

Speaker 1: [foreign language 00:02:58].

Libertad Gills: Hi Lynne, welcome.

Lynne Sachs: Hello Libertad.

Libertad Gills: Welcome Lynne and welcome everyone who's joining us today from all over the world. Lynne, it is such an honor to be able to speak with you today. We are thrilled to have you and to have the opportunity to see your films in the retrospective organized by Camara Lucida, available only until the end of the week. Today, we will speak with filmmaker and poet Lynne Sachs, many of you already know Lynne's work and some of you have met her personally. On her first trip to Ecuador about six or seven years ago at the EDOC film festival. Now this is opportunity for new audiences to see your work, including many of our students and colleagues based in [inaudible 00:05:31] in Cuenca, which is where the Camara Lucida film festival is typically held. And it's very exciting to be able to be a part of that opening up of your work to these new audiences. So welcome, Lynne.

Lynne Sachs: [foreign language 00:05:45]. And thank you for doing this in English, I wish I spoke Spanish better.

Libertad Gills: No worries. This will be translated later, so everybody will be able to watch it as well in Spanish. So presenting you adequately, Lynne, would take a long time because you have made over 40 films and your work transcends the film forum. As you're also a poet, a teacher, a writer, and just a total artist, you make films, but you also make installation work, you publish books which I have actually right here one of your books, I don't know if you can see, and you collaborate with many artists in different ways. Something that I really love about your work is that you have films that you've made in response to texts or essays that you read, artists that you admire and films that have inspired you. And so your work is often made often in correspondence to the work of others, but you also maintain a personal point of view.

Libertad Gills: I'm speaking for example about your film, which is probably the first one I saw, which I shared with my students at the University de las Artes, "Drawn and Quartered", which I had read, you made it in response to Laura Mulvey's\* visual pleasure and narrative cinema. Or the task of the translator in responds to Walter Benjamin's essay of the same title, or "The House of Science" with where you draw from and respond to the writings of Iobrostos, criminal woman. And so we see in your films the work of someone who's looking at the world, reading, writing, listening, watching, observing, interacting, and responding through film and writing. And this makes your work very relevant and contemporary, but also very exciting and thought provoking. And I think it's also work

that makes others when we see your films, we also want to respond in some way and makes us more also want to make films like you.

Lynne Sachs: Oh, thank you. I wanted to say one thing about your country and about Ecuador, that is that I don't know of any country in the world where experimental documentary and experimental film are in such a deep conversation with each other. And that you have two such distinctive festivals that are bringing people from all over the world to talk about this kind of practice in media that is for the most part, not commercial, but is so celebrated. So for me, it's such an honor to be engaging with your whole community, with you, and I keep meeting people from Ecuador who love experimental film. I can't really think of any other country where I've met so many people who are so passionate about it, so it's just very it's to me that you and Francisco set this up for us to converse.

Libertad Gills: We're so excited to be able to have this conversation with you. And it's true what you say about these two film festivals, Edoc that has been around for several years, it's the longest lasting film festival in Ecuador to date. And Camara Lucida is a smaller festival that just started six years ago and there are overlaps and then they're also differences in the programming of these festivals and it's very exciting to have them both as film spectators. So I had mentioned to you before that I wanted to center this conversation around the topic of filmmaking and as it relates to writing.

Libertad Gills: But first I would love to ask you to please tells us about your beginnings in filmmaking and what drew you to film in the first place, because as I understand it, you did not exactly mean to study film or you were actually quite resistant to it at first, but then you discovered that film could also be much more than just classical Hollywood filmmaking. And there's an interview where you say that you discover that cinema could be a personal art, like painting, poetry or photography. So please tell us more about your first encounters with experimental cinema and how you knew that it was something you wanted to make.

Lynne Sachs: I would say that probably the first time that I ever saw what you might call an intimate experimental film was in the early 1980s, and I was living in New York and I actually was working for a documentary filmmaker answering the phone and doing a bad job at that, I was also doing a lot of copying and doing a mediocre job at that. So I was just trying to find my way. And I discovered there was a place called the Collective for Living Cinema, and there was another place called Downtown Community Television. And that they, there were these spots in the world where you could go and gather and be with other people even in a very small group, and it wasn't about a theater with popcorn, though of course I love

popcorn, it was about being in a space and then talking about the work afterwards.

Lynne Sachs: So in that period, I had the chance to see Maya Deren's films, I also discovered Bruce Connor's films. So we have one sensibility that's very much about bringing our dream world out to a screen, and then we have another sensibility that would be Maya Deren, and a very feminist one at that. And then we have someone like Bruce Connor, who is a renowned found footage filmmaker, who was making a commentary on culture. And I saw the works of those two people, and I thought, this is really, shall we say, spicy, unpredictable, expressive, spontaneous, maybe I could do that.

Lynne Sachs: So those were probably the very earliest experimental films that I saw. Then a little bit, also around that period, or a little before actually, I saw the feature films that were very personal and introspective as well by Chantal Ackerman and Marguerite Duras, that was during the year which I was living in France, but those were bigger films. So it was a sort of discovery that you could work in this very accessible way. You could shoot something with your own Super 8 camera, which is what I had access to at the time, just seemed really possible and really exciting to me.

