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Through the Looking Glass
Marie Antoinette, the Mafia & the Buddha

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Thesis Sponsors:

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Through the Looking Glass
Marie Antoinette, the Mafia and the Buddha

*“Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that.
Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither.
We know not what comes next, or what follows after.
Thus, the most ordinary movement in the world...
may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected fragments...”*
-- Virginia Woolf (2006)

ABSTRACT

Through the Looking Glass: Marie Antoinette, the Mafia & the Buddha is a short documentary film that recounts six chapters from the autobiography of Marie Antoinette. No, not that last Queen of France who got her head chopped off. This Marie Antoinette lives in Woodstock, NY (“*but I do like cake!*” says Marie from inside her shop). And yes, Marie Antoinette is her real name. She is 78 years old and she sells what she calls “wearable art” out of a ramshackle and overstuffed boutique in town. Marie is facing the possible closure of her shop: her 100-year-old landlord has just relinquished his ownership of the building. “What am I gonna do with all this stuff?” Marie wonders as she surveys the diorama-like installation of jackets, trinkets, toys, pop schlock and other pinkish ephemera. “It’s more than a shop...” she insists, “it’s a *feeling!*”

Exploring themes of family, honor, tradition, mothers, daughters, creativity, bliss and belonging, *Through the Looking Glass* offers a collage-like portrait of a collage-like artist who is

facing a particularly introspective moment in her life. We are invited to spend a day in the shop with Marie Antoinette as she evaluates the breadth and power of her madcap talents and as she considers her life's work and her life story – and stresses the difference between the two. All the while Marie offers us bits of her unique philosophy: gurus, honor, truth-seeking, family traditions, secret messages, karmic loops, escape, liberation and rebirth. In each successive chapter, Marie entrusts us with more details about her life and her art, and her collages start to resonate with meaning as Marie unpacks deeper cycles of deliverance, confinement, isolation and self-emancipation.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In a small overcrowded shop in Woodstock, NY, nestled among all the predictable purveyors of hippie concert paraphernalia, 78-year-old Marie Antoinette sells what she calls “wearable art” that she designs and sews by hand. Her work involves elaborate assemblages of fabrics and figures, each sewn onto the back of a salvaged, second-hand jacket. Each jacket offers its own staging and narrative and/or its own internal logic of symbols and patterns. To behold Marie's fantastical sewing installations, one might say that she works in the *collage* tradition of art (“*I wish Dada art*” we see scribbled in one of Marie's journals; she wrote it as a caption for a self-portrait that she spliced from childhood photos). But truthfully, Marie doesn't really come from the collage tradition in any formal sense. In fact, for Marie Antoinette, as we will learn, “tradition” has an entirely different connotation.

It turns out that Marie Antoinette's tradition happened to be a rather infamous one. Marie, aware of this intriguing and noteworthy family background, drafted a movie treatment of her life story several years earlier. Her husband Fred helped her to write it and they even tried to shop it around, Hollywood style. Only one producer called but he ultimately passed on the story, advising Marie that "gangster movies are *passé*...that's been done." Why did he even call in the first place? It turns out he was doing a courtesy to his mother – she happened to be a loose acquaintance of Marie's.

Marie has lived in Woodstock for 35 years, having run her shop there for the past ten. Last year marked Marie & Fred's 55th wedding anniversary, but nobody in the family really celebrated anything. Marie and Fred have two sons who also live in Woodstock, as do their respective sons. Marie's daughter Bambi lives in Ohio, as do her respective daughters and granddaughters. "There are so many facets to my story..." Marie reflects, cryptically.

In addition to making her jackets, Marie has been journaling for decades. She has assembled volumes of personal scrapbooks...pages and pages of collaged materials, tableaux of family stories, photos, letters, cards, souvenirs, drawings, and prayers. Looking closely at the photos and clippings in her journals, we see Marie's collage techniques again at work, this time on the family photos. Disembodied heads and miscellaneous flower parts meet and float over scenes of Tibet and India (and Florida). Our Marie Antoinette has effectively chopped the heads off all of her "subjects," choosing to whimsically replace them onto new bodies and into new environments. "I was always into heads...I'm taking them out of bad surroundings and putting them in beautiful surroundings.." Marie foreshadows for us.

