic film, with this physical trait in the heroine. The aspect of the treatment ideas that was most interesting for the class was the impression of the ROAR. The ROAR at this point was a sound that I could identify, but was not yet able to articulate in the narrative. It was a sound which confuses the heroine from puberty through confrontation with her inner self in her middle age. The physical sound of the ROAR sound did not emerge until the final stages of post production, although it existed as a concept in all stages of the project's development.

After this review my work focused on defining the heroine's struggle. Was she disabled by one or several things? Upon the insistence of Zoë, my 14 year old daughter, the Girl's one arm disability was eliminated. Zoë had commented, "how will she turn cartwheels, and how will you make it look real?" Although reality was not a visual goal, the film portion of the project was conceived to embrace a reality of the Girls' own making. The Girl's disability was simplified to be represented by the ROAR, her internal

conflict. On another level, the ROAR represented the the suffocating control of society's norms for behavior. Reflecting on the influences or the masked character as used in the ballet "Parade" and in the commedia del' arte, I experimented with the idea of the Girl wearing a mask at the time that her internal ROAR develops. The mask indicated a persistent state of confusion. It denied the character's ability to evolve separately from its form. The mask defined the Girl as soon as it was placed onto her face in Sequence Six.

The thesis proposal was formally presented to the faculty and staff of the Film/Video/Computer Animation Department, School of Photographic Sciences in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences at the end of April. The proposal included a first draft of my script, the treatment, budget, storyboards describing the look of the film, and preliminary map of the installation space. This was an educating experience as I gained several new insights for the installation environment and for the script's development. My thesis proposal for "I Am (the Life of a Girl)" was passed on April 30, 1998 with one concern relating to my budget figures.

### *The Early Sequences*

During the early summer the pre-production of the project moved in several directions: script clarification, casting of the first part of the script, building the set and creating costumes. The casting process influenced the script development. The young women who played the Girl and her friends, provided a raw energy to the script pages which allowed me to further develop the middle sequences. I cast a young dancer Erica Abbott as the young Girl, At 16 years of age, Erica had the ability to project a persona on stage as well as to perform mime. The other teen roles for Sequence Three

were cast from dancers at my daughter's studio. These girls all proved to have the stage experience and the concept of rehearsal time which brought the scene together.

Erica and I began working together in late June. The preparation for the part included creating the Girl's costume and mask. The character of the girl was conceived to be a stock character as represented by the *amorate*, or beloved, in the commedia plots. She would be defined by a consistent visual style in all sequences the same hairdo, shoes and dress. This fixed outer appearance focused significance onto the Girl's internal dilemma.

The process of directing Erica began with the production of Sequences One and Two which were shot on a day in July. Storyboards were used to map out the main visual directions in the final edit. These I created on a series of index cards that held visual information and comments for each shot. The small summer crew of myself as solo camera with one production assistant was efficient for the non-dialog scenes and proved important for Erica. She was able to develop a rapport with me and to flesh out her sense of character.

After shooting Sequences One and Two, we cast Erica's mask. My research for a casting material had resulted in a polymer resin which could duplicate the details of the face. To achieve this detail required a plaster death mask to be cast from Erica's full face. This process required her to lay completely still, to breathe through straws and to close her eyes. Needless to say, this implies a trust between us. The act of casting Erica's face into plaster seemed to bond her to the role. I began looking to her for the emotional movement of the storyline, trusting her to understand the Girl as she had trusted me to cast her face and to lead her into the part.

The next sequence was arranged for the Sodus High School in late August prior to the school's opening. The three teens who played opposite "the Girl," rehearsed with Erica for one long session. The teens had a limited time slot for the actual shoot, and I had to rely on their intuitive understanding of the situation from their rehearsal. My lessons from the production of the early sequences were: have well thought out storyboards that several people can understand, rehearse to a comfort level and cast for intuition when working with non-professionals.

The script development in the fall for the middle Sequences, Four, Five and Six, followed the intuitive lead that Erica had given me for the Girl's character. During one of our summer car rides I pushed Erica for possible directions that would grow from the high school scene. She surprised me by adding the ideas for the Sequence Four, "Changes." She thought the girl should be more active, more original. We shot this sequence in September with the addition of Daniel Tonitto, the film's Director of Photography. It was a simple shoot, but it provided the first opportunity for Daniel to work with Erica and for us both to develop our shooting and directing styles. This shoot was followed by Sequence Five, "the Run" and "the Fall." This outside scene was visually exciting because of the natural abilities of movement that both Erica and Daniel brought to the process. In addition, I had a strong sense of the critical visual emotions for this scene. Our goal was to capture a teenager's anxiety in its most direct state. We worked at contrasting the Girl's out of control "Run" with her passive but alert "Fall."

As we approached the moment of the Girl's masking in Sequence Six, I asked Erica to reach out and meet her own conflicts with putting on the rubber mask. She had a difficult time defining her conflict with the



mother character, perhaps because of her lack of training in acting. But I was able to capture her passive stubbornness in the edited sequence. This scene was quite difficult in its physical limitations for me as a director. The actress, whom I had cast to play the Girls' mother had a time table in hand, despite my many discussions with her. She exuded a nervous anxiety which was the only emotion we were able to work with in the shoot. However, we focused on the story boarded shots which developed Erica's reaction to her Mother.

### *The Later Sequences*

At the time we were shooting the Girl's character as a teen I cast Jil Matrisciano, a MFA dance student at SUNY Brockport, in the part of the Girl as an adult. Like Erica, Jil had an intuitive understanding of movement and portrayed an intense stage presence. Our goal was to project her character without relying on dialogue. We started Jil's sequences with the dream in Sequence Seven "Beyond the Door." This sequence introduces two dreams of the young Mother: a dream of heroic revenge and a dream of missed opportunity. Jil asked me to help her understand what emotion I was looking for in her first scene. Although at the time this seemed unintuitive on her part, I later realized that the character of the Girl was inside me. I had to pass on to Jil the understanding I had developed while working with Erica. Eventually we encountered the Girl by using Jil's own responses including her natural mannerisms, the awkwardness of her mask and wig, and working in front of a mirror. We rediscovered the heroine struggling to find her way out of the stickers in Sequence One. In a metaphorical sense the poetic Sequence One, in which a young Girl crosses a sticker patch to reach an open field, was not fully resolved in the

character of the young Girl. The Girl had crossed through the difficult patch as a youth, without the real life experiences that would grab at her flesh. Now in Sequences Seven Eight and Nine the older mature Girl, was searching for a way through life's stickers to an open field of possibility that lay within her vision.

Jil devoted herself to empathizing with the Girl in Sequence Eight which introduced her teenage daughter, and in Sequence Nine, where she meets the wise woman. She became the Girl as a mother who lived a life filled with indecision and hidden anxiety. Her struggle was felt through the thick rubber mask and in spite of the stylized costume. As we worked through the intensity of Sequence Nine, I appreciated Jil's stamina and persistence in developing the part of the older Girl.

The set for these last Sequences was created in a friend's old house which was under restoration. My set carpenter, Lory Ghertner, constructed a kitchen with a sink, cupboard and wall system which also became part of the Girl's Installation House. By shooting in the house with consistent crew, lighting, and set, we developed a sense of dramatic continuity. Jil was costumed in the same blue dress and her wig gradually became streaked with grey and her mask showed age wrinkles. These elements contributed to the reality and continuity of the story emphasizing the metaphor of time and change.

### *Post Production*

Upon completion of shooting Sequence Nine I shifted my focus to organizing the digital video footage for the edit process. As I looked at the story's narrative dynamics on tape, two possible directions of narrative structure were present. One direction following the dialog and plot could be

characterized by a direct or straight path. A second structure emerged from the non-verbal information in the Girl's unconscious anxiety. I started editing with the emotional Sequence Five, "the Run" and "the Fall," in order to grapple with this unconscious emotional energy. I also wanted to solve the technical problems that I knew would develop with the use of MiniDV tape, our acquisition format for this scene. I had some hesitation because of this format's lack of SMPTE time code however, I discovered that as soon as the tape was digitized I was able achieve frame accuracy in the digital edit process.

This scene came together with a structure following the visual dynamics of the Girl's run. She was noticeably upset and the footage had a natural movement. However, I wanted to give visual life to her internal dilemma. This was achieved by working with layers of video to act as time lapses in her experience. She was remembering and experiencing different times as she ran down the road and lay on the grass fixated by her surroundings. A question remained concerning the sound layer and where the ROAR would emerge. It took me a month and a half more to develop the sound layers for the final installation. The sound was created from working with the dialog portions of the script as well as introducing the machine sound effects to represent her mental disturbance.

The course of my editing for the remaining sequences followed the technique which developed in Sequence Five. First the linear layer was constructed from the straight line plot movement. This followed the dialog in the sequences when they contained verbal story line. After this linear progression was built, I created layers of visual information relating to the Girl's emotions. Finally a third and fourth layer were added using the audio overlays. The non-linear process of editing with the Avid Media

Composer facilitated this layering process. I was able to create multiple versions of the sequences and to create the layers using its nesting effects features. The visual effect of the layers created a seamless image which could represent both her internal and external reality. Although this visual design was constructed in the Avid edit environment, the concept of interweaving the aspects of the Girl's mental and emotional life were developed with my understanding of the baroque concerto. The possibility of the Girl's life developing outside of one dimension was produced from the intertwining of musical motif on different instrumental voices.

### *The Installation House*

The metaphoric structure in which to place the Girl's story seemed to require a space which could both hold the Girl's life stages and expand on their meaning. The House which was built in the SPAS Gallery became this container which "housed" the Girl's life. The physical structures of the installation House, rooms, hallways, corners, window and furniture, provided a physical relationship to the video's set. The kitchen and its sink, cupboard, shelves and table existed in both the film and installation set. The entrance to the House, the archway through which the viewer passed with the slide projections covering the walls, announced the beginning of the Girl's life. Similar to the Italian arched entrance opening the street to the interior of the home, the House's arch led the viewer into the interior where the Girl's private life resided.

In the beginning of January 1999 I designed the plans for this Installation House which would be constructed in the RIT SPAS Gallery at the end of April, 1999. With the help of Lory Ghertner, Mark Vande, Ralph Mosher and Robert Bruce, the carpenters, diagrams were created for the

house construction. I laid out a timetable for the installation, the purchase of materials and the scheduling of work crews. We used 2 x 4 lumber to create the framework of the rooms and hallways. This was covered with theatrical muslin which was the most cost efficient material for our budget. The muslin supported an aesthetic effect creating the idea of wall surfaces and providing a surface for projection. The doors, windows, high school locker, kitchen furniture and the openings for the monitors were all fitted into this wall framework. In the third week of April a dynamic group of friends and fellow students assembled the installation house in the Gallery. This took three full 12 hour days including the construction, the covering of the framework, the placement of the monitor spots, the kitchen decoration and painting. As the house reached completion we carefully placed eight monitors, two video projectors, ten VCR's, six slide projectors, four sets of speakers and amplifiers into their specific viewing locations. By the night of the thesis opening, the installation house was inhabited by the spirit of the Girl. Its hallways, windows, kitchen and and rooms resonated with her search for her self.

### *The Installation Video*

In the gallery exhibits I viewed and with which I interacted during the late 1980's, I came in contact with the art form described as installation video. These video installations called "portable spectacular environments"<sup>1</sup> for me were the artist's attempt to render a sense of reality and immediacy to the viewing experience. The artists explored the idea of kinesthetic and interactive viewing between the viewer and the space. The video loop itself was an element in this space. Their devices, whether Nam June Paik's

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<sup>1</sup> Marc Meyer, "Being & Time: The Emergence of Video Projection" (The Buffalo fine Arts Academy, 1996,) page 28.

piano, Tony Ousler's spheres or Laurie Anderson's telephones, are in a dialog with the content of the video. These installations flabbergasted my senses, making little intellectual meaning for me, however they left an impression which led me to second and third encounters.