Libertad Gills: That's great that you mentioned these, especially women filmmakers that have inspired your work in the beginning, and I had read about that filmmaker, Gunvor Nelson, was your film teacher when you began setting film? And there's an interview where you say that, "She asked us to embrace the bumps, holes, and other risks of the road to relish in the form, rather than setting our sites in the more predictable pleasure of character and conflict. In this process, we can discover meaning within the frames of formerly adventurous experimental film." So I thought that was really interesting that Gunvor Nelson taught you to embrace these happy accidents that could occur during experimental filmmaking.

Lynne Sachs: Yeah, I love the idea of a happy accident because we have to admit, the first few days, we call it tragic, when things happen that you don't want to happen. And then you feel like you can't do it again, or you don't have the funds for it, or that particular event will never happen, will never occur as it did before. But the thing is, most of us don't make films with a very frozen script. So the script has to follow us rather than we follow the script. And I'll never forget, I was actually talking with the man named, do you know George Kuchar's films?

Libertad Gills: Yes.

Lynne Sachs: Yeah, and I love his work, and I remember he was shooting a film and he got a whole roll of film back that was very, had been

exposed by the light, and so you could barely see anything. And he said, "Oh, no problem, we'll just call this the fog scene." So it was kind of a whimsical go with the flow. But then those kind of adjustments I later learned that it can be more conceptual and more daunting. And then the material speaks back to us, when accidents happen, we eventually find out that maybe they were meant to be. And then we're letting the incidents, our relationships to reality guide us in some way that we can't control. And maybe that's what distinguishes experimental and documentary film from narrative film, is an acceptance of a lack of control.

Libertad Gills: I would like to show a clip from your beautiful film, "Carolee, Barbara, and Gunvor", from 2018, and specifically the section where we meet Gunvor Nelson through your eyes and through your lens. And this film is in the retrospective, so for people watching, like you can see this film in its entirety after the talk. And there are three portraits here of three filmmakers who were very close to you, who have been very close to your work, Carolee Schneemann, Barbara Hammer, and Gunvor Nelson. So we're going to watch that first clip. Is it being shown right now?

Lynne Sachs: Oh, it's up.

Libertad Gills: Okay, good.

Lynne Sachs: Perfect.

Libertad Gills: Oh, it's up.

Voice of Gunvor...: After seeing a few of Bruce Barley's films, I understood that I also, as a sing artist could try. I'm sure I knew that time was the basis for all the events that could happen throughout the film. It was exciting to discover the choreography and especially the development of all the aspects that one could use, like color, black and white, light and dark, soft to sharp contrast, distance and close up, as well as all the other elements of story and concrete or abstract images. I'm still very much drawn to film, but plan to only complete three more films, no more. The 60 minute film "On The Fence" is about ready. And another, a short film that I call "Trying To Be Me" is halfway ready. The last short film is in a planning stage. The technical digital dimension is difficult for me now, especially since I live in a small town in Sweden, where no such support is available. I'm looking forward to only working with still images.

Libertad Gills: So I think that now we can get into the subject of writing and filmmaking, because it seems to me that as far as your work is concerned, this relationship is very much intersected by your discovery of experimental cinema. And when seeing "A Film About

A Father Who", I found, so I think that we can get into the subject of, when seeing "A Film About A Father", who I found it really interesting that in a moment in the film, you and your siblings attempt to define each of your parents in relation to grammar. Your mother, you say is points and commas, while your father is only exclamation and question marks. You also say that your mother taught you that grammar was worth understanding, because as you say, once you had grammar, you had total transparency. So I'd like to show this clip and then maybe you talk about in your films relationship between writing and filming.

Lynne Sachs: Could I just say one thing about Gunvor Nelson?

Libertad Gills: Yes, please.

Lynne Sachs: Yeah, sure, so I met Carolee, Barbara, and in Gunvor with a complete lack of intention, I just wanted to spend time with these three women I admired so much, who had taught me, not always in the traditional ways Gunvor did as a professor of mine in art school, but as role models, as people I watched in terms of how they engage with their community, with young people, through their practice as they traveled with their work, I just wanted to have time with them. And I asked each of them if I could come to their home to spend time with them, we actually ended up having a couple of different slumber parties. And then at a certain point, I decided to put it all together. So it was not a plan, but it was kind of like a gift to them to be in the same structure.

Lynne Sachs: But I wanted to say one thing about Gunvor Nelson, who is a Swedish filmmaker, she's actually the only woman of the three who's still alive. She's in her early '90s now. She lived in the United States for 40 years and then she was invited to go back to Sweden by the Swedish Government. And they said, come back to Sweden, we'll support you, we'll give you a house in the town where you grew up and you can continue to make your art. So I went visit Gunvor with the intention of spending time with her and shooting with her. And I just wanted to share a couple of things that I learned from her, I was writing a note to myself about it as you chose those clips.

