

SOWING THE SEEDS OF LOVE:
A LOOK INTO NON-CONVENTIONAL SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY
WITH A FOCUS ON AUDIENCE ENTERTAINMENT

by
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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of

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DEDICATION

To Mygama. I hope this makes you laugh wherever you are. Love you always.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the makings of the film *Sowing the Seeds of Love* and the stylistic choices made to produce a science documentary film focusing on audience entertainment. *Sowing the Seeds of Love*, a three-part short film starring an animal and a celebrity for each section bringing attention to the non-heteronormative mating behaviors of each animal species. The entire film is shot on 16mm film and uses animation and scripted scientific information representative of each celebrity host and their time of peak popularity to focus on the nostalgia of the audience. The goal of this film is to highlight a commentary on heteronormative roles in our society challenged by the mating behaviors of animals across our planet. This paper also explores three different documentaries that inspired the topic and style of *Sowing the Seeds of Love* and how the filmmaker came to the decisions of certain stylistic choices to create a non-traditional documentary in wildlife film.

THE ARTIST

Artist Statement

As a film-based artist and science communicator, I make films that intertwine the natural world with satire, creating films that question society's heteronormative culture. My work uses the wonder of sexual reproductive behaviors within the animal kingdom to bring attention to the important questions around sexual identity within our culture. I use familiar celebrities to satirize their popularity to discuss the mysteries of animal reproduction to both educate and entertain. I challenge forms of traditional documentary to create pieces that connect to audiences through experimentation of using comedy, satire, animation, 16mm film, and the connection of our behaviors compared to the behaviors of different animal species.

Website and Portfolio

www.rileyyoung.com

Films

Mygama. *Mygama*, 15:28 min, HD Video, 2022.

Logline:

My 80-year-old grandmother reflects on the grief-stricken tragedies of her life and yet somehow sees the positive.

Synopsis:

Mygama is a film that explores the life of my 80-year-old grandmother, Elaine

Rock. *Mygama* focuses on the importance of family and the inner strength of women. Elaine

Rock grew up on a farm in a small town in rural southern Illinois during war time when getting

an orange for Christmas was the greatest gift to receive. However, as a little farm girl, Elaine knew she didn't fit into that life and dreamt of going to California, where oranges grew on trees. At the age of twenty-one, Elaine had three young children fathered by two different men. While her first husband, and father of her first-born child, was away at war, his brother took care of her and her newborn. However, during the couple years of war, she married the brother of her first husband and had two more children with him before leaving to her dream of California. But the dream was entangled in nightmares. Elaine was continuously challenged with tragedy. From murder, divorces, to depression, loss, weakness, and most recently illness, Elaine has been able to overcome each obstacle with endless positivity. Without her struggles, she would not be the powerful woman she is today. She has managed to build a loving and supporting family who holds her sacred as the matriarch. She is the foundation of her family, instilling the values of strength and love. She continued a bloodline of powerful women who learn and grow from tragedies just as she did and continues to do. *Mygama* brings to focus the theme of strength in women and family by having this film made by her granddaughter, me, who conducted all interviews and directed this film, creating a strong connection to the familial history being told.

Crew:

Directed by Riley Young

Written by Riley Young, Elaine Rock, Laura Borders-Young

Music by Dayton Mark Borders

Edited by Riley Young, Lex Harold

Produced by Riley Young

Face: A Work in Progress, 01:56 min, HD Video, 2022.

Logline:

A personal look into the personal effects of sexual assault using paint as a form of reflexivity.

Synopsis:

This work in progress film looks at the personal effects sexual assault has on a person. This is a reflexive film that shares the story of the filmmaker. Using a painting of herself on a mirror to express the feelings of assault vs the appearance she puts to the world. The mirror holds two representations, one of the inner broken self and the other representing the difficulties of looking in a mirror through the memory of the assault. The film is not finished, nor will it be any time soon.

Crew:

Directed, written, starring, and edited by Riley Young

Generational Love. *Generational Love*, 03:25 min, HD Video, 2022.

Logline:

Past voice messages are used as a reflection of love between three generations of women.

Synopsis:

The filmmaker used herself, her mother and grandmother in *Generational Love* to make a film that expresses familial love. She used voice messages left by her mother and grandmother saved from years prior. She filmed the raw makeup free faces of these women and morphed them together throughout the film to represent the connection of love they all have for one another.

Crew:

Directed and edited by Riley Young

Starring Riley Young, Elaine Rock, Laura Borders-Young

Screenings:

Women and Wine Film Festival-Award Winner “Best Experimental/Alternative Film”

The Bee. *The Bee*, 01:46 min, HD Video, 2022.

Logline:

A poetic look into the lifeline that is female for the survival of honeybees.

Synopsis:

The Bee showcases the life of a female working bee. The film is black and white and switches between the eyes of a bee to the scientific slab of a deceased bee with handmade labels representing both the anatomy and the social tasks the bee is assigned to from birth. This film focuses on the labor of female bees versus the male bees within this breed with an underlying message about our societal gender roles.

Crew:

Directed, written, shot, edited by Riley Young

16mm. *16mm Edit*, 04:52, 16mm hand processed and digitally scanned, 2021.

Logline:

An experiment on 16mm film: A walk through the garden.

Synopsis:

This 16mm film works with different techniques using in-camera double exposures, single frames, solarization, and writing on negatives.

Crew:

Directed, shot, edited by Riley Young

Featuring Alex Lloyd

A Landlocked Ocean. *A Landlocked Ocean*, 03:02 min, HD Video, stop motion animation, 2021.