Marie's sewing has lately become something of a compulsion. Several times a week she makes the trip to rummage through the clothing donation bins at the local charity, where she sorts through linens, discarded clothes and other relics to get the choice materials for her creations. "I don't even know where these designs are coming from, but they're coming," says Marie. "And all I keep doing is making more...why? Why, if nobody is going to wear it?"

These questions become one of the through lines of my project. Who is Marie Antoinette and what is she about? What is driving her relentless capacity to persist with her sewing? Are her collages merely a clever take on decorative upcycling in today's vain and crafty *bricolage* culture, or might there be something more creatively nuanced and profound going on with Marie Antoinette's work, perhaps even something with real artistic potential? Moreover, as one of the film's interlocutors asks midway through the film: how did this "Mafia princess" end up as this hippie woman living in Woodstock? These are the questions and observations that I hope *Through the Looking Glass* can provoke, but not answer. Audiences, I hope, will be invited and empowered to make their own decisions about Marie and her work.

The film can be also be considered part character study and part psychedelic poem, as it plays with different levels of storytelling while introducing both Marie Antoinette the collage artist and the Marie Antoinette the memoirist. Marie complains that she never really intended these parts of her life to get mixed together. And yet: "there's plenty there," she promises, cryptically, "I know there's a lot there..." This becomes another through line in the film: might we perhaps find some of Marie's most meaningful memoirs *not* in her Hollywood treatment, but in her collage work itself?

Before arriving on Marie Antoinette as a documentary subject – which is to say, before meeting Marie Antoinette, one of my goals in trying to create and produce a thesis-level artistic and documentary work in the Hunter IMA program was to consider ways in which art itself can function as documentary, and not just the other way around. I wanted to take this on in the form of a fully realized artistic documentary work that could function both narratively and creatively in this space between documentary-as-art and art-as-documentary. Topically, I did not have any particular subject in mind, but I knew that as part of my thesis work I wanted to create a character-based project that would (i) challenge me to cultivate a brand new encounter with a subject who (or that) was previously unknown to me, (ii) foster a collaborative dialogue with that subject in order to co-realize a creative work together, and (iii) catalyze the production of new hybrid/multimedia work from me that would be beyond anything that I had ever made before. I had no specifics in mind beyond these considerations, and I often worried that this left me at a bit of a disadvantage, since I had not been doing any field testing of my work in other IMA classes nor had I started the IMA MFA with a specific art project. In general, I was hoping to be a part of a new experience of discovery, and to be challenged to create expanded multimedia nonfiction work based on that discovery.

There is something to say about *immediacy* that interested me here as well: I wanted to engage with a story that I never really planned for or prepared for in any advance way, but that I could be activated to jump into action to execute. I also knew that the kinds of media projects I would continue to seek out would be those that required facility for working across and between media, and for working in unexpected and (perhaps even discreet) circumstances. I had an

appetite for this expanded sense of process coupled with a loose, treasure-hunting sense of anticipation, and that was it!

Lastly, of particular interest to me was finding ways to “vertically integrate” as an artist. This meant seeking involvement and execution within every step of the creative process – from seeking and finding a story that could be sustained in the context of a collaborative experiment, to writing, researching, shooting, editing, sound design, VFX, etc. Today’s digital storytelling and media making tools have been democratized and miniaturized to such an extent that it is now possible for a single creator to take on a whole singular work, and sometimes that scale of making allows access to worlds that might not otherwise be glimpsed with more complicated and intrusive setups. This vertical style of making is something I have long been interesting in realizing but had never tried before in such a comprehensive way.