Lynne Sachs: First of all, I asked her if I could shoot in her garden. So I was sort of following her hand as she moved the plants and was touching different flowers. And then she said to me, "Lynne, why are you always shooting the living flowers? The dead ones are so much more interesting." And it was like this revelation to me, it was like a parable for everything that you should do. You shouldn't be drawn just to the birthday parties in people's lives, you should be drawn to the moments in which they're driving from their school to their home after a long, hard day or just all those in between moments where people reveal things or where you feel loss, not

just where you're showing your best side, like a flower shows its best side in vase, but what about those other times? So that was something I really learned from her. And I also wanted to say something about shooting with Gunvor was also challenging in a way, because she wasn't really comfortable being in front of a camera at that point in her life.

Lynne Sachs: So it wasn't so much that I had to convince her, I had to respect her as an artist. And once she had the camera which you saw at the end of the scene, she was taking pictures of me, there became more of an exchange, a kind of correspondence between the lenses. So she was doing something about in a way, and I was doing something about her and we were equals, and that's been a way of working that I've tried to maybe model ever since, to ask people who are in front of my camera to give something of their spirit, their intellect, their contribution to the process. And it was only in that way that I began to actually have the ability to see her face and to see her not just as my subject, but as a person in the same moment of observation as I was. So I just wanted to share that about the clip, the really interesting clip, interesting, because she was so hesitant and I had to find a way to reach her.

Libertad Gills: Thank you so much for sharing that. And It's really very interesting that you can learn not just from your teachers, but also the people that you film, in this case, she was also your teacher and a subject of your film, it's someone that you filmed. And so we also learn from the people that we are filming. I think that's really, well, if we're making films in this way as you do, which is listening and really paying attention to how the subject is responding to the camera, to our presence. This makes me think about something that's also in "A Film About A Father Who", before we watched this clip that I had selected where your father's filming you, and he says, "What are you working on?" And you said, well, before I made a film about looking inward, then a film about looking outward, and now I'm doing like a little bit of both, or both at the same time or something. And so I think that's interesting because you have films that are like very personal and then ones where you're looking outward. And it seems that looking outward also makes you look inward as a filmmaker.

Lynne Sachs: And actually the looking inward film is in the Camara Lucida program, it's "House of Science". "The House of Science: Museum of False Facts" was all about my diaries and my body, and also other women's experiences as women in the world. But it was very introspective, it was my most visceral film ever. So I kind of needed to escape looking at me, me, me, and I've thought, well, look at somebody else who's also important to me. And so it's really perfect timing that you mentioned that clip, that conversation I had with my dad, because I shot that scene 30 years ago right when I finished "The House of Science".

Libertad Gills: Oh, so you were speaking about that movie in particular?

Lynne Sachs: Yes. I was speaking about that movie, exactly.

Libertad Gills: Now let's see this clip from "A Film About A Father Who", which is Lynne's most recent film, and is available right now in Camara Lucida.

Voice of Lynne ...: Dear mom and dad, it is now 10:00 PM, and I'm really tired. I went to school from 6:00 to 7:30 and then ate dinner. Then I had a lot of work to do at the office, and I came back here until now. This was really a busy day, so that I could have peace in my family to be, please don't mention anything more about linens, pillows, et cetera. But I move into an apartment with Diane next August and I am missing anything at the time, I would appreciate those gifts.

Libertad Gills: So I think that the clip maybe was not able... It's going to be fixed so we can watch it in a couple of minutes, because I think we could hear it but we couldn't see it? Maybe while we wait for the clip to be ready, maybe you could tell us a little bit about your decision to make this film.

Lynne Sachs: Sure.

Libertad Gills: Precisely that question about looking inward and outward, because I feel like many times when we film our own family members and our brothers and sisters, because really your whole family, your entire family, all of your brothers and sisters, all seven of them.

Lynne Sachs: Actually nine.

Libertad Gills: Nine of them. I felt like I was missing a few.

Lynne Sachs: Well, no, no, but I thought it was seven for a long time.

Libertad Gills: Yeah, exactly. So it's you say seven I think many times in the film, but it's nine? So sometimes when we're filming our own family, it's a little bit of looking outward and inward, because they're so much a part of us and who we are. And so to speak about a family member, so to speak about ourselves in a way.

Lynne Sachs: So there's both a convention of shooting home movies that people have been doing since the invention of the camera, it's this idea of creating a souvenir, something that gives you usually access to those happy turning points in life. And most of us don't necessarily want to savor something that has caused anguish or something that is like steeped in ambivalence. Like, I don't really know what this means, but I'm going to go to bed tonight and hopefully it will be better tomorrow. But if you're using a camera at all those different points, then you actually are able to stop

analyzing the rhetoric of every event. And you just think the camera is an extension of my eye, of my presence.

Lynne Sachs: So I was basically filming all the time. It meant if we were at a family dinner, I would sometimes be a little resentful against myself because I couldn't eat dinner because I would be filming. And there were so always something that I thought I'd rather be doing. But after a couple of decades of shooting all the time, I thought I just have to finish this, we have an expression, get it out of your system. And I didn't really think that it was going to be a film that would travel as much as it has. Now, I actually finished the film in 2020, and then it had my first ever feature film distribution, and it was during the pandemic, so it was in virtual cinemas, but it was in maybe 40 different theaters around the United States and in Europe, now it's in Ecuador. Excuse me.