These experiences led me to a personal exploration combining sculptural objects and video. When I considered how to present the story of the Girl's life, I decided that the video installation environment would add a secondary layer of meaning to the video story. This art form, video installation, has been described by artist critic Vito Acconci in a way that I feel might add some meaning to this report.

Video installation is the conjunction of opposites... on the one hand, "installation" places an artwork in a specific site, for a specific time... On the other hand, "video" (with its consequences followed through: video broadcast on television) is placeless: at least, its place can't be determined there's no way of knowing the particular look of all those millions of homes that receive the TV broadcast. Video installations, then, places placelessness: video installation is an attempt to stop time.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to watching a film where time is compressed so that the entire story is contained in the viewer's single sitting, installation video may treat time in several different ways. It can be afforded a particular importance by the mere act of its passage. The viewer can be attracted to the sense of time represented in the video because of its very close connection to the viewer's presence in the installation itself. In contrast to a single time sitting of film viewing, the installation video may be viewed in parts, over a period of several sittings all completely at the discretion of the viewer. It is this quality of viewer interactivity which makes the video loop of the installation an art form itself.

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Vito Acconci, "Television, Furniture and Sculpture: The Room with the American View," *Illuminating Video: as Essential Guide to Video Art*, eds. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (San Francisco: Aperture, 1990), page 133.

The design of the installation space, which in terms of the story was the Girl's House, contained places for monitor based viewing, spaces for viewing projected video and spaces for encountering the "furniture" of the installation. The monitor viewing was structured in two ways. In Sequences, Three, Five, Six, Seven, Eight and Nine the video was defined by the film scene structure and was complete in itself from beginning to end. On the other monitors, Sequences Two, Four and Ten, the video was placed on a loop and was a deposit for constantly reoccurring household duties - cooking, sewing, and household chores. A viewer could view these monitors with their own methods, stopping for a short period of time to sample a portion of the video's loop or engaging in the full duration of the cycle. As sampling sites the video resisted the beginning, middle and ending structure and instead focused on manipulating time in order to evoke the feeling of a suspended moment in the Girl's life.

The monitor acted as a window into the teen years in the Girl's life in Sequence Four. By highlighting the intimate surroundings of the Girl's bedroom with the picture frame, the viewer would feel as though he or she were peering into the teenage life. I wanted to create a photo album moment, captured forever by the frame. Sequence Ten was presented on a silent monitor with attached headphones. The viewer was given the opportunity to experience the Girl working and finishing a task, laying tiles. In this sequence the video time equaled the real time it took for the Girl to grout the tiles.

The other looped video sequence, "That I am," Sequence Two, was projected into a small corner of the installation House. The four by six projection literally filled the space. This changed the dynamic of the Sequence adding a larger than life dimension and creating in its perpetual

motion an installation metaphor. The cartwheel with its associated sound of feet hitting the ground in a rhythm, filled this space and echoed the Girl's spirit under and through the sounds from the dialog in the other sequences.

The second video projection, "Return to When," in Sequence Nine, was presented just outside of the kitchen room. This is the keystone scene in the Girl's internal struggle with her hidden self. Here she meets her wise-woman, who is projected larger than life, participates in the sifting of flour and making of bread. She is given permission by her wise woman self to take off the mask and enter into a communication with her inner self. This five by five foot projected scene filled its room giving the viewer a more cinematic experience of the story. This choice of viewing format served the purpose of emphasizing and adding drama to this critical part of the Girl's life.

*Working towards the conclusion before I get there*

Now I leave my notebooks behind. The notebook for organizing myself for production consisting of potential crew and their contact phone numbers, possible actresses and their phone numbers, my advisor's e-mail, close friends for emergency help and calendars for scheduling. Another notebook, a beautiful bound folio, with pages of square graphs coupled with pure white pages on which I proposed to draw my storyboards was filled through March of 1999 with notes, drawings, references, critiques, cut outs and new ideas. A final notebook I leave is my three ring edit log, which saved me many times, kept me on track and afforded me the luxury of forgetfulness. With notebooks placed on the shelf, I turn to encounter the Girl again as she emerges in my time lapsed mind.



Over the three years of this thesis study, I have embraced the study of a narrative approach that I identify as classical narrative structure. Its strategy is to create a sense of reality for the spectator which allows them to connect with the characters in the film. In this process they gain a feeling of character identification as the story unfolds in a manner they feel they understand. In this project I was not interested in telling a story in which the audience completely identifies with the characters. Rather the story to be told embraced the feeling that I (the viewer) am absent or I am present in this story. Within this more alternative voice, the viewer is confronted with a set of values, conditions and realities that are different from their own. The Girl's dilemma, while not completely unique in conditions or situations, has specific content which I hoped would allow the viewer to engage with her search.

In placing the story in a gallery installation, it is removed from the realm of the cinema where there is a communal experience of viewing. In the video installation this communal viewing is replaced by a more private one where the viewing conditions, except on opening night, are often quite lonely. In the installation space which I designed, the video narrative is framed by the "television" monitor and by the gallery environment of the Girl's House instead of the cinematic screen. This framing constructed a dimension of realism for the video narrative. The Girl inhabited her House, we could hear her as we passed from room to room, just as we hear a family member in the course of daily life. In some places, the kitchen in particular, the video supported the illusion that the Girl's life was real. The presence of sink, cupboard, appliances, and food give the viewer the comfort of a real house. We all like the kitchen, the knowledge that someone will be there, that the cycle of family meals will perpetuate. This kind of

psychological convention for kitchen life is referenced in the placement of Sequence Six -“The Masking” and Sequence Eight “Return to When,” into monitors in the kitchen. However at the same time the convention of this kitchen is undermined by the differences between the set’s kitchen and the film’s kitchen as time and space are mixed up, compressed and suspended. The kitchen set asks the viewer to consider their own experience; to place their personal memory in contrast or comparison to the sequence playing on the video loops.

This contrast of real, film, and memory time was a primary component of the viewer’s experience or the installation. In the actual gallery time the Girl’s House existed for a specific two week period. I was constantly reminded of this reality as people asked me if I had documented the house or asked, “Can I come back?” As suggested earlier, the story in the video loops, represented a separate dimension of time and place. The video story took place a fictional place and time, related to the Girl’s Installation House, but not identical to it. This juxtaposition, developed an interplay between the fictional narrative, the Installation House and a third component, the viewer’s personal memories. As I edited the video and designed the installation house I recognized that the meaning the viewer brought to the story would change their understanding and how they might sequence the various parts of the installation.

The viewing styles ranged from a random approach to a completely linear approach. Both approaches have drawbacks which might affect the understanding of the installation. The linear viewer uses the map provided at the entrance archway and seems to need to follow the story using the time line of the Girl’s life. This approach could act as a barrier to experiencing the deconstructive aspects of the installation. The non-linear

viewer on the other hand, approached the house and the sequences as visual displays. My fear was they would not “get the story” and merely enjoy the visual space. In actuality most viewers used a combination of techniques. If the story was interesting to them they would revisit the sequences for additional viewings. This leads me to believe, as Howard Lester has noted: the viewing audience is sophisticated, they understand far more than you realize merely by their experience with film viewing. The more information you can give them and the more subtle the metaphor, the more interested they become.

In the end I am an artist. My medium, film and video, describes my thoughts, my intents and my dreams. Without an audience however, the dreams remain in my own personal place whether in my notebook, in my head or in my video. In whatever manner I elucidate and draw meaning to the various aspects of this thesis project it is the traces of the Girl’s life her gesture, the imprint of her personality, and her struggle to release her inner spirit - which carry the connection for the audience. In “I am (the Life of a Girl),” my intents, thoughts and dreams ignite around the celebration of a particular woman’s story. I choose to make a small insertion into a history of all tales and place a new heroine, the Girl, into the collection of narratives.

## Appendix A

### Original Thesis Proposal

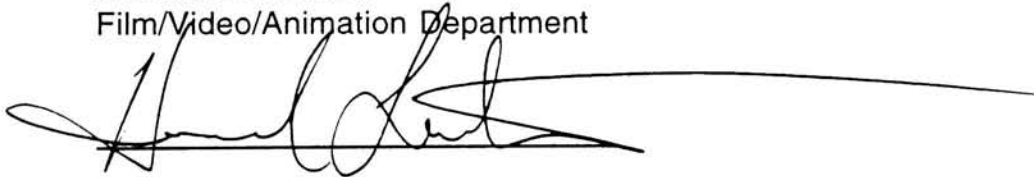
Proposal for MFA Thesis Project

"I Am"  
by  
Nancy G. Ghertner

MFA Imaging Arts/Computer Animation  
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES  
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
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## Synopsis "I Am"

**"I Am"** is a video installation that introduces a female figure, "The Girl", as a hero.

The sequences of a Girl's life will be presented in an installation environment where the viewer discovers the hero's search by choosing and organizing the pieces of narrative in the process of viewing. In a sense the installation is like meeting a person for the first time and learning about their life through the bits and pieces which are given by that person's actions, speech and spirit.

The Installation space will be presented as a house with rooms, passage-ways and open spaces. Video projections (3), slide projections, video monitors of a variety of sizes, speakers and headphones will be embedded in the house. The viewer will activate their play by their presence in a space or by touching an object which relates to a video sequence.

The Diagram page of this proposal is a working visual idea of the installation environment as it relates to the individual sequences of the treatment.

## Treatment “I Am”

### I am 1

A Girl is walking into a thicket of tall grasses and bushes. At first she can't find a way through. She looks around and after awhile finds a place where the bushes are thinner, however she discovers that these bushes have prickles on them. Finally by lifting the branches individually she can slowly pass through the thicket to the clearing beyond. As she finds her way a distinct melody attaches its tempo to her movement. She reaches the clearing.

### That I am 2

The Girl turns cartwheels, exploding to the ground and bouncing up, the motion like a turning toy. The cartwheel girl is accompanied by sounds of a family cheering, “good going, wow, where did you learn that.” The Girl stops the cartwheels and looks towards the voices. They start talking about their day, their jobs, things they have to get done. The Girl walks away from the voices. She starts her cartwheels again her melody beats with her.

### That I should be 3

The Girl bursts into a kitchen, her spirits are high. Her Mother is sitting at a table making supper. She asks the Girl where she's been. The Girl tells her mother about the flowers she saw on her way home. Her Mother interrupts her insisting that the Girl was kept after school for misbehaving in class. The Girl says she took her time coming home, but the Mother is not interested in her story and brings out a special DRESS that the Grandmother has made for the Girl to wear. She tells the Girl she will wear this dress everyday to help her act properly. The Girl objects, saying she likes to choose what she will wear, and besides the dress is a costume, not a dress. The Mother stops the objections saying, “The Dress will help you be good.

The Mother with the Grandmother in the background, put the DRESS on the Girl, fastening it at shoulders and waist. The DRESS is a MASK, it is somewhat clear and fits over the entire front of the Girl's body. You can see the Girl under its surface.

## What they see

4

A school cafeteria buzzes with junior high lunch drama. The Girl, a teenager, carries her bagged lunch to a table of kids, sits down, and starts eating her lunch. She doesn't join the conversation at the table. After a few minutes the conversation slows down and the kids at her table look at her. "What" she says. "You haven't said anything," a girl says. The Girl answers, "Oh, I don't know what's going on today." The other kids start talking about their science class. One friend asks the Girl to try her new eye shadow. The cafeteria begins to clear out, the friend gives her the eye make-up. The Girl tries to apply the eye shadow, and has trouble getting it on. Her friend sees her struggling and helps her put on the make-up. The sounds of the cafeteria and her friend's voice become distant as a low roar penetrates her awareness. Although she is distracted by the sound, she gives back the makeup and leaves the cafeteria with her friend. Voices intrude - Friend's Voice: "I love your hair. It's so black, do you dye it?" Mom's Voice: "Be polite, Keep your legs together, smile." Teen's Voice: "Straighten your hair, walk slow, don't care so much," and the "ROAR" sounds now always present.