These ideas started to become realized in June 2017, when I tried to visit Marie Antoinette’s shop on Tinker Street in Woodstock after attending a wedding in the nearby mountains (side note: as it turns out, this is not an uncommon route to discovering Marie Antoinette and her wondrous little shop). I did not know what was inside Marie’s shop when I passed by; I had certainly not been doing any research about Marie and I wasn’t looking for her shop or hoping to foster a rapport with her as a documentary subject. It was much more accidental than that: I tried to get inside her shop, I bumped into Marie, she cursed me and kicked me out. Alas, it was too late, I had seen the shop! I had caught a glimpse of the inside of this woman’s shop and I was convinced it must be some kind of simulacrum of her cosmos, or psyche, or both. Responding quickly, I did what seemed the intuitive thing to do: I asked Marie if

I could return to spend some more time with her, and maybe I'd bring a camera and we could do some creative experiments together. And that is how she became my subject.

To be clear: at the outset of this Marie Antoinette project, I had only known of Marie what I could glimpse from being inside her shop. There was something remarkable about her work – the smashed-togetherness, the juxtapositions, the fabulously weird compositions full of form and color and meaning. The surrounding “installations” (as she called them) of art and toys and clothes in the shop only added to the intrigue about what might be going on inside of Marie's mind – what kind of calamitous beauty, violence and kaleidoscopic chaos was this?

It turns out the answer had more to do with personal trauma than with fuzzy and/or rapturous psychedelia. But before I learned about any family trauma from Marie, I learned about the aforementioned family infamy. And I didn't learn about the trauma or the infamy until much later in my rapport with Marie, well after I had already decided to start spending time with her. In other words, even *before* I learned of all the twists and turns that Marie's story was going to take, there was her art, and just the art. And I was prepared to try to work with that. One might say that in a sense, I was lucky as a documentary maker to subsequently get all the Sopranos-style stuff about gangsters, gurus, bastards, hitmen, and hucksters. But that is just the point: I didn't get lucky, because I didn't get these things. Not right away at least. In fact, they were forbidden. Once these tidbits had been revealed, I was obviously curious to pursue them as part of my documentary inquiry; when I asked to go further into these stories, or for access to more information about them, I was roundly refused. Marie and Fred seemed offended that I was not interested in doing more of a hagiography of Marie Antoinette the prodigious and heretofore

undiscovered designer of wearable art from Woodstock, NY. They were offering me my own personal *Finding Vivien Maier* (2013), and here I was trying instead to make it into *Mean Streets* (1973).

Thus, began the up and down dynamics of my rapport with Marie Antoinette. One week she would be jubilantly sharing all manner of stories from her life, philosophizing whimsically, and maintaining a curious and cooperative rapport with me. By the time of my next visit, the situation would have completely reversed itself, and Marie would complain of my intrusions into her life, accuse me of trying to expose classified materials, curse me for not paying her to make this movie, demand to see footage and prove that I wasn't trying to exploit her life story. What was behind these reversals, and how did I end up so swiftly and inextricably bound up with this person's life, and possibly even her success? To be sure, I had wanted to be a part a new kind of documentary encounter, one that would challenge me at all levels – that was supposed to be the whole point of undertaking this project. But I found myself troubled by the different complicated positions that I had to navigate with Marie, with Fred, with daughter Bambi, and – I would soon encounter – with a handful of individuals still connected to the Bonanno family estate. Would there be something that I was in danger of corrupting irrevocably? And would that thing that I corrupted be my documentary, or would it be Marie Antoinette?

Marie says her art is pure, and she's been waiting to see her jackets in a magazine. Her life? Marie says she's been waiting for recognition for that too, first in the form of a book deal followed by a *Sopranos* type TV deal. As for me? Yes, it turns out, Marie says she had asked for me too. To hear Marie explain it, this whole thing has all been an inevitability. Marie Antoinette

had been asking her guru (“he’s not in the body” she reminds us) to send someone to discover her. My arrival to her shop was just that, and for Marie this has all been part of some larger astral intention.