Libertad Gills: Bless you.

Lynne Sachs: But I didn't ever anticipate that. And perhaps one of the lessons I've learned is that if you try to think too much about your audience and will there even be an audience, then you start to censor yourself. So instead I just said this is something that I need to do in a very immediate way, I need to do it so that I can actually move from being a child and a daughter, to being an adult, even at this age. I want to keep thinking about being a daughter, but I also need to close that period of my life and recognize that I found a kind of maturity. And so that's why I actually allowed myself to write, as you said, to write about both forgiveness and rage, and I have versions of this film that have both. Or no, excuse me, that have mostly one or mostly the other, and I had to allow for that full gamut of experience. And I think that's been one of the reasons people have connected with this film, because all of us are trying to grapple with, you used the word, the grammar of this hermetic space, which is our family.

Libertad Gills: And so how many versions of this film did you have? I think you mentioned-

Lynne Sachs: I worked with a wonderful woman who had been a student of mine and that now she's a great artist, I think and editor, her name is Rebecca Shapass. So once we started working together, she insisted that I stopped censoring myself all the time. Like, "No, we can't put this in." Or "Oh, this part is so bad." Or, "Oh, I need to explain this part all the time." And once I started to just look for more conceptual relationships between the scenes and the ideas, I think we probably had 36 or 37 versions of the cut, but I spent one year editing the film as if it were 12 experimental films. That's why it's so timely that I'm showing it at Camara Lucida. So we created something that worked in three minute bursts. Now I'm wondering

if maybe, oh, do you know if he's able to show the film yet? Or do we know?

Libertad Gills: I'm not sure.

Lynne Sachs:

Libertad Gills: I think so. Yes.

Lynne Sachs: Okay.

Libertad Gills: Yes.

Lynne Sachs: Now we're going to show a scene in which I'm talking with, I think it's the one where I'm talking with my brother and sister about grammar, but everybody, when you hear the word grammar, you're probably yawn, but it's more about how we communicate with each other.

Ira (in film cl...: Had a ballast of our very stable, very traditional mom, who was providing an example that was much more linear to them.

Lynne Sachs (in...: And stable.

Ira (in film cl...: And stable.

Lynne Sachs: There were no question marks when you were in that house. And when dad's there it was all question marks, we didn't know what could happen. When with mom, there was a sense of like even, I was obsessed with grammar, but that was grammar was worth understanding because once you had grammar, you had total transparency. And mom understood the grammar-

Dana (in film c...: Dad's like, there's no grammar, well, there's was punctuation.

Lynne Sachs (in...: Exclamation marks.

Dana (in film c...: And question marks.

Lynne Sachs (in...: Exclamation marks and question marks, and with mom, we knew were periods and commas and the comma, like gave you a sense of-

Dana (in film c...: The pause.

Lynne Sachs (in...: Yeah, you knew where things went and they were... But the thing was, you had the commas and pause and they were exquisite, they were just right. And you felt affirmed.

Dana (in film c...: Well, she was steady. And she would keep things in discreet pieces, life was very, you knew where the boundaries were. And

his was always opening up into something, like a colon opens to something else, the semi colon-

Lynne Sachs (in...: Dad had his own language and we were expected to speak it. I loved him so much that I agreed to his syntax, his set of rules.

Libertad Gills: Okay. So yes, this scene, this scene seems pointed to me in relation to your work with words and images as a writer and filmmaker. Your films often feel free and unbounded, even as they're beautifully held together by the editing and montage, it is as though you have taken both from your mother and your father in your personal use of film language, both the support and the transparency that you said that grammars permits, and at the time, the possibility of keeping things open, surprising, and free. So I was wondering if this is something that you were thinking about while you were editing this film in particular, but also how conscious you are as you make a film of the relationship between film form and writing itself, so for example, do you think about punctuation when you're filming and editing? Do you film for punctuation or is it something that you discover more in the editing process when you look over your footage? These are things that I, that I'm wondering after seeing your film which I enjoyed so much.

Lynne Sachs: Thank you. So one of the things that I think great things that happens in any kind of photography practice, is that you are capturing an image, but you don't always know what it means. And that's one of the things that stops us, is we intellectualize before we collect. And if we just allow ourselves to collect, but in a very aware state, then we can take that material. And the editing process, and sort of shift it over to, I used the word rhetoric earlier, but to another kind of rhetoric, in this case, it is both conceptual and anthropological. So yes, you're thinking about your family members, but you're also thinking about in a, let's say a meta way, how is it that men and women talk, or how is it that we talk across generations? How is it that we develop a linguistic, let's say, terminology that is very, very specific, not to one country, not to a region, but to this entity which is called one specific family.