## Out there

5

The Girl, a grown woman still wearing the Dress-Mask, sits at a kitchen table picking peas from their pods. She hears the sounds of children opening the door to the house, throwing down school bags. Her daughter comes into the kitchen and kisses her on the cheek. She keeps podding the peas, looking out the window, and daydreaming. She sees a stairway, the ROAR grows more distinct. She climbs the stairs, at the top is a door. The roar sounds loud and fierce from behind the door. She opens the door, to the fumes of a beast. She raises her kitchen knife turned sword to strike back the beast. At the peak of her swing a child's voice intrudes. "There's nothing to eat. We never have anything good." The Girl's sword is again a knife. She cuts open the pea turned very large and feeds her child pieces of the pea. Her face looks incredulously at the Girl, but accepts the pea.

## What is it

6

In an empty room the Girl is held up by her Husband. She is reaching to replace a light bulb. They embrace as she slides from the light fixture. She asks, "Do I have to finish everything?" He answers her, "I believe so, I do." After awhile he asks her what is bothering her. She tells him about the Roaring sound inside her head. He wonders what it sounds like. She starts to describe the ROAR for the first time out loud. He holds her close, then lets her go, leaving the room. She stands there watching, shifting her feet, restless.



## Return to When

7

The Girl, is working in her kitchen, mixing dough in a bowl. Her Daughter, a teenager, bops into the kitchen and asks to use the car. The Girl wants to know about the Daughter's day in school and what homework she has. The Daughter starts putting on makeup while this questioning goes on. The Girl says, "I wish you wouldn't wear so much make-up, it changes you." "Well, Mom that 's the idea." answers the Daughter. "You look different," says the Girl. "Good!" says the Daughter. This answer puzzles the Girl and puts her in a daze. The Daughter looks at her Mom takes the car keys and leaves the kitchen.

## Waiting to know

8

The Girl, is working in her kitchen, mixing dough in a bowl. The ROAR sounds inside her head. She walks to her cupboard and takes out a box of flour.

She turns back to her table and the table appears further away down a hallway. She walks down the hallway. As she gets nearer the table, the Roar is louder. At the table sits a Woman who is mixing dough. This Woman is the same person as the Girl, however the Woman does not wear a Mask. The Girl asks the Woman what she is doing. The Woman says that she is making bread. As the Woman starts speaking, the ROAR goes away. The Girl is astonished at this and asks the Woman how she stopped the ROAR. The Woman doesn't understand what the ROAR is. The Girl tells her about the absurdity of the ROAR, and that it has created a disconnection in her psyche. The Woman says, "Yes I know, about this disconnection. Why don't you take off the Mask which covers you so that you can see and hear more easily?" The Girl reaches to her face, and feels the surface and then feels her neck free of mask skin. She tries to take this Mask off, but can't. She asks the Woman for help. The Woman says she can help, but not until she finishes making the bread. She says, "In order to finish this bread, I need flour and salt. And we will need peanut butter for the Mask."

The Girl gives her the box of flour and goes back down the hall for salt. She returns with a container of salt and a jar of peanut butter. The Woman finishes mixing the bread, and gives it to the Girl. saying, "Please return to your family and bake the bread." The Girl says she never left her family. The Woman tells her she has been gone a long time, too long and says, "the ROAR has distracted you, but you could have taken off your Mask long ago. You must confront your own making and why you wanted to be masked." The Woman goes behind the Girl, and taking the table knife cuts the strings holding the Dress-Mask to the Girl. The Dress starts to move free, but the Mask stays attached to the Girl's face. The Woman takes some peanut butter from the jar and applies it to the edges of the Mask and wiggles it. Finally the Mask comes free. The Girl turns her head to thank the Woman, but she is not there. She feels her face, her ears and then begins to prepare the bread for baking. The ROAR although still present has diminished.

## That I Continue

9

The Girl is kneeling on the ground laying tiles in cement. She places a piece of mosaic into a pattern on the floor. Sounds come from the tiles, voices of children, of work, and the Girl's melody. She sits back, views the piece she has just positioned. Her hand adjusts it against the background. The colored tile begins the shape of a new pattern. Voices of family life surround her. There is no ROAR.

Script for Installation Narrative  
"I Am"  
Nine Sequences

I am  
Sequence One

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A Girl is walking into a thicket of tall grasses and bushes. At first the thickness of the thicket allows no passageway. She looks around and after awhile finds a place where the bushes are thinner. But these bushes have pricklers on them. Finally by lifting the branches individually she can slowly pass through. As she finds her way a distinct melody attaches its tempo to her movement. She reaches the clearing.

That I am  
Sequence Two

EXT. AN OPEN SPACE - DAY

The Girl turns cartwheels, exploding to the ground and bouncing up, the motion like a turning toy. The cartwheel girl is accompanied by sounds of a family cheering, "good going, wow, where did you learn that." The Girl stops the cartwheels and looks towards the voices. They start talking about their day, their jobs, things they have to get done. The Girl walks away from the voices. She starts her cartwheels again.

That I should be  
Sequence Three

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The Girl bursts into a kitchen, she is out of breath. Her MOTHER is sitting at a table making supper.

MOTHER  
Where have you been, you know I need your  
help this time of day.

GIRL

Mom, you wouldn't believe all the flowers I saw on the way home. I went all the way down to the creek to see if the skunk cabbage was up. Remember the story about the first bouquet of spring.

MOTHER

If you were behaving in school you wouldn't have to stay late. Now what happened.?

GIRL

Mom, I didn't have to stay after school I took the long way home.

MOTHER

I called the school, they said you were staying for the after school period. Couldn't you tell me what you were going to do? What am I going to do to get you to keep things straight.?

GIRL

Mom,listen to me. I decided not to stay after school today, and then on the way home I saw the flowers and forgot about getting home.

MOTHER

Come over here.

The Mother walks to a closet, the Girl follows her.

Your Grandma made this special DRESS for you. She wants you to wear it everyday from now on. It will remind you how to act properly.

GIRL

But Mommy, that's not a dress. It looks like some sort of suit. And even if it was a dress I wouldn't wear it everyday. I like to choose what to wear.

MOTHER

Honey, It's for your own good. The DRESS will help make things easier for you. Grandma thinks its time.

GIRL

What do you mean ? I'm not wearing that.

MOTHER

That's enough from you. And the DRESS is not what you think it is. You wear this DRESS and things will work out for you. It will make decisions easier, you'll see.

The Mother and Grandmother in dissolve background, put the DRESS on the Girl, fastening it at shoulders and waist. The DRESS is a MASK, it is somewhat clear and fits over the entire front of the Girl's body. You can see the Girl under its surface.

What they see  
Sequence Four

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The school cafeteria buzzes with junior high lunch drama. The Girl, wearing the DRESS-MASK carries her bagged lunch to a table of kids, sits down, eats her lunch not paying attention to the conversation at the table. After some time the other kids stop their chat and are looking at her.

GIRL

What ?

TEEN

What's wrong, you're not talking today ?

GIRL

Oh, I don't know what's going on today.

FRIENDLY TEEN

Yeah, science was a drag, bet you're thinking about that test coming up. Well don't worry Mr. D will beat the stuff to pulp by then.

OTHER TEEN

God, do we have to talk about school.

FRIENDLY TEEN

Hey you want to try my new eye shadow ?

GIRL

Sure, what's the color ?

The table begins to break up as the lunch period ends. The Friendly teen gives the Girl her eye shadow.

FRIENDLY TEEN  
It's Orange, weird huh.

The Girl tries to apply the eye shadow. It is difficult to avoid the Mask. Her friend sees her struggling.

Let me show you, hey lets go to the girls room..

They leave the cafeteria. The room sounds become faint as a ROAR, like the sound inside a jet plane penetrates her awareness. Her friend chats on, other voices intrude.

FRIENDLY TEEN  
I love your hair. Its so black, do you dye it?

GIRL  
No, my mother would never let me do that. I hate it  
its so curly.

VOICE ONE  
Straighten your hair, walk slow, and don't care so much.

FRIENDLY TEEN  
Did you believe those lies Jane told about her grades.  
She acts like she's so smart. I despise her.

VOICE TWO  
Be polite, Keep your legs together, and smile

SOUND THREE  
The ROAR

In the girl's room the two teens apply makeup.

Out there  
Sequence Five

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The Girl is sitting at a kitchen table picking peas from their pods. She is a mother, she wears the DRESS-MASK. She hears the sounds of children opening the door to the

HUSBAND

What does it sound like ?

GIRL

It's not so bad, kind of an ocean swelling without the rise and fall. I get tired of it, it's always the same.

HUSBAND

Well try to remember when it started, I mean have you always had the buzz thing?

GIRL

It's not buzz thing and I have always had it, I think. I can't remember not having some part of me occupied with this Roaring, Gyrating, Monotonous sound !

She is looking in front of her. He gives her a hug, ruffles her hair and leaves the room. She stands there watching, shifting her feet and looking around the space, restless.

Return to When  
Sequence Seven

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The Girl, older, is working in her kitchen, mixing dough in a bowl. Her DAUGHTER, a teenager, bops into the kitchen. She has all her school stuff in her arms and half throws them on the counter near her Mom, the Girl.

DAUGHTER

Can I use the car for a bit, Mom? I need to run back to school.

GIRL

How was your day, did you get homework ?

The Daughter has opened her backpack and is taking out makeup. The Mother watches her apply some mascara while she mixes the bread dough.

GIRL

I wish you wouldn't wear so much make-up  
It changes you.

DAUGHTER

Well, Mom that's the idea. What about the car ?

GIRL

You look different.

DAUGHTER

Good !

This exchange provokes the Girl, she gazes out the window, thinking. The Daughter looks at her Mom, takes the car keys.

Well, I'm going down to school  
Be back in awhile. Love you, Mom.

Waiting to know  
Sequence Eight

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The Girl is working in her kitchen, mixing dough in a bowl. The ROAR is loud inside her head. She walks to her cupboard and takes out a box of flour. She turns and her kitchen table is now further away down a hallway. She walks down the hallway. As she gets nearer the table, the ROAR is louder. At the table sits a WOMAN who is mixing dough. She looks like the Girl, but wears no mask. The Girl comes up to her, clears her throat.

GIRL

What are you doing ?

WOMAN AT TABLE

I am making bread for my family.

As the Woman starts speaking the ROAR inside the Girl's head diminishes. She is astonished.

GIRL

How did you get the ROAR to stop ?



WOMAN AT TABLE

I don't know what you mean. What is the ROAR ?

GIRL

It's a sound that is in my head most of the time.  
It's hard to express. This is amazing. The ROAR  
has stopped ! Its completely absurd that  
there even is a ROAR , but when its not here  
then I know that it must be different for you.

WOMAN AT TABLE

You are bothered by small things I can tell.  
and you are far away from your home.

GIRL

Now I don't understand you. This is my home  
and you are in it. Anyway, the ROAR is  
connected to you it seems, otherwise why did  
it leave me.

WOMAN AT TABLE

Tell me about this sound you call ROAR.  
Is it inside you ?

GIRL

Yes in here. It has made me unsettled about so many  
things in my life. I get unconnected to my family and it  
keeps me from any work.

The woman looks at the Girl.

WOMAN AT TABLE

I know about your family. Why don't you try taking  
off the mask that covers you like a dress? Maybe  
then you could hear and see.

The Girl is astonished that she is wearing a MASK. She reaches to her face, and feels the surface and then feels her neck free of the Mask's skin. She tries to take this Mask off, but finds that it is connected to her

GIRL

I had forgotten about this thing. Can you help me ?