Considering my original mission statement above, what kind of encounter had I just encountered? How was I going to tell the story of this sewing collagist with a Hollywood-chasing “gangster”-ish background? Certain aesthetic and ethical priorities became apparent as I started to make decisions about how to steer this documentary project about Marie Antoinette, her art and her life. Given the volume and breadth of Marie’s sewing output, I knew that we needed to use Marie’s work as a form of documentary storytelling in its own right. This meant it was important to maintain the integrity of her work, and to show it on screen in as full a format and as high a resolution as possible. *What if Scorsese worked in embroidery?*, I wondered. Perhaps there was a conceit here that could be used to tell Marie’s story.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

As I set out to work on *Through the Looking Glass*, the bulk of my research involved more gumshoe detective type work than it did academic research type work. I pored through FBI surveillance records from government archives, New York City housing records, local newspapers, etc. Noting where my research findings corroborated Marie Antoinette’s own accounts from our interview sessions, I was able to piece together a tale that – incredibly – follows Marie from 1960s era *cosa nostra*-crazed culture of organized crime culture with 1970s era *Be Here Now*-crazed culture of organized religion. Interestingly, both have similar dynamics

of family hierarchies, power, honor, tradition, “gurus,” bliss, and betrayal (Bonanno, 2000; Talese, 2009; Dass and Levine, 2013).

The more comprehensive story borne out by the research goes something like this: Marie Antoinette was born in Brooklyn, raised in Queens, the lonely, only child of an overprotective father and disinterested mother. She was named after her grandmother; her father Frank insisted on this full use of her name as a tribute to honor his mother. Frank also happened to be brother-in-law and loyal captain to Joe Bonanno, head of one of the five families of Sicilian organized crime in earlier 20th century New York.

As a teenager, Marie Antoinette’s hand in marriage had been promised to the son of a fellow mafia family. “Salvatore” was an ambitious young scion of tradition, enjoying a lavish inheritance after a mysterious boating “accident” killed his father (“How many yachts *explode*?” Marie wonders). Marie’s marriage to Sal was supposed to cement family alliances and enable the fathers of both families to consolidate their respective powers and maintain their flourishing “tradition.” Frank could not have been more overjoyed at this prospect for his only daughter. He planned a luxurious wedding: the Sheraton Astor ballroom, fur coats; a long honeymoon in Sicily. But it had to be Frank’s way. He vetoed all of Marie’s bridesmaid choices and replaced them with the daughters of his street bosses; many of these women were complete strangers to Marie.

Fast forward a few years. Marie ran away from her overbearing family situation and she eloped. “Fred got me out of there...” she will later remember. Fred had been her high school friend of sorts, a Long Island boy with a gentle manner and a fast convertible. The two drove

south out of New York in Fred's Austin Healey; several days later they consecrated their vows in Georgia. Marie will say she eloped because she refused to be relegated to what she considered a medieval society of patriarchs and "breeder women." Before they left New York, Fred grabbed a rifle and stashed it in his trunk. Upon their return to New York some months later, Fred would begin spending his evenings at a Manhattan dojo run by Japanese disciplinarians. "I wanted to be able to get myself out of the room, If I had to..." Fred will later say of his karate training.

Fast forward ten more years. The couple and their young children have moved to Brooklyn, into the Bushwick building that Marie inherited from her father after his death. The first floor of this building had served as her father's official business, a neighborhood sewing and thread supply shop. The shop had been bugged by the FBI for years, and by all accounts, everybody knew that. What's interesting is that her father also bugged the shop (as well as his house, and the car), and everybody didn't know that (Dugard, 2018).

Marie and Fred converted their building into a communal space for their tightly-knit cadre of semi-Buddhists and pseudo-Yogis. We will learn that Fred's self-defense training had yielded an unexpected and revelatory "one in a million" transcendental moment, and this spiritual experience had gained him access to New York's elite group of spiritual seekers at the time. Fred and Marie invited their new meditation groups to live and study in the building, on the specific instructions of their teacher "Ma Joya", a precocious seeker and channeler from Brighton Beach. Joya insisted they use Marie's father's old thread shop for spiritual classes. Says Marie, "I could see people discussing philosophy and meditating in the same room where, after school, I had listened to the radio for the horse racing results and kept lists of the winners

for my father's bookmaking business.” Ram Dass was there too; he painted the place white. A year later, Ram Dass would publish “Egg on my Beard,” an article about his experiences with the group. He disavowed Joya and all but admitted that the whole thing was a mistake. He used the experience as material for his next book *Grist for the Mill* (2013).