Lynne Sachs: And I saw this as I was making the film, for example, there's an expression that we use in English, which we call white lies, so do you know that expression, a white lie? A white lie is an untruth, but you tell a white lie to protect the person to whom you're lying. So that is a linguistic, call it a trope, like an anthropology, a trope that we develop with almost everyone in our lives. I'm going to tell you a shade of the truth, because I love you. And I love you so much that I'm going to protect you from your own reality. And we do it all the time. And it's not like it's a bad thing, it's just part of our mode of communication.

Lynne Sachs: And so in thinking about that and thinking about secrets being told, secrets are a kind of additional level of linguistic exchange. We keep one secret from one person, but we tell another, so is it really a secret or is it just transactional communication? I'm sounding really cold. But so with my mom and dad, people ask me this question, I bet you've been asked a hundred times or a thousand to yourselves, like how are you a little bit a part of your mother and how are you part of your father? And often we're asked that question in terms of DNA, well, I have my father's nose, but I have my mother's chin or something kind of physical. But also it kind of runs deeper than that. And we're always cultivating that, how am I composite of these two human beings? And it can take a long time to figure out. And also sometimes we don't want any part of one parent, we're trying to cleanse ourselves of that.

Lynne Sachs: So I didn't really understand that until I was sitting on that bed with my sister, Dana, and my brother, Ira. And actually my husband Mark was filming. And I'm basically dressed in my pajamas because I wasn't even intending to be in the film, I was going to just film with my sister and brother. So they look very nice and I look really shabby, but I had to kind of go with the flow. And as we were talking and getting that energy together, I think the camera made us find something new about our relationship, like find out, oh, mom is periods commas, and semicolons. And dad is like a colon and then our big announcement and a... So found it out there, it was often [inaudible 00:44:58]. And yeah, I think it's also a reflection of my interest in writing. And you mentioned the word punctuation, which I love, and it made me think about Roland Barthes, seems very timely since he wrote a book called *Camera Lucida*.

Libertad Gills: Yes.

Lynne Sachs: That was brilliant. And he used that word punctum. So in the punctum is the thing that sparks you, that takes you out of just recognition or are cognitive, acknowledgement that something exists and it reaches into us, call it into our soul. And I think that can be shaped through, you called it punctuation [inaudible 00:45:54]... I'm going to come back to the text and the same is true with a film, particularly, I think an experimental film. Because for me, experimental film does not rely on exposition. I'm very opposed to exposition in either documentary or experimental film, as in this is the cause and this is the effect, and this is the context. I kind of always hope I don't have to give all that, I'm not responsible for it, it comes through the material in a more generative and activated way. And I think documentary in particular feels an obligation to exposition, which makes many documentaries feel a little content driven rather than formally radical or expressive in terms of the material.

Libertad Gills: And to not have that pressure for exposition film also allows for the film maybe to begin right away in a sense, get rid of all that-

Lynne Sachs: I love that, I love that. I actually I'm going to remember, I'm glad you said, how can you make a film that begins right away? And if you begin right away, I think you create a kind of paradigm that for involvement and for pre like really extreme presence from your audience, because the audience has to be in kind of collaboration with you in the process.

Libertad Gills: Yeah. Well, that's actually something that I learned from [inaudible 00:47:58] in his workshop. He's saying, you have to start, you just have to start it and just forget. Also, when we would explain what film we were going to make as students in his class, and everybody always gives excuses or a big introduction to the film that they're making. And he said, no, just tell me the film. So it was just like cut right to what it is that you are trying to do in the movie. So yeah, speaking about experimental cinema, in relation to more maybe conventional documentary forum, I think that it was, it's very interesting to hear you speak about that every film creates its own idiom. And you say that the viewer of an experimental film will not necessarily speak the language prior to entering the theater. But once the film is over, and he or she will have been introduced to this unfamiliar mode expression. And you call these vocabulary lessons.

Libertad Gills: And I really like that idea that the spectator is not necessarily speaking this language before the film, and the film starts to create this language as a vocabulary lesson. I was wondering how do you go about finding the idiom for each film? Well, that's a very big question I know, and it depends on each film. But also how is it possible to sustain the language produced by an experimental film? Or is it something that is reinvented each time, because you speak of a cinematic memory, which I really love that concept, I think it's very interesting to think about. And I think that you also speak about it in relationship to the films of Gunvor Nelson, something that she had spoken about how you create cinematic memory in a film. But what about creating cinematic memory across and between films, is it possible that pneumatic memory builds over time and from one film to another? What do you think?

Lynne Sachs: Well, I'm going to actually speak about a couple of films that are in the program, the Camara Lucida program, because I came up with an idiom that's actually in "Film About A Father Who", but it first started in my film, "Photograph of Wind". And that was that there's this extreme energy between the camera lens and the person being photographed, as long as you allow the person being photographed to look deeply into the lens, as if the lens is a channel to your head, the filmmaker's head. And so I started

shooting with my adults, my daughter, Maya, when she was six years old. And I asked her to run in circles around me. So you could say, if you ask your child to run in circles around you, it's kind of like having a leash on them. And you'd say, oh, you're like a little dog running in the circle around me. But it's also creating this vortex between us, this like kind of momentum, this very physical activity. And also I got very, very, very dizzy, so I lost my grip, let's say, or my stature as mom, and she sort of gains control.