## WOMAN AT TABLE

Yes, after I finish the bread. To finish I need more flour and some salt. And we will need peanut butter to get the Mask off.

The Girl gives her the box of flour and goes back down the hall to her kitchen to get the salt. She returns with the salt and peanut butter. She gives it to the Woman. The Woman adds the flour and salt. Then she takes the dough from the bowl and gives it to the Girl.

## WOMAN AT TABLE

Please knead the bread and return to your family and bake the bread for them.

## GIRL

What are you talking about. I haven't left my family, I just went to get flour.

## WOMAN AT TABLE

You have been gone a long time, too long. The sound has distracted you, but you could take your Mask off. You must confront your own making and why you wanted to be masked.

The Woman goes behind the Girl, and taking the table knife cuts the DRESS-MASK from the Girl. The DRESS starts to move free, but the Mask stays attached to the Girl's face. Then the Woman takes some peanut butter from the jar and applies it to the edges of the Mask and wiggles it. Finally the Mask comes free. The Girl turns her head to thank the Woman, but she is not there. She feels her face, her ears and then begins to prepare the bread for baking. The ROAR although still present has diminished.

That I Continue  
Sequence Nine

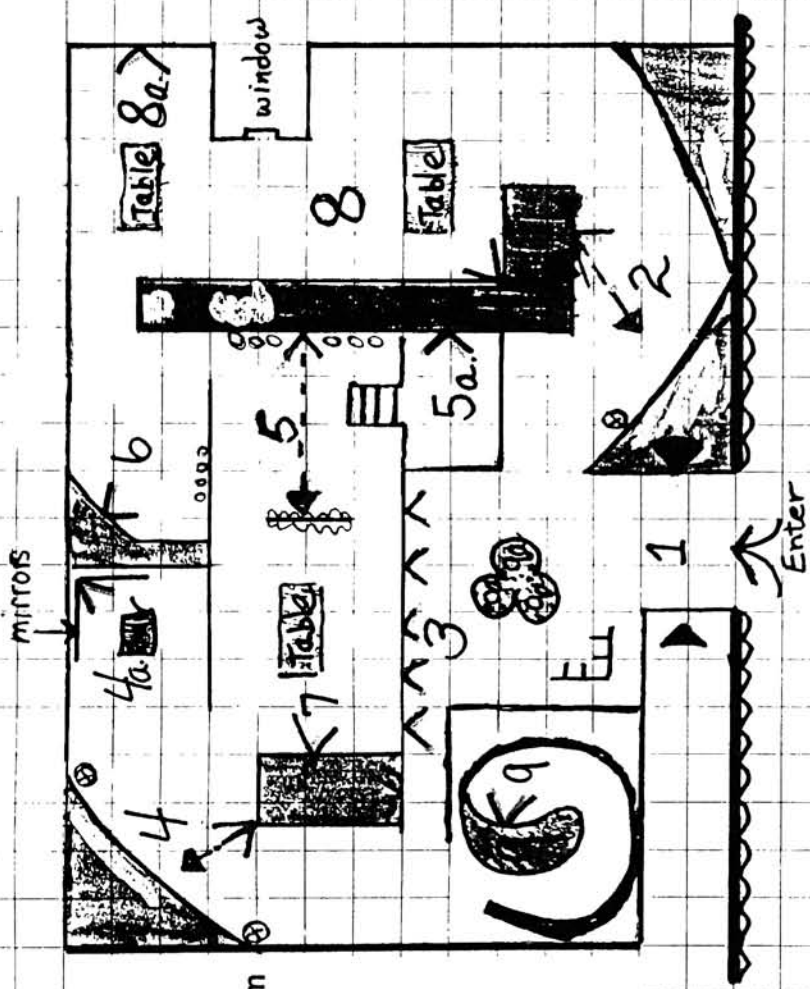
## INT. PATIO - DAY

The Girl is kneeling on the ground . She is working at laying tiles.. She places a piece of tile mosaic into a pattern on the floor. The sounds coming from the tiles are sounds from her life, voices of children, sounds of work, arguments with family, and quiet at

midnight. She leans back, views the piece she has just positioned. Her hand adjusts it against the background. This colored tile begins the shape of a new pattern. Voices of family life surround her. There is no ROAR.

# "I Am"

## Installation Diagram



## Narrative Sequences

(numbers are from the Treatment Sequences)

1. I am
2. That I am
3. That I should be 4a
4. What they see 5a.
5. Out there 5a.
6. What is it
7. Return to when 8a.
8. Waiting to know 9a mosaic
9. That I continue

### Key:

- Monitor w sound
- Video Projector
- Rear Slide Projector
- Speakers
- Headphone Jacks
- Headphone Rack & Maps !
- Plexiglass Reflector
- Work Area

### Scale:

- 1' = 1 block = 15' x 14'
- 1.5' = 1 block = 22.3' x 21'

**Time line**  
**"I Am"**

**June 1 to September 1**

Finalize script, Design Shooting Script, Design shooting storyboard  
Design sets and construct sets  
Cast all parts  
Design and sew costumes  
Shoot backgrounds  
Begin rehearsal with the Girl(s)

**Fall Quarter- 1998-99**

**4 credits of thesis**

Production, Shooting sequences 1 - 9  
Work with Sound Design Person

**Winter Quarter -1998-99**

**4 credits of thesis**

**December 1 to February 1**

Post Production - edit off line, edit on-line, sound recording

**February 1 to March 15**

Installation preparation

Marketing for Final Exhibition

**Spring Quarter - 1998-99**

**4 credits of thesis**

**March - April**

Thesis Installation

Thesis Report

**Marketing Plan:**

Propose Installation to other galleries and installation venues

Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo

Munson Williams Proctor Institute, Utica, NY

Art in General, NYC

Spaces, Cleveland

Sculpture Center, NYC

ARC, Chicago

Colby College Fine Arts Gallery, Waterville, Me

Submit to Digital Media Festivals and Web sites - Virtual "I am" I Installation

Women Who Direct Movies, Chicago

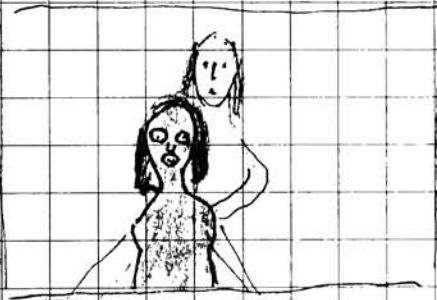
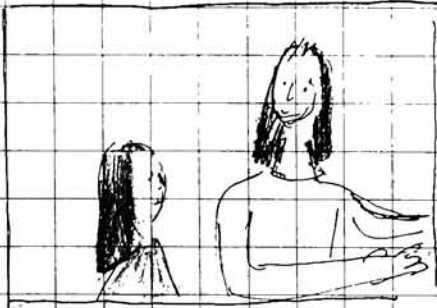
Eventworks, Boston, MA

Others Under Research

A	B	C	D	E	G	H	I	J
<b>BUDGET</b>								
<b>Title: "I Am"</b>			<b>Producer/Director: Nancy Ghertner</b>					
10 - 15 minutes running time			Production Format: DV Cam					
Days - Production: 7			Post Format: SVHS & AVID					
Days - Post Production: 16			Display Format: Installation with VHS					
Shooting Ratio - 4:1								
Item	Quantity	Fee	Length	Subtotal	Estimate	In Kind	Actual	
<b>Story</b>								
1	Research, Script, Shot Lists,	1	1000	1000	1000	1000	0	
2	and Storyboard							
<b>Art Direction</b>								
4	Set Construction	4	75	300		897	0	897
5	Mask	2	50	100				
6	Set Props		150	150				
7	Drawing Supplies		25	25				
8	Costumes		200	200				
9	Makeup Supplies		50	50				
0	Lighting-gels	12	6	72				
<b>Talent</b>								
2	Director	8 days	15/hr	12hr /day	1440	4015	4015	250
3	Sound Designer		200		200			
4	Actors main	6 days	100/day		600			
5	extras	3 days	75/day		225			
6	Musician		500		500			
7	Set Designer		15/hr	10hrs	150			
8	Carpenter		15/hr	60 hrs	900			
<b>Production Personnel</b>								
0	Camera Operator	6 days	15/hr	9 hr days	810	3030	3030	0
1	Gaffer	6 days	10/hr	"	540			
2	Grip	6 days	10/hr	'	540			
3	Assistant	6 days	8/hr	'	432			
4	Audio Engineer	6 days	10/hr		540			
5	Photographer		7/hr	8hr x 3 da	168			
<b>Production Equipment</b>								
7	Camera Pack: DVCam	6 days	500/day		3500	4780	4700	80
8	Bolex	2 days	40/day		80			
9	Grip Van	6 days	200/day		1200			
<b>Videotape Stock - edit &amp; transfer</b>								
1	DVCam 64 min	7	36		252	400	0	400
2	SVHS 30min							
3	VHS 60min	11	6.27		68.97			
4	VHS -duplication- 30min	10	5.58		50.58			
<b>Filmstock and Labs</b>								
6	Raw Stock- B/W	2 - 400' rolls	50		100	316	0	316
7	1 transfer to Beta SP w proc	800 ft.	.27/ft.		216			
<b>Sound</b>								
9	DAT tape	2	8		16	216	0	216
0	Sound Track Recording		200		200			