Another note about research: In addition to my research into Marie’s family, I also watched a series of films as part of a survey of how a biography like Marie’s might be told. I spent time with (1) lower-grade mafia films related to stories from the Bonanno crime family, and (2) character documentaries about late blooming artists, enigmatic grandparents, aberrant fashionistas, “outsider” artists, and the like (Berliner, 1991; Eyre, 2001; Press, 2010; Rybicky, 2014; Stiefel, 2016; Yu, 2004). These screenings helped me to better understand the landscape of films comprising this “genre,” and to further refine some aesthetic considerations for the telling of Marie’s story. To put another way, it helped me to rule out several specific creative strategies for telling a story – viz., reenactment (Morris, 2010), animation (Stiefel, 2016), historical expert (Eyre, 2001), art expert (Walter, 2002), medical diagnosis, gallery incentivization subplot (Rybicky and Wickenden, 2014), etc. While these are interesting techniques and tools for the telling of these individual stories, I ruled them out for my purposes – either the production costs would be too high, the payoffs too low, or worse yet, I would be undercutting one of my principle objectives to present Marie’s work as a kind of pure, creative act.

To speak a little more about on my interest in Marie’s world in general, especially as I encountered it to be mapped inside of her store: as an artist, I have always pursued a general thematic interest in what I’ll call the “cosmological.” These would be questions not just about

our world, but about our “worlds” — how we create them, compete with them, maintain them, and the degree to which they afford us our own “solipsisms” within larger different social and cultural structures. This interest has fueled my pursuit of creative nonfiction media in general. The projects that I have undertaken in the IMA program have all involved an engagement or confrontation with someone who is stuck in their “world,” whatever that might mean. For Marie, what does she do with her world? Consider one of the adages Marie is fond of reciting, “The world is yours!”. My project could be viewed as an attempt to invert the meaning of this affirmation. Yes, Marie, the world is yours; but it is yours and yours alone — not, as in the world is your “bull to take by the horns...” Rather: the world is yours, your own private place to be in, all by yourself. Could Marie’s world be her bliss? Could her bliss be hell? Is any of it the other way around?

In *Through the Looking Glass*, I suggest that Marie Antoinette’s shop is not really a commercial or retail endeavor, it is a solipsistic cosmic projection, a paradise for one. Marie Antoinette has not only figured out a way to create a multidimensional and kaleidoscopic world of her own, she has succeeded in mapping that world onto, or into the world in the form of her shop. Every artifact installed inside her shop or rendered onto the back of another salvaged jacket is yet another “odd, disconnected fragment” for Marie (Woolf, 2006), a simulacrum of, and connection to, a very specific element from her life. Marie is not only subject to the karmic loops she is so fascinated by, she even creates them for herself by virtue of her work.

PRODUCTION PROCESS

In making this work, I kept to a production regimen of visiting Woodstock for several days at a time every 6 weeks or so from June 2017 to March 2019, completing a total of about 20 different shoots with Marie during that time. In the end this allowed me a glimpse into a full year-long seasonal cycle of Marie's life in and around her shop. I did not spend very much time on any initial pre-production, other than sourcing some camera equipment and finding a local campsite in Saugerties. Considering Marie's situation, Fred's failing health, and the possible impending loss of her shop, I recognized that time was of the essence. I felt it was crucial to start being on site with Marie as soon as possible, and that's what I tried to do. Most of the filming took place at the shop as I spent time with Marie. Seasons came and went and visitors continued to dip in and out of the shop, alternately mesmerized, nonplussed, or repulsed by the garish and confining shop displays. Our remaining interviews with Marie were shot during the evenings at her home. At first my goal was to capture any scattered stories from Marie as they emerged, because at first, new details were emerging all the time and they never emerged very predictably (*did she just say something about the Bonanno crime family and the Sopranos?*). Eventually, my goal became to not re-capture the stories that she started repeating (*is she saying that thing about the Bonanno crime family and the Sopranos again?*). Why so repetitive, Marie?