Lynne Sachs: But that film I made in 2001, and I never thought I'd make it again. But I fell in love with the process, I fell in love with this idiom of asking to people to run in circles around me, because I got to think about filmmaking in a more epistemological way, I would say. To think about film as an activity in which you were documenting time in a moment, but what if I were to do it, which I did in the second iteration in 2006, I filmed her at 16. So then she's both aging and staying the same. And it became this big kind of possibility of thinking about the claiming of a documentary practice, the claiming that I was there, I witnessed my daughter as in any old home movie that you do. But then I witness her again, not just because she's six and 16, but because she's moving in motion, we call that horizontal time, but we're also thinking of vertical time like this notion of a daughter and the same daughter again.

Lynne Sachs: And you're thinking about this associated time between a mother and her child. So there's lots of different constructs around time. And then I filmed it again. And the third time, which was when she was 24, and I called it "Maya At 24", gave me another opportunity to think about the medium of film as running 24 frames per second while just being a series of frozen images. So that was actually, and as you used the word idiom, which I loved, that was like a language that we played with, I probably was thinking about Michael Apted's "Seven up", like the notion of seeing a person grow up through the frame. But then there's another kind of energy, which is between a mother and her daughter.

Libertad Gills: Thank you so much for introducing that because we to show "Maya At 24". So I think that would be a good, I mean, we could show all three, I would love to see all three right now with everybody, but I think that we should show "Maya At 24", because it includes the other films in it as well in a way. But it is a new film. So we will see the entire film, which is five minutes, we will show it in a few seconds.

Lynne Sachs: Fantastic.

Libertad Gills: Okay, thank you. So before going into one of the final questions before taking questions and comments from the audience. You have called "Photograph of Wind" a cinempoem, and can you talk

about what is a cinepoem to you? What is cinepoetry? I really like this term.

Lynne Sachs: Oh, thank you. Okay, I'm trying to come up with a definition for that doesn't just simply address the obvious, which is the length of time. But I think for me, a cinepoem is an immersion in a kind of engagement that is sort of like a multi cut gem where you see things from different perspectives, but you aren't trying to take it into trying to come up with a... Oh gosh, I'm kind of at a loss for words in a way, because sometimes I make work that is, I call a cinepoem, and it's very much addressing poetry, it's using the language, you hear words, this is one kind of cinepoem for me. And you hear words and the images are in conversation with those words. But other times a cinepoem is completely nonverbal and it's suggesting the kind of ideas that we often give over to words and we say, well, the words aren't necessary in this case, we can go into a layered space, layered series of emotions or responses that are completely out of the verbal mode of communication.

Lynne Sachs: So it's just a way of working for me, that is not driven by story, let's say that. I've never really this, I hate to define myself over, but I'm not, but I've never really been drawn to storytelling for my own work, I love reading a good novel. Right now, I'm reading "Pere Goriot" by Balzac. I'd read it in college and I wanted to return to it. And it's a fabulous story, and it's very full descriptions. But my work is more about impressions and associations and not story driven. And so it's an allegiance I have to poetry. Though, I don't like in the English language that when we say something is very every day, we say it's prosaic, meaning it's not sublime the way poetry is, and I think prose can be fantastic. So this is just a place where I feel at ease with my work. And then especially in the last couple of years, I've been working with a lot of poets who maybe I write a poem or they make an image, or they make a write a poem and I make an image, and there's a kind of lovely, unknown in which we arrive with something new.

Libertad Gills: I really like that idea about the prosaic also being beautiful, but that could also be [inaudible 01:03:35] of beauty. You sort of mentioned it at the beginning of your answer about what would be the most obvious thing to not speak about the duration, but I think it is interesting to speak about the duration of many of your films. The other day, you told me that four is your favorite number and you have a few films that last four minutes. And then in the film, "A Film About A Father Who" is a film that's about 70 minutes, if I'm not mistaken or-

Lynne Sachs: 74.

Libertad Gills: 74 minutes. So here in the context from where we are as a film festival, sometimes you do feel like that there is certain resistance to the short film format, for example, the national film funds here now exclude short films from their categories for funding. And just in general, it's perhaps viewed as a forum more for students than for filmmakers, there's a resistance and there's a lot of prejudice against this short film format, and so I was wondering if you could tell us more about your interest in the short film or in the film that can last, whatever it needs to last, and what place it occupies in your film making. Also, how you're making of short films differ from your making of longer films, including questions of film forum, but also perhaps in terms of financing and distribution. And just in general, why make short films today when so many people seem to think that short films are not actually films? Or there's all this resistance?

Lynne Sachs: I really will say, honestly, I hope I never grow up and grow out of the short film, because the film that is a few minutes long is also as closely associated to poetry as it can be. And it's also a kind of testimony to how powerful just a few images can be, that nothing is wasted. Every image counts and every image has to hold its own weight. And so I will always find joy making these films of these lengths. And I can also say that it can be painful to make a feature length film. And it can be liberating to make a short film. And these days I'll just say in a practical sense, there are so many places to show short films because of the internet, what happens with a shorter film is that you learn to see your film become something new in context of a program, it's like seeing a painting in a group show in the gallery, it starts to pick up through osmosis, this sort of [inaudible 01:06:51], rigor on film. All of those things happen because the film gives space for other things to happen to occur.