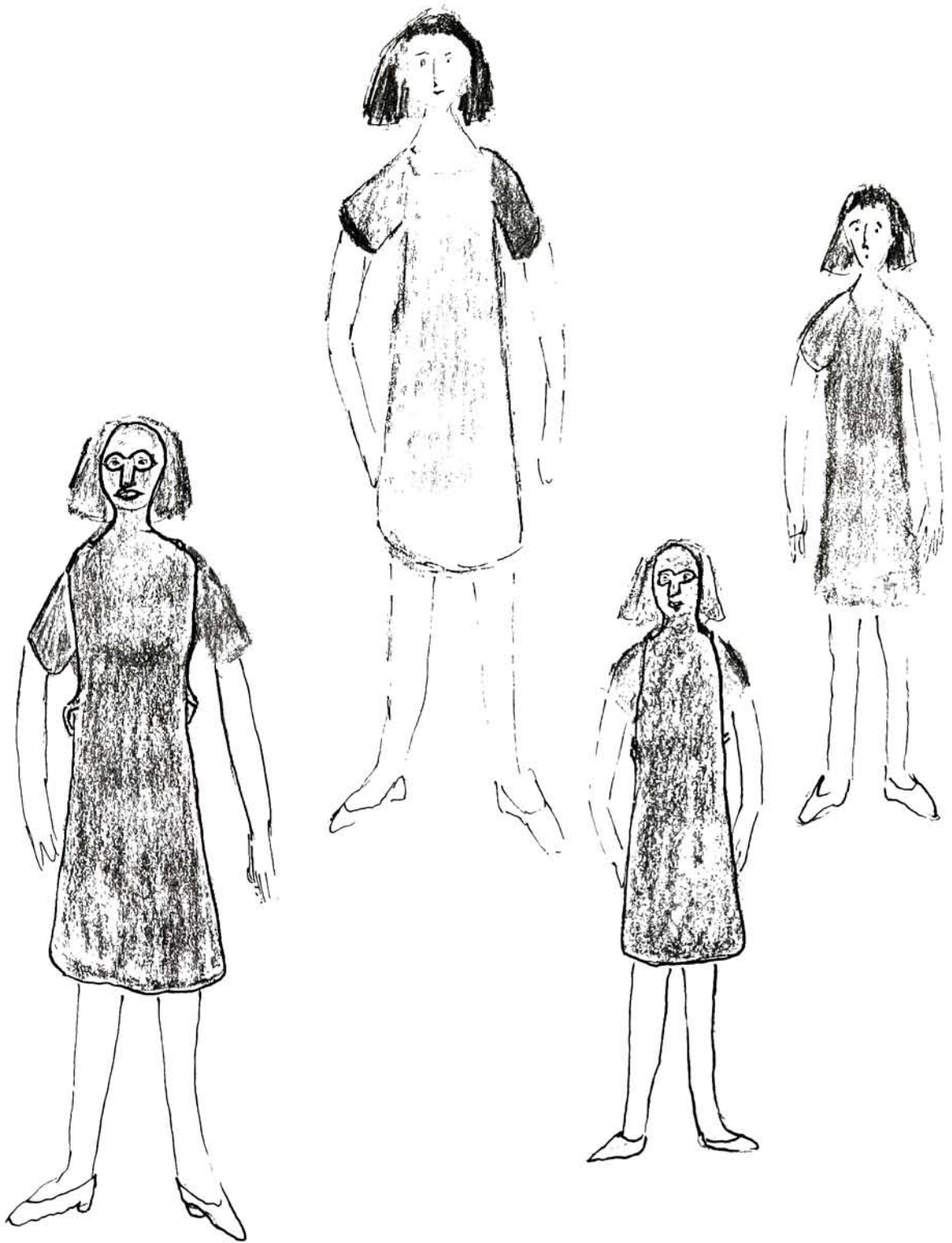


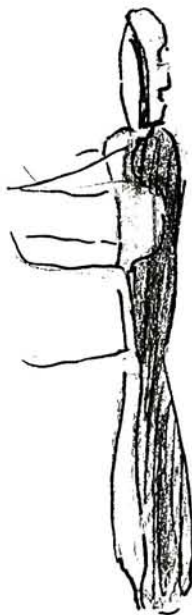
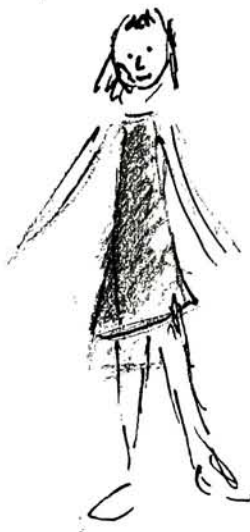
# MASKING





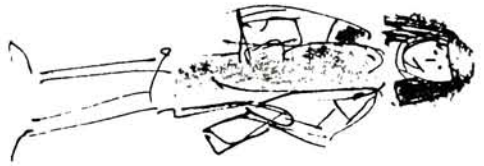






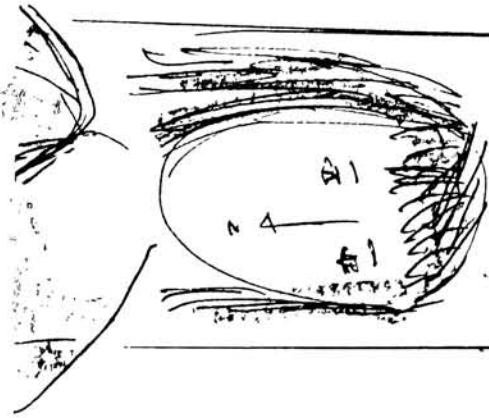
## Appendix B

### Storyboards and Shot List for Sequence Three



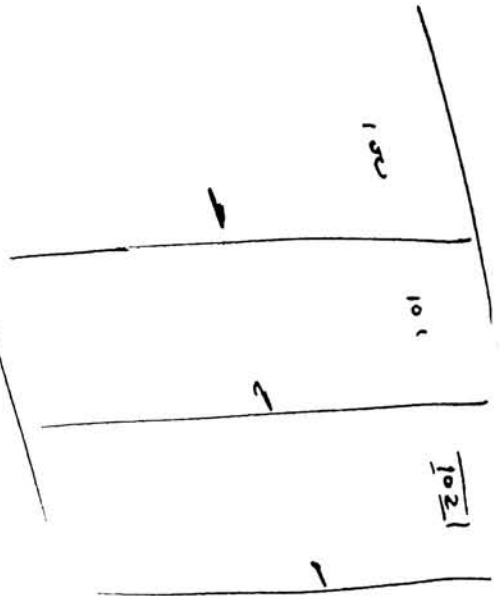
LS  
down  
down  
wall

①



walking  
short  
blurred  
or  
pale complexion

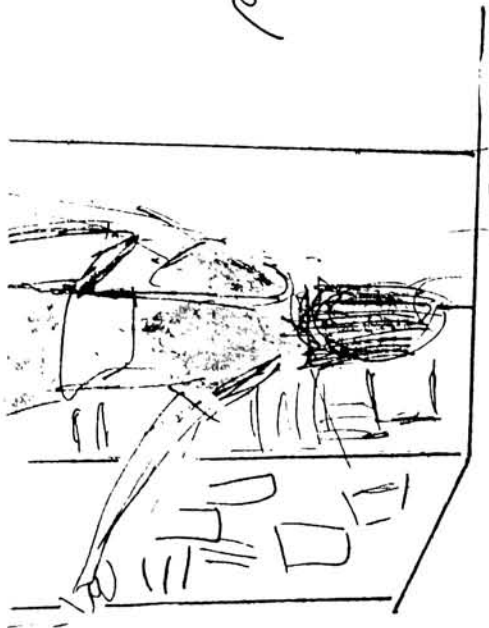
2



she  
sees  
locks  
leaves  
teacher  
discuss

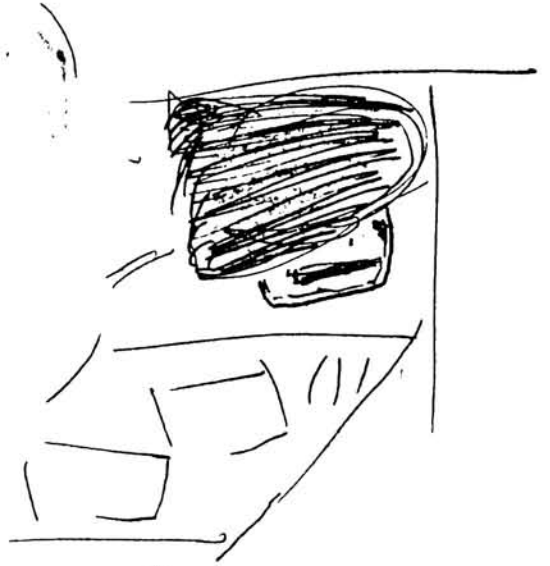
room  
in on  
locker  
#

3



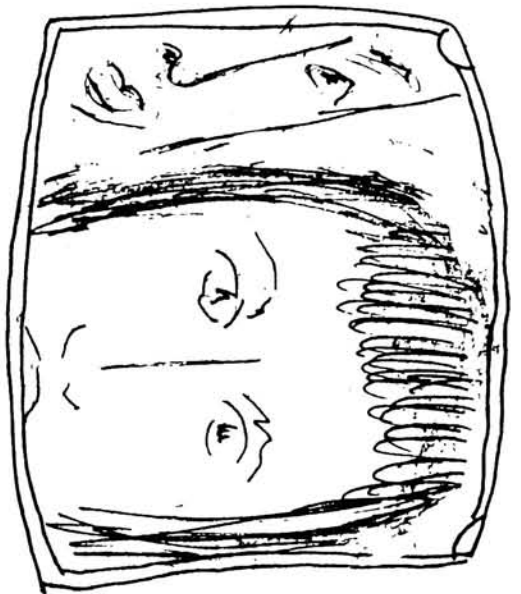
MS in  
Follow in  
2 down  
to head  
short

4



HS-  
Zoom  
same top  
allowed to  
CU mirror

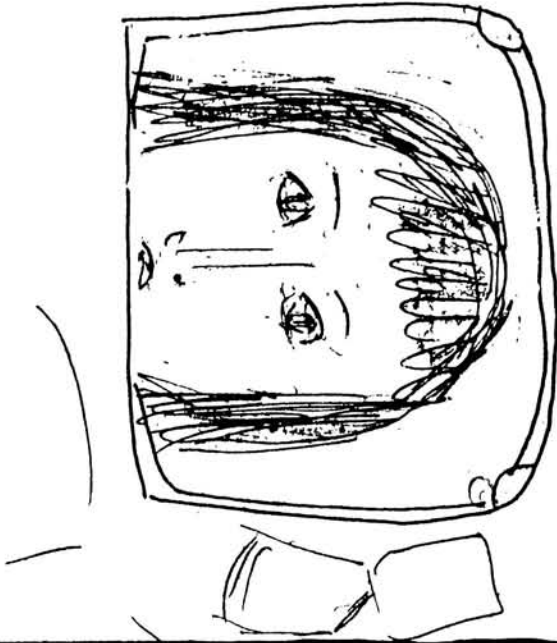
3



include top

MIRROR SHOT  
same top  
1. Now Sylvia  
that's in  
hair

4



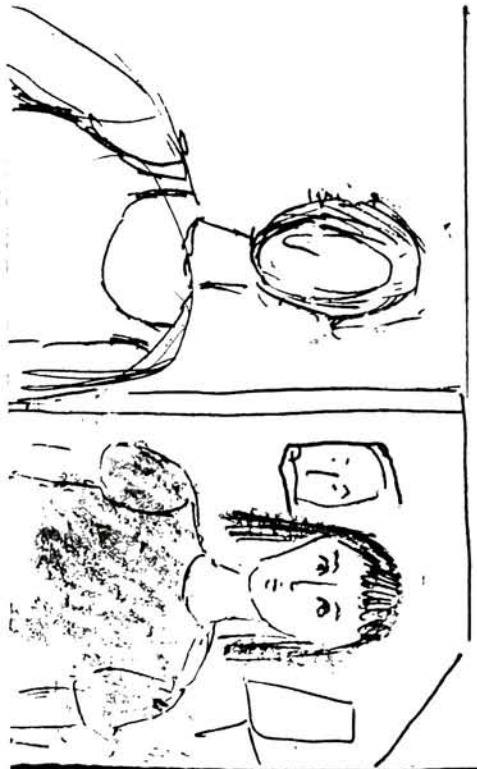
CU  
Mirror-  
Shot  
Same  
Shot  
Continues

5

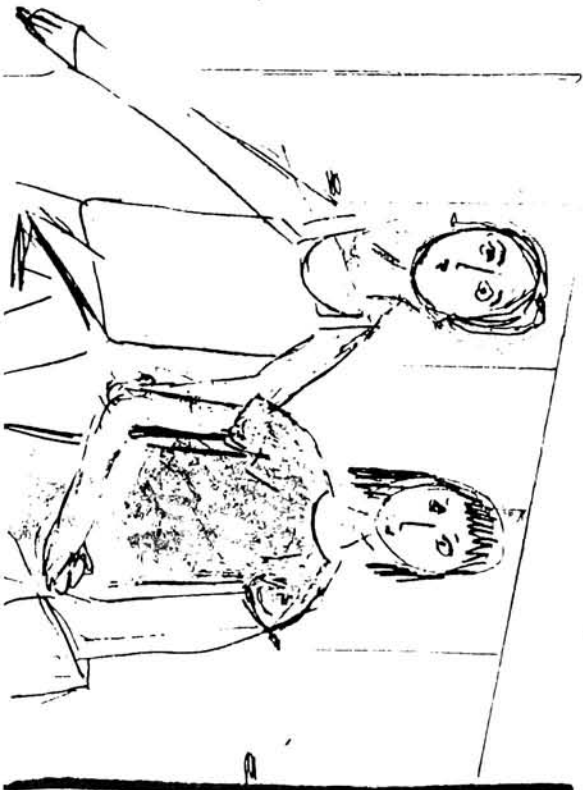


OS - ms  
at Sylvia  
Sylvia, I  
didn't  
you're  
I thought  
that's  
wrong



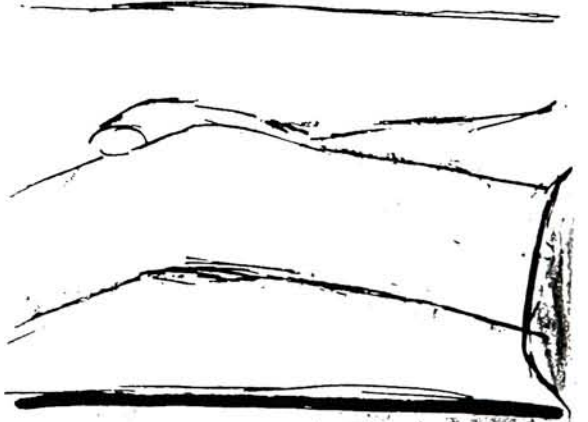


MS  
POU Sylvia  
Oh =  
what's what  
turn  
look in  
mirror  
close  
door  
- POU Sylvia  
8



MS  
Same  
shot  
Sylvia  
turns,  
Girl looks  
at Sylvia's  
hand.