Marie and I had hit a plateau and it would be one of my next challenges to figure out how to productively break through this. The context and circumstances of our interview sessions proved instructive here: I realized that the *inside-shop* Marie Antoinette was a different person than *at-home* Marie Antoinette. She was more confident and at ease, perhaps. When at the shop,

Marie was able to be amid all of her work, her life's work, as she saw it – in effect, an extension of her very self. But perhaps the more important part about this observation was that her husband Fred did not come to the shop much anymore, whereas Fred had been at home with Marie during our evening interviews. That was the difference in Marie's behavior. At home, even though Fred would not speak much, he would nonetheless keep our conversation steered into the "art" stories and away from the "Mafia" stories. I only later learned that Fred had been corrupting our interview sessions after we would finish, lashing out at Marie with ominous, morning-after admonishments and accusations of divulging too much information or saying the wrong thing. Marie would return to me in the following days or weeks and recant everything, imploring me to not use anything she said, and demanding that I "stop digging!" These dynamics between Marie and Fred provided the conflict that informed much of that year; it also provided me with an entry point for me to engage with Marie in a different context to break through our plateau. A moment of reckoning was at hand: do I be honest about my desire to access both parts of Marie's life in order to attempt this portrait documentary piece, or do I proceed without her knowledge of my intentions and get what I need no matter what? After much deliberation with my producer/partner and with my advisors, I chose the former, opting not only to be honest with Marie about my intentions to seek out her story, but to push things even more into the unknown.

I had already learned that Marie was quite protective of her life story and was not keen to reveal many details about her life to just anyone. "Let's just focus on the art!" she had pleaded with me countless times. Paradoxically, I knew that Marie also longed to be recognized and acknowledged. She wondered whether Beverly Donofrio, author of her cousin Rosalie's book

Mafia Marriage, might be willing to help Marie to write her story. By then, Marie figured, she could turn her book into the movie or serialized TV show that it was always destined to become (side note: Beverly Donofrio is not interested; we interviewed her).

Marie's outpourings about her cinematic strategies yielded another discovery that served as a major turning point for the structure and scope of *Through the Looking Glass: Marie Antoinette, the Mafia & the Buddha*. Marie shared with me that she keeps a Hollywood-style treatment of her life story that she and Fred drafted, but that she only shows it to certain people (preferably Hollywood producers). The discovery of the existence of this film treatment immediately sent my ethical question to the forefront of everything: knowing what I know about the life of Marie Antoinette, and despite my not having any prior awareness of or interest in these aspects of Marie's life, how can I not only *mention* this interesting bit about Marie's movie treatment of her life, but also how can I now *use* her written materials as well? Could I do that? What would that look like? And would I be able to do so while still empowering Marie to capitalize on her own story if/when/how she saw fit? How can I make my movie plus her movie, and yet also let her make her movie too?

Moreover, structurally speaking, I was beginning to see this Marie Antoinette story as unfolding on more than one level in the film. This movie treatment of her life was somehow going to be a script that would anchor one level of the film. My strategy for convincing Marie to cooperate with this idea was to show her that I was going to both make her movie based on her treatment, but also not make it, and by introducing it all in an experimental documentary context, I would be able to draw unique attention to Marie's life as a possible larger narrative vehicle for

her to produce however she saw fit. Furthermore, since my film would be about her art and how Marie had to go through certain parts of her life in order to get to her art, wouldn't it be ideal to use Marie's own words from her own autobiographical narrative to move this story forward? Furthermore, I promised Marie that I would work to extend some of my New York theatre connections to invite a noted actor who was in *Goodfellas* (1990) and *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) to help us with the voiceover narratives. Together, we would make an experimental film piece that would showcase both her story and her art. My strategy to convince Fred to cooperate with this idea was to wait until Marie was sufficiently enthusiastic about, and inured in, this project that she would be unable to succumb to Fred's objections.