Lynne Sachs: Now, I actually just recently started working with a woman named Maria Vera, who has a boutique film distribution company. And it's called Kino Rebelde. And she's actually from Argentina, but is now working out of Portugal. And an Ecuadorian filmmaker, Alexandra Cuesta, who might be on this talk, but I don't know, both of us have our films there. And what is so fantastic about Kino Rebelde is that it doesn't just advocate for the film feature film, it's sort of saying that groups of films, for example, I worked really closely with Kino Rebelde on setting up this program at Camara Lucida, but it's looking at the body of work of an artist she does. And also looks at how these shorter films can be in communication or conversation with other makers around the world. And so it's been super exciting to have found her work, which was almost a year ago, exactly, that I found Kino Rebelde. And it's been such a great fit for my work because of exactly your question, because it's not just the feature, which takes up a whole evening experience, it's about these other kinds of cinematic gestures.

Libertad Gills: Or the way that these films are screened and how, but it's a short films often shown with other people's short films with other short films, so there's a kind of community that can also be created through this film programming as well and the distribution of these movies. Just a final question before going to the audience is I wanted to just ask you, also because of the context in which we're speaking today, which is online, virtually. And so I was wondering about this thing that you've called the thingness of cinema, that is what is essentially specific to cinema, for example, watching movies in a movie theater and how this thingness has changed for you, if at all. I think it has from what you've just mentioned of Kina Rebelde over these past almost two years with the pandemic. For example, today, as I said, we're able to speak this way online and audiences are listening in not only from Ecuador, but from around South America and all other countries, and also the film festival itself is great in streaming online right now. So I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about this experience that you've had and maybe how that thingness is changing or for you.

Lynne Sachs: That is a really good and timely question because the last two years has been so daunting for all of us. And we could say it's true that we've been very, very isolated, but in other ways, we've had the opportunities to create these virtual communities that are very, very, very deep, like you and I knew each other's work, probably I would say through the internet, but then we actually met in person in a cafe in Brooklyn. And then there's a filmmaker from Trinidad who was actually working in Boston, then our work at – his name is Che Applewhaite –and our work showed at the Sheffield Documentary Festival. And then he happened to come to New York, so we took a walk on the Highline. So there was like that in-presence experience as a result of the virtual, I actually wrote an essay for the Brooklyn Rail about the thingness or about my missing the object, like the fact that I want to make an object, like a painting that fits in my hand and then sits on a shelf like my book, "Year by Year poems".

Lynne Sachs: But there's also something, like a magic carpet that I can send my films to you or to a film festival by pressing a button, and then I'm sharing my spirit, my worries, my failures with you. And there's also the teaching that's happened, because I've read in your bio that you worked with Christopher Harris. And Christopher and I met each other, at first, he wrote about a film I made in 2001 called "Investigation of a Flame". Then we actually met in person, now we're actually in the process of working with some emerging curators through Canyon Cinema. So all of that, did you meet Christopher in person or did you meet virtual?

Libertad Gills: Chris in person Because I went to screening on his films at NYU. But hardly in person, and then online in a collab through UnionDocs.

Lynne Sachs: Yeah, so we're all learning to accept, I would say the warmth that can happen through the virtual, not to just see it as the last choice, but to see it as a very immersive experience that's all about speech. I'm sort of saying, oh, I make cinemoems, and we don't depend on words, but this really depends on speech. I articulate an idea and you hear it. And when I think about Spanish, when you learn the difference between [foreign language 01:12:59] and [foreign language 01:13:01], like what is the difference between listening and hearing, or listening, which means to understand and listen and just to hear and be aware, and we do both. And I would say through the virtual, we've learned to acknowledge that we give that back to each other, the very active receding of other people's work and the engagement with it, and that it happens on multiple levels. Actually, it's funny because I'm noticing that I'm speaking to you with my hands a lot, which people like on CNN, have you noticed they never used their hands. Like this. So I feel like I'm speaking to you as if you're just sitting across the table in the cafe in Brooklyn.

Libertad Gills: Yeah, in Cafe Lulu.

Lynne Sachs: Yes.

Libertad Gills: So we have also a surprise for the audience that Lynne and I were speaking before about opening up these films that Lynne made in South America. So "Con Viento En El Pelo", a film that Lynne filmed in Argentina in 2010 will be available online. And we will put the link in the chat for today. And the other film, I think that we will also share, because these are both films that are filmed in Spanish language. And so will be of a special interest for our viewers in Ecuador, in South America. Is a film that you made in Uruguay in a workshop. And "Caudro Por Cuadro", I can't recall the title right now.

Lynne Sachs: I think it's "Caudro Por Cuadro".

Libertad Gills: "Caudro Por Cuadro".