9



CU  
Hard on  
arm

12

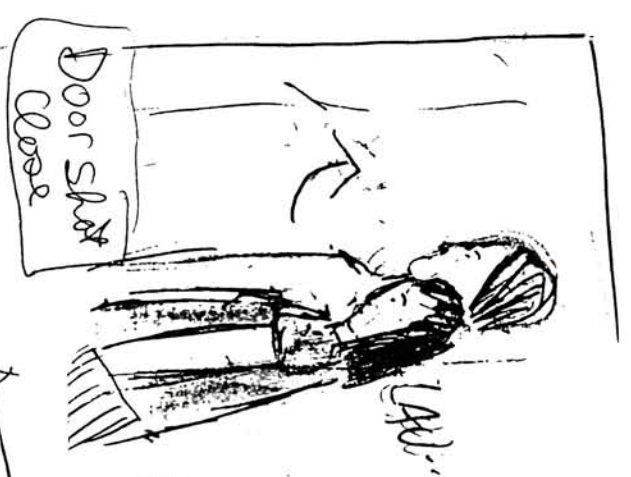


13  
choice to  
pull shot

12

BENNY

bathroom  
10:00  
audio  
separate



Turning  
into  
car  
end slot  
with  
girls ahead  
of lanes  
going off  
camera  
12

1. See whole  
bathroom  
Zoom in  
to sink  
"Godd  
you have to...  
come here"  
14



1 ms  
see  
hand  
@ then tilt  
slightly  
on faces  
15

ms  
save  
slot  
hit to  
faces as  
under-up  
gets on  
so what do  
you think  
"Huh...  
"well I thi  
14



putting on  
makeup



MS - over  
Shoulder  
into mirror

1. Put makeup on
2. ~~Stop~~ "it..."
3. ~~Sorry~~ "with"
4. ~~Do~~ "my mother"
5. ~~Reading~~ "So what do you think?"
2. "Muh - I like it"
3. "Well I like it"

Close  
Mirror shot  
cu

1. Girls look of surprise
2. So what do you think?
3. "Hu - nice"
4. "Well Ethel"
5. "What?"
- c. "Not in there"



Nice  
Shot



turns

cut  
makeup  
shot

1. Helping with makeup
2. hum
3. voices
4. "Stop... I'll be"
5. "Sorry..."
6. "You mean..."
7. "Knowing what"
8. "Beel see her"

MS  
pousguira

1. Stop... stings
2. "Sorry..."
3. "No, my mother"
4. "You mean..."
5. "You're stings to mirror"

(18)

new set-up  
towards door





M/S

1. Sylvia hums
2. "Gee whiz"
3. Mother's voice
4. Sylvia's voice
5. Girl disappears make up

(182)



CU -  
Zoom in  
Roar

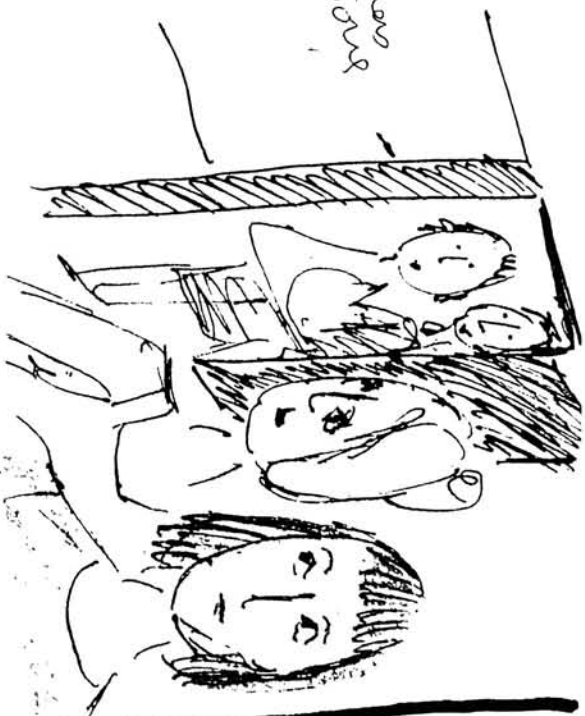
20



CU - Mirror shot

1. Face - Hand wiping - Mother's voice
2. Sylvia - yawns
3. Keppel's make up
4. Roar

19



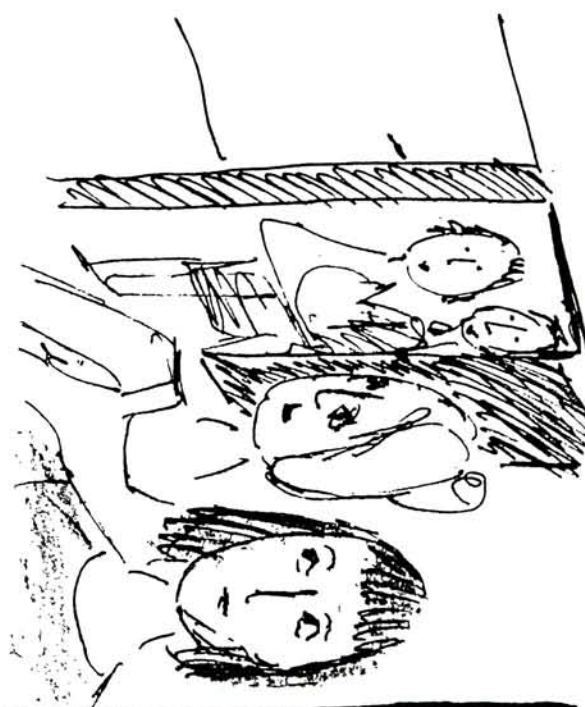
News setup  
leaving

M/S

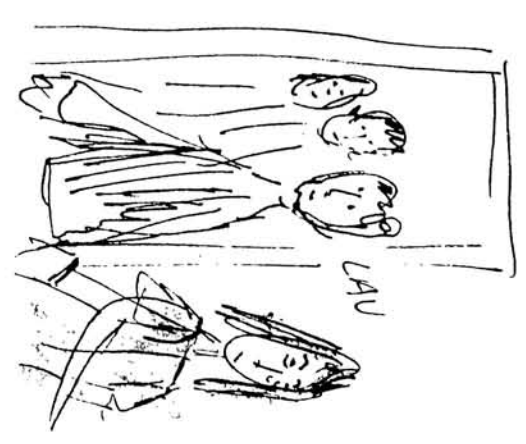
Sylvia looks The girl leaves First, the looks Girls come out of stall

(21)

Think about this as direct shot



MS  
Sylvia  
Looks  
The Girl  
Leaves  
First, then  
Looks  
Girls  
come out  
of stall  
(21)



MS  
Leaving  
L40.  
(22)

## Appendix C

Video Stills from Sequences  
2,4,5,6,7,9 & 10

# Sequence 2

# " That I am"



**Sequence 4**

**"Changes"**



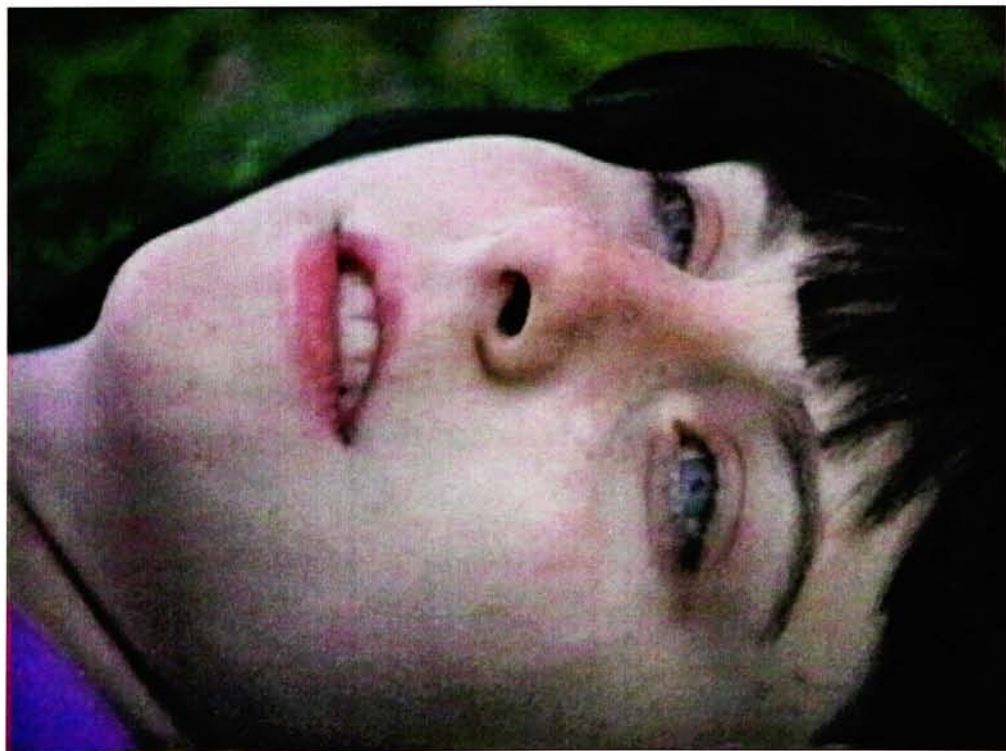
**Sequence 10**

**"That I Continue"**



Sequence 5

"Out There"



Sequence 6



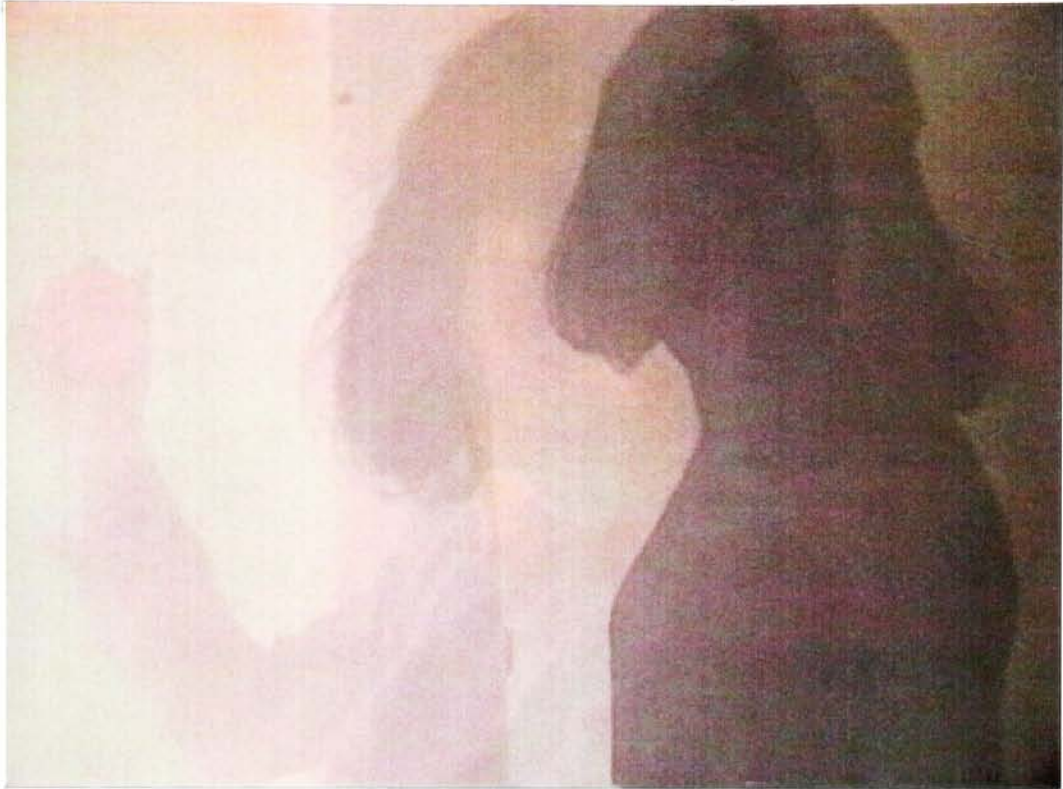
"That I Should Be"