The focus of my shooting continued to evolve as well, as Marie's family started yielding new bits of her story to me. One creative breakthrough came as I was sorting through piles of artifacts in Marie's shop. I realized I was seeing little visual reminders in Marie's art, echoes here and there of Marie's unbelievable stories. Might these be more clues? Surely, they merited closer inspection – literally. I decided to try a slower and closer examination of the work. For my next few visits to Woodstock, I rented a high megapixel camera/macro lens package and spent the nights at Marie's shop making close-up images of her work. This is when another important creative breakthrough occurred. Looking closely at Marie's designs, I started to pick up the same stories, characters, and scenarios in her collages that she had been recounting to us in her stories. Her stories were all there, they were just reformatted for the “the back of a Goodwill jacket” kind of storytelling.

This realization gave me a second platform on which to experiment with the story of Marie Antoinette, her life and her art. On the one hand, I would present a story of Marie in her shop. She would be lamenting her lack of sales, diagnosing her ailments, predicting her shops longevity, dishing TV-ready riffs of various life stories, and complaining about Fred. On the other hand, I would present a more playful and fantastical narration of a few chapters of her life. I would feature the actual text from Marie's Hollywood treatment, and it would be narrated by a professional actor with experience in a "gangster film." On top of this second layer I would then add all of Marie's work in its high-resolution glory. Viewers would have the chance to evaluate Marie's work as both aesthetic object and as fantastical device for elaborating Marie's unbelievable life narrative.

AUDIENCE & EXHIBITION

I would like *Through the Looking Glass: Marie Antoinette, the Mafia & the Buddha* to be considered the first of several creative experiments resulting from my encounter and rapport with Marie Antoinette. One important consideration for me has been to introduce this film not as a standalone offering but as part of a larger art project that invites installation opportunities, and/or immersion into Marie's world. Phase II of project Marie Antoinette will incorporate more of these immersive, and installation exhibition opportunities – including working with samples of Marie Antoinette's jackets and creating simulations of the inside of her boutique. One particular

medium I am currently experimenting with is the creation of large photographic prints, and prototype large scale fabric samples and wallpapers featuring collages of Marie's jackets.

In terms of a featured exhibition of this film: As a way of celebrating my subject and showing my gratitude to the local Woodstock community that supported the making of this film, my goal is to have *Through the Looking Glass* selected for a world premiere at the 2019 Woodstock Film Festival in October 2019. As of May 2019, we have just submitted a prospectus for the film.

A few last points about legal and ethical matters before this film can be released. Considering my earlier points about ethics and positionality: while not technically a legal matter, I did have to clear a significant milestone in order to be able to create and screen this film. Before my interview with Marie's daughter Bambi in Ohio, I had to be a part of a conference call with a member of Bambi's family who was the executor of the estate of Joseph Bonanno, and who had been alerted to our project. Why were we making this film? What were we saying? What business was it of ours? He was protecting his family's interests for sure, but more specifically he was also keeping anyone from interfering with a series of upcoming Bonanno family docu-fiction projects being developed for cable TV.

Regarding outstanding legal matters for the film: since one of the creative conceits of the film was to present a Scorsese or *Sopranos* style rendering of the story of Marie Antoinette, replete with narrative voiceover and period music. I decided to make use of some specific 1960s era popular music in this film, and, evoking this Scorsese-style storytelling, I synced this music with first person voiceover for each chapter reading. I found that this referential music was more

effective in conveying the story of Marie Antoinette than any compositional music. Realistically, I do not anticipate being able to license these actual sound recordings for use in the final, distributed film – not without heavy additional financial assistance! In anticipation of this, I am not only working with a producer to understand the licensing costs for any festival-only screenings of the film, I’ve also recorded cover versions of the songs in question, and am prepared to purchase mechanical licenses for these songs per the statutory rate. For purposes of screening my work inside the IMA MFA, I chose to go with the unlicensed, commercial music.

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