Lynne Sachs: Is that frame by frame, is that a good-

Libertad Gills: Frame by frame, yes, made in Uruguay, so hopefully one day we will have a film of yours also made in Ecuador and that would be wonderful. So I don't know right now, if we can take some questions or comments from viewers watching.

Lynne Sachs: So they'll write them on Facebook, is that correct?

Libertad Gills: Yes.

Lynne Sachs: Okay.

Libertad Gills: So one second to see-

Lynne Sachs: Aren't we high tech.

Libertad Gills: Let see, so that people can feel also that they are a part of this. I had seen some comments, yes, so there are many hellos, like just people-

Lynne Sachs: Ola.

Libertad Gills: ... saying hi to Lynne, including Bruno Varela, a Mexican [crosstalk 01:16:01].

Lynne Sachs: There's a tribute to Bruno's work right now. And because of Camara Lucida, we've now watched each other's work, that's like a perfect example of the virtual bringing us together, we kind of like wrote each other in this sort of Facebook message way, and then we decided to send each other our films. And so if you send the kind of films that we make to each other, you're entering someone else's head very quickly, immediately like Kera [inaudible 01:16:34] said, "We're just thrown right in."

Libertad Gills: Actually the idea for this talk came to us while we were sitting with Bruno in a cafe, and we were talking and we were thinking that we should do this. And then we said, okay, let's just do this. The presence is also important sometimes for that kind of inspiration that can happen. But I know that there was a reading, there was a [foreign language 01:17:03] from Alexandra Cuesta, as you mentioned. And also Lucia Romero, another filmmaker from Tito, and Lus Arana. So people are very excited to-

Lynne Sachs: Well, something about Alejandro's or Alex's or whatever you might say, Alexandra films, because she spent a lot of time in the United States. And that's always a gift when you see someone from another country who has immersed herself. So for such a long period of time, and to see, in this case, the West Coast, particularly Los Angeles, she has a way of seeing Los Angeles, which is so different from the way that is shared to the rest of the world through Hollywood, it's a kind of confrontation in a delicate way, with the more conventional images of what is culture in America. I really would love her very observant eye, her sensitivity to those people who don't have access to all the glitz and gold and big houses and fancy makeup that people associate with Beverly Hills, and Los Angeles, and Hollywood. And I feel like her work is kind of opened up to her viewers, her audience, a way of seeing a part of America, in this case, the West Coast, the Southwest, in a

really revealing and beautiful, I mean, beautiful in a compelling way, beautiful way.

Libertad Gills: Those kind of crossovers between countries and ways of looking at each other at one another from different point of views is very interesting. So I just want to thank you so much, Lynne, for your time, for your generosity, for just like your joy, because it comes through in your films and it's coming through right now in this conversation. And I want to thank Francisco Alvarez, and the director of Camara Lucida for organizing this conversation. And also for being like behind the scenes right now, putting all the clips in order and doing all of that we're not actually seeing, we're not seeing the behind the scenes, but he's doing that I know.

Lynne Sachs: I could say something about Camara Lucida, and Francisco's work. Yes, the film festival is based in Ecuador and the streaming part of it is accessible to people in Ecuador, but in our, call it global experimental film community, this festival is so respected and so important in the ways that we look, if we look at the website for example for Camara Lucida, we see what's going on all over the world. We see what people are concerned about, what people are doing with the 16 millimeter hand processing, like your work. We see all the adventures and the risks and the radical ways that this field is being pushed in so many different directions.

Lynne Sachs: And again, because each program at Camara Lucida is curated, it's not just programmed, it's curated to create relationships and to bring out the best in each film as it relates to the other films. So I just want to say that I've admired this festival for years, so it is such a like really profound gift to me to have so many of my films available. And now you and I have just added two that we'll either put online or we'll just share the links for those films, the one shot in Argentina and the one shot in Uruguay. So thank you so much for allowing me to be a part.

Libertad Gills: Thank you so much, Lynne. Also, I just wanted to say that there will be a talk tomorrow with Bruno Varela at seven o'clock, also on Facebook Live for the film festival. And yes, just thank you so much. And you're always welcomed to Ecuador, and we hope that you can come soon. It would be very nice to... You are also doing a lot of teaching, a lot of workshops and poetry and filmmaking, which is very interesting, and it would be nice to share that also with the viewers, perhaps in the link, we can extend whenever there's a workshop, I think that would be very interesting.

Lynne Sachs: That would be great. We should do something together, I really love the film that you made with the birds and the textures. And I just got a chance to see Libertad's work, so this has really been an exchange, next time I get to ask you questions.

Libertad Gills: That's a deal. And yeah, I would love to make a film with you, that'd be an honor for me. Thank you so much, and thank you to everybody who has tuned in to listen to us and watch us today. And we remind you that Lynne's films will be available until Sunday in Ecuador. And many of your films are also available on Vimeo and on your website. So this is an invitation for everybody watching to continue to enjoy and to see Lynne's work.

Lynne Sachs: And if you have questions about any of the films or just thoughts, you can also actually write to me via my website.

Libertad Gills: Great, thank you for that.

Lynne Sachs: Bye, bye everybody.

Libertad Gills: Bye.