Sequence 7

"Beyond the Door"



Sequence 9



"Waiting to Know"



## Appendix D

SPAS Gallery Proposal  
SPAS Gallery Diagram with proposed Installation space  
Installation Diagram  
Construction Diagram

Exhibition Proposal , SPAS Gallery at R.I.T.  
Nancy Ghertner, MFA Candidate in the School of Photographic Arts and Sciences  
Rochester Institute of Technology

I propose to place my MFA Thesis "I Am." in the SPAS Gallery of R.I.T. This thesis project, which is in the form of a multi-media installation, was approved by the Department of Film/Video/Animation of the School for Photographic Arts and Sciences in May of 1998. I propose to share the gallery and its exhibition space with Jessica Burko, a fellow MFA candidate in the School for Photographic Arts and Sciences, Department of Fine Arts Photography. Our joint exhibition in the SPAS Gallery is tentatively scheduled for April 23 to May 7, 1999. I agree to meet the guidelines and expectations for MFA students exhibiting in the SPAS Gallery.

## **EXHIBITION PLAN**

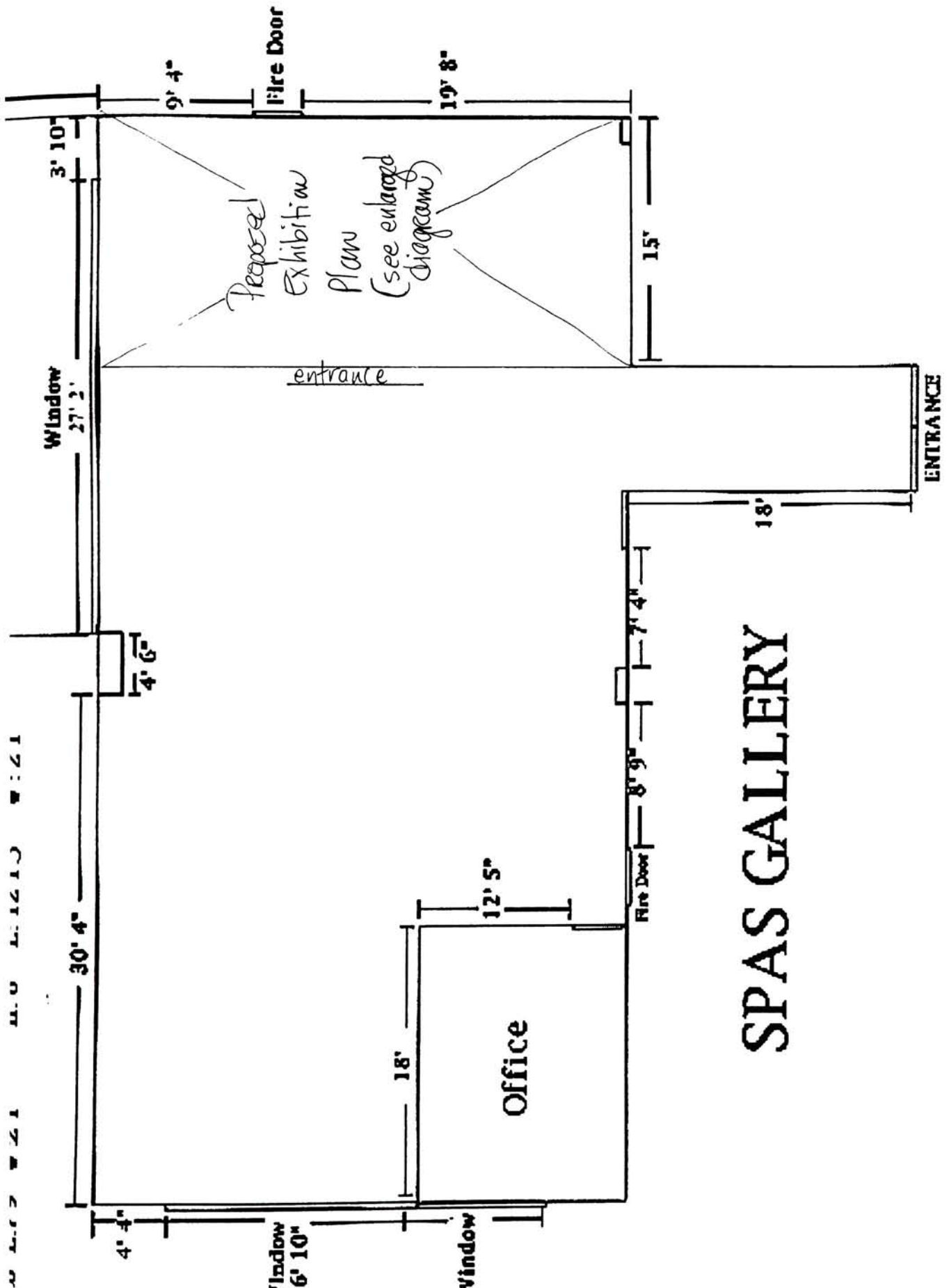
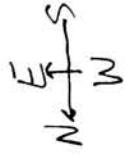
I propose to use the south portion of the SPAS Gallery not including the entrance hallway, but including an entrance to the "I Am" installation house along a constructed wall. (see diagram). The outside dimensions of this space are 15' by 29'. A interior wall will be constructed separating the outside gallery walls and the north exhibition space from the installation space of "I Am." This will create a workspace to house the projectors, monitors and VCR equipment. Into this wall will be embedded the viewing surface of 6 slide projectors, 8 video monitors, 2 video projectors, and 6 speakers with associated sound playing equipment. All electrical power will come from the existing outlets, with adequate power surge protectors and safety strips for extension chords.

### Construction materials:

The walls will be constructed from a 2 x 4 framework, with both wallboard and muslin providing the covering. Furniture will include a non-functioning sink and stove, table with chairs, several doorways, a high school locker and several false steps. The Gallery windows will not be blackened as the false wall will separate them from the installation house. The installation will be lit using a combination of gallery lights and additional spot lights connected to the constructed walls.

### Special equipment:

The artist is obtaining the necessary video and slide projection equipment. However if there is a SPAS Gallery VCR and monitor available it could replace the number I provide. I am also requesting to ETC and the Fine Arts department for use of video projectors, however I realize the length of the installation may prohibit this request.



# SPAS GALLERY

Proposed  
Exhibition  
Plan  
(see enlarged  
diagram)

entrance

Office

ENTRANCE

W 41 1/2' x 30' 4" W 41 1/2' x 30' 4" W 41 1/2' x 30' 4"

Window  
27' 2"

4' 4"

4' 6"

Window  
6' 10"

18'

12' 5"

8' 9"

7' 4"

18'

3' 10"

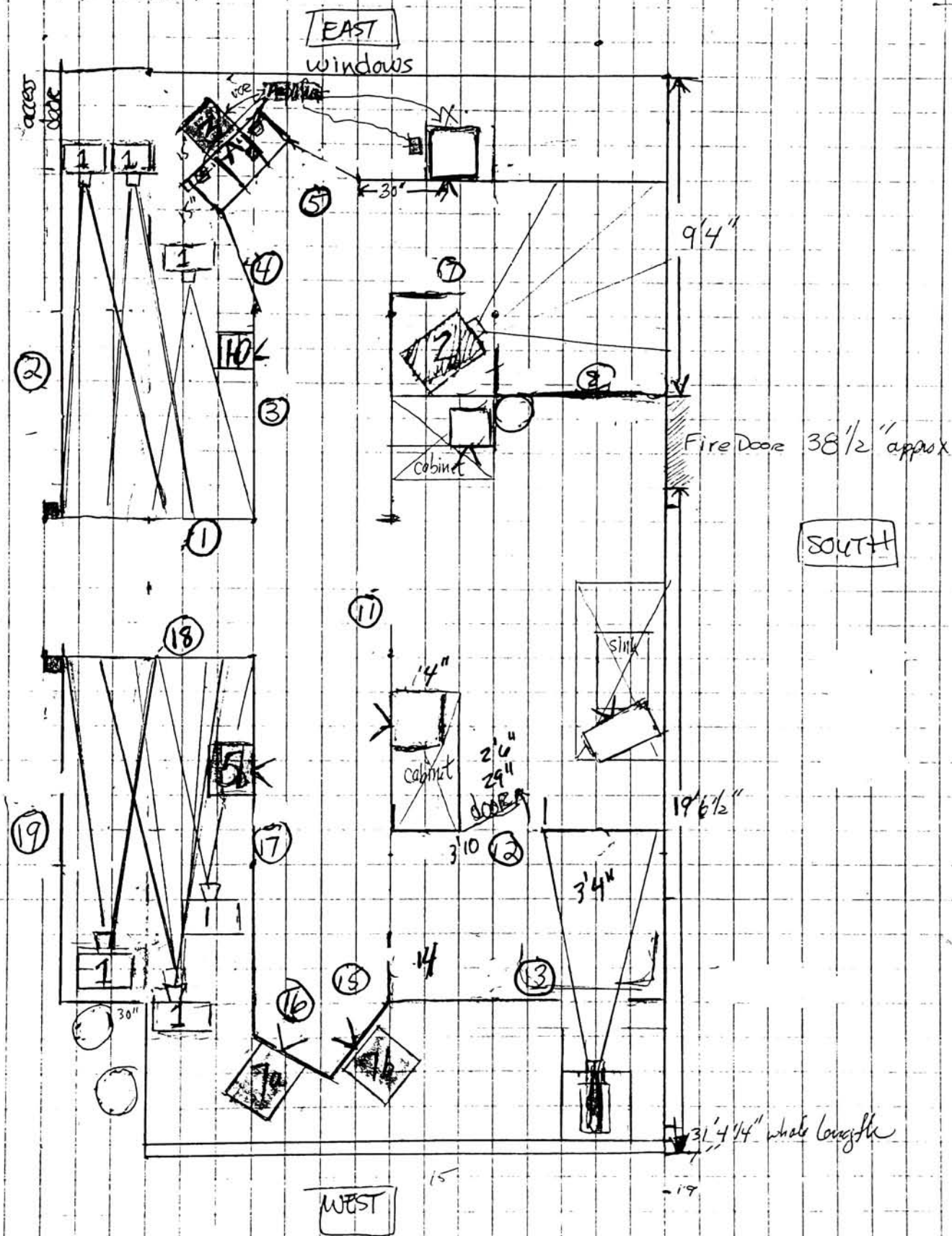
9' 4"

Fire Door

19' 8"

15'

"I AM"  
 Installation Plan  
 SPAS GALLERY



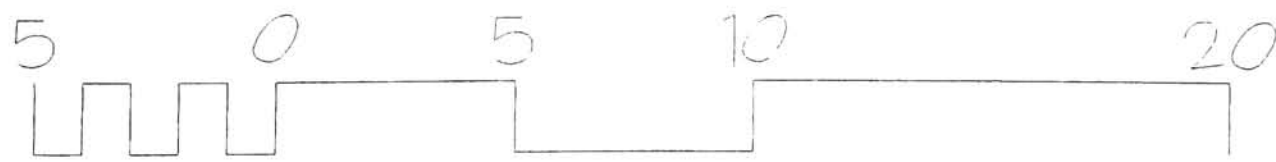
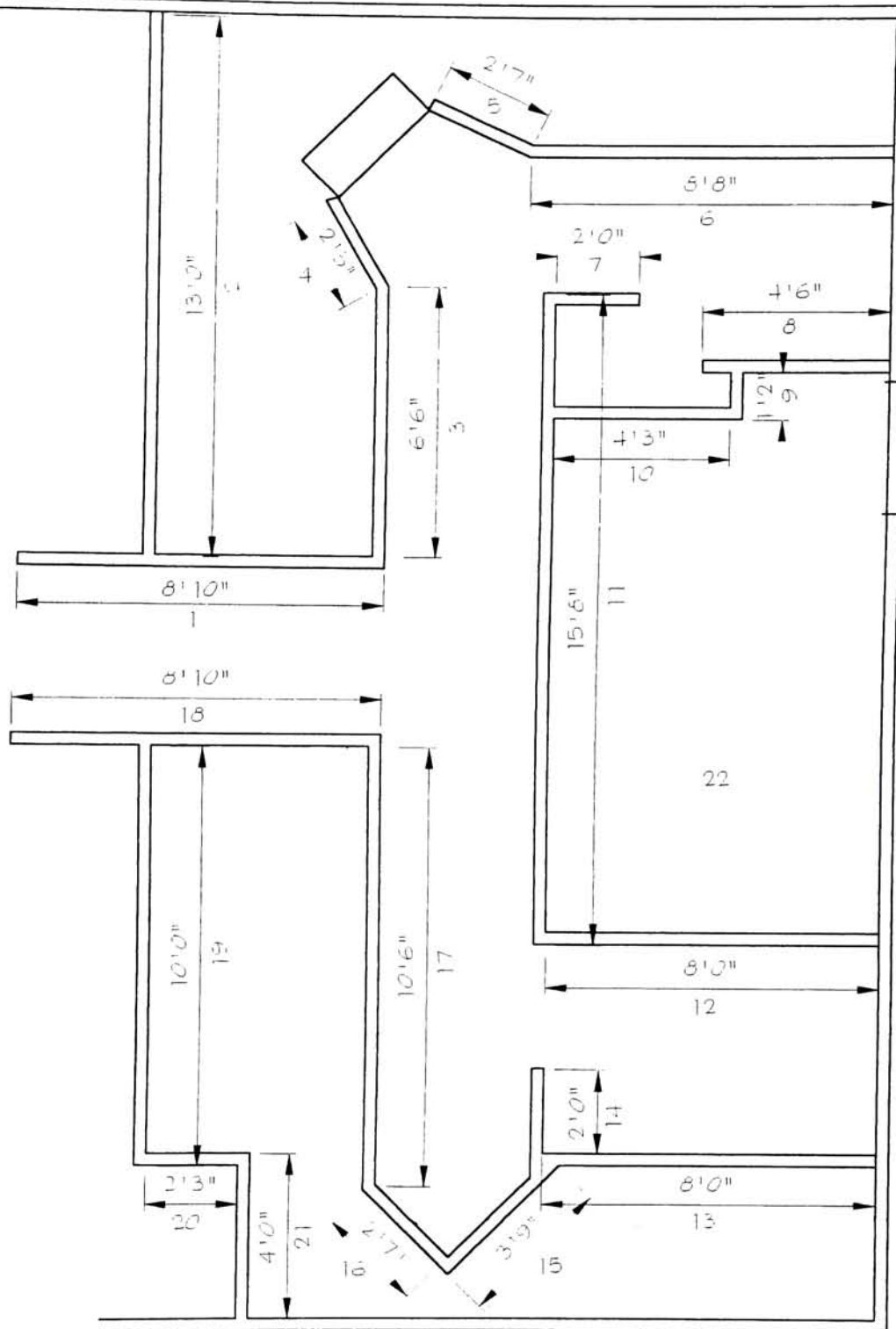
0274

SOUTH

WEST

15

-19



SCALE IN FEET  
 APPROX SCALE 1/4" = 1' 0"

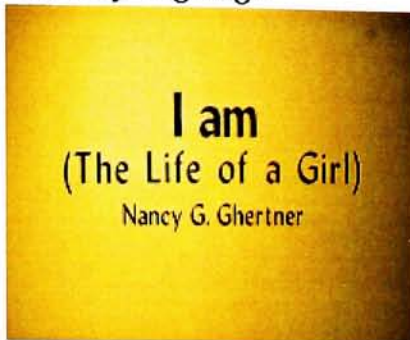
Appendix E  
Installation Documentation

Prints of Installation Slides  
Installation Invitation  
Installation Map Handout  
Artist's Statement



# Installation Slides

Gallery signage



Front hall



SPAS Gallery entrance



Sequence 10 monitor and location



Sequence 1 in entrance



Hallway with locker



Sequence 1 slide



Locker with Sequence 3 monitor



## Installation Slides

Sequence 4 and 2  
in corner hall



Sequence 7 hall and monitors



Sequence 2 projection



Sequence Seven monitor  
and window reflection



Sequence 4 picture frame



Girl's dresses hanging  
in hallway



Inside Sequence 2 picture frame:  
lamp and monitor



Sequence 9 projection



## Installation Slides

**Kitchen entrance**



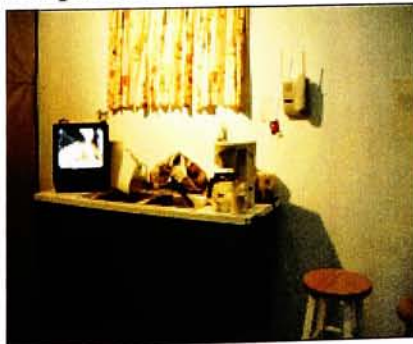
**Entrance way with arch**



**Looking into kitchen**



**Kitchen sink and  
Sequence 6 monitor**



*"I am (the Life of a Girl)"*  
SPAS Gallery Invitation



**I am**  
**(The Life of a Girl)**

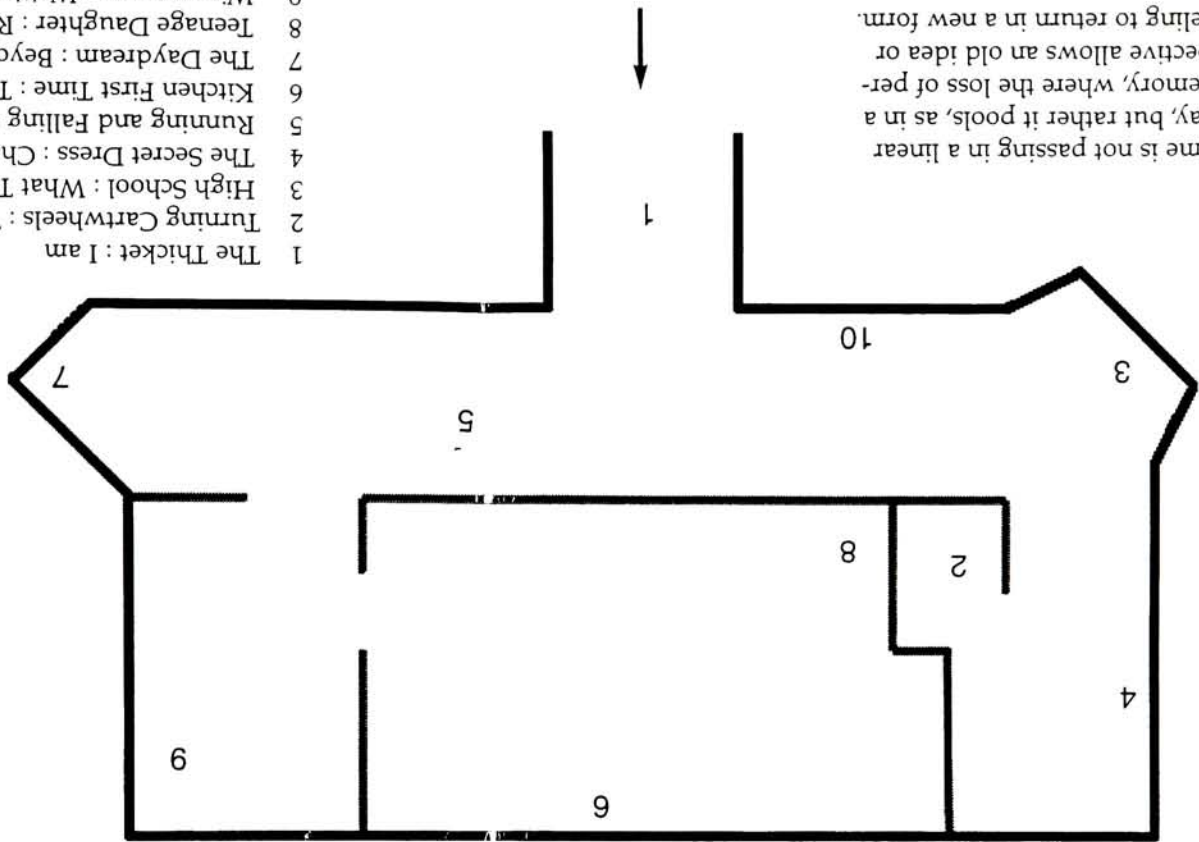
MFA Thesis Installation  
NANCY G. GHERTNER  
**April 23 - May 7, 1999**

SPAS Gallery  
Frank E. Gannet Building  
70 Lomb Memorial Drive  
Rochester, NY

Gallery Hours  
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday  
9 am to 5 pm  
Wednesday, 9 am to 8 pm

Opening Reception:  
**Friday, April 23, 6 - 8 pm**

- 1 The Thicket : I am
- 2 Turning Cartwheels : That I am
- 3 High School : What They See
- 4 The Secret Dress : Changes
- 5 Running and Falling : Out There
- 6 Kitchen First Time : That I Should Be
- 7 The Daydream : Beyond the door
- 8 Teenage Daughter : Return to When
- 9 Wise woman : Waiting to Know
- 10 The Pattern : That I Continue



Time is not passing in a linear way, but rather it pools, as in a perspective allows an old idea or feeling to return in a new form.

## I am (The Life of a Girl)

The "I am" project is dedicated to my Grandmothers and Mothers - Ruth Esser, Jean Gertner, Jane Gottlund, and Zoe Gottlund.

All lumber and reusable building materials used for the creation of I am (The Life of a Girl) will be donated to Habitat for Humanity at the close of the installation.

Nancy Ghertner  
April 15, 1999

For a moment, I saw the pattern  
where the next tile would fit.  
I saw how I could finish the long task.

The light changes from red to green,  
satori moves out of reach.

I am shaping the tile, choosing its color  
absorbed in the details of its immediacy.

*Nancy Ghertner*

Please Wipe Your Feet At the Door

Artist Statement  
MFA Thesis Installation

"I am"  
(The Life of a Girl)

For a moment, I saw the pattern, where the next tile  
and then the next tile  
and then the next tile would fit.

I saw how I could get to the pattern's end and finish the long task.

The light changed from red to green. Recognition passed, satori moved  
out of reach.

I am shaping the tile, choosing its color, absorbed in the details of its  
immediacy.

April 12, 1999