Logline:

Earth is over 71% covered by ocean, yet it is difficult to physically see how action in landlocked areas such as Montana impact the waters. *A Landlocked Ocean* tackles this notion with a lyrically stop-motion representation aimed to educate audiences of all ages, especially kids.

Synopsis:

A Landlocked Ocean tells the story of how everything in our world is connected. The basis of this connection is the ocean. The climate, the atmosphere, we humans, the land, even the little, tiny critters hiding under rocks, are all connected to one another in a cycle that has the ocean at its core. But as humans, land living organisms; we focus on the land around us. It is our immediate impacts that motivate our lives. In this world that is covered by a wondrous sea, being landlocked inhibits our ability to see and feel the significance of the vast world that impacts every single one of us. This film focuses on the connection the ocean has with landlocked areas, specifically Montana, through the medium of paper-cutout stop motion.

Crew:

Directed and edited by Riley Young

Written by Riley Young and Laura Borders-Young

Performed by Lyric Allen

Music by Melissa Borders Allen

Screenings:

Bozeman International Film Festival, Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, Nature Now Documentary Film Festival, Student World Impact International Film Festival-Quarter Finalist

A Hazy Shade of Winter. *A Hazy Shade of Winter*, 03:21 min, HD Video, 2021

Logline:

Surrounded by Bison and a winter snowstorm, one filmmaker patiently awaits the perfect shot.

Synopsis:

A Hazy Shade of Winter explores the behind the scenes of what it is like to be a wildlife filmmaker through the eyes of a poetic documentary. This film focuses on the environment as much as it does on the filmmaker's journey. It explores the brutal conditions that are met to capture the perfect shot. We are shown the blankets of snow and ice, the bundled filmmaker, the clouded skies, and the cold breaths of winter. Shot in negative 20-degree weather, this film aims to show the patience that is needed to observe and capture wildlife.

Crew:

Directed by Riley Young

Written by Riley Young

Produced by Chrissie Bodznick, Ashley Lobao

Starring Ashley Lobao

Edited by Riley Young, Chrissie Bodznick, Ashley Lobao

A Race Against Life. *A Race Against Life*, 03:19 min, HD Video, stop motion animation, 2020.

Logline:

The life of a seahorse entails a tango dance of copulation, a focus of fatherhood, and the ultimate death of a flamboyant creature. *A Race Against Life* captures these moments in the form of paper stop-motion animation to be enjoyed by audiences of all ages.

Synopsis:

A Race Against Life depicts the lifecycle of a seahorse. This film uses stop-motion animation to visually represent each stage. It begins with a male and female seahorse finding one another leading to their mating dance. At the end of the dance, the seahorse eggs transfer to the male's pouch where he carries them until birth. The final stage, as with any organism, is death. This film has zero narration. The focus of this film was to depict each stage in life solely with animation and sound.

Crew:

Directed, written, edited by Riley Young

Screenings:

Florana International Film Festival

A Bannack Nightmare. *A Bannack Nightmare*, 01:11 min, HD Video, 2020.

Logline:

A poetic representation of the horrific history of the ghost town Bannack.

Synopsis:

Bannack in a ghost town just outside of Dillon, Montana. It holds gruesome history as having the first jail in the country to house murderers as well as gallows. *A Bannack Nightmare* is a poetic look into the now dilapidated town focusing on what lies behind the outward appearance.

Crew:

Directed and edited by Riley Young

Hand Performance by Lex Harold

Lost in Transient Memories. *Lost in Transient Memories*, 03:53 min, HD Video, 2020.

Logline:

Audiences of this film experience the visuals of a rare form of epilepsy that causes individuals to lose personal memories and the effect that takes on the identity of the individual.

Synopsis:

Lost in Transient Memories transports the audience into a haptic visualization of subject Fernando's experiences with an episode of his rare form of epilepsy. Fernando suffers from Transient Epileptic Amnesia which affects his memory. When he experiences an attack, his surroundings begin to fade and his memory of himself dissipates. Everything goes blank. Then he starts to see a past memory play before his eyes. A memory that he forgot he even had. And just as quickly as it appeared, reality starts to come creeping back into his sight. However, it takes him minutes to be able to piece it all together and remember who and where he is. This film gives the audience an embodied glimpse into what Fernando goes through. It visually shows the fading of existence into a memory and back to reality. We hear the narration of Fernando as he explains the sensations. This film tries to shine a light onto this rare form of epilepsy that otherwise may not be known to many.

Crew:

Directed and edited by Riley Young

Written by Riley Young, Fernando Espinosa

Starring Fernando, Diego, Valentina

Edited by Riley Young

Screenings:

Florana International Film Festival

Electronic Press Kit

<https://www.rileyyoung.com/new-page-1>

FilmFreeway

<https://filmfreeway.com/RileyYoung141>

ABOUT THE FILM

Story of Your Film

As an active film buff, I began discovering films that take science in a different direction. I discovered the films of Jean Painlevé which focus on marine species but utilize surrealism and comedy to convey not only the science behind those species, but also connect the behaviors of these alien-like animals to human society. Painlevé, who studied mathematics, medicine, biology, and zoology and received degrees in physics, chemistry, and biology, became fascinated by the French avant-garde scene, and started to experiment with filmmaking (Macdonald). His experimentations with surreal filmmaking styles resulted in a revolutionary look into the lives of animals. Similarly, I discovered actress Isabella Rossellini's mini-series *Green Porno* which explores specifically the sexual behaviors of animals. Rossellini is an actress, model, and animal activist. She combined her interests of animal biology and acting to promote awareness of different animal species and their mating behaviors. Rossellini stars in all the episodes of *Green Porno* by portraying the focused animal of each specific episode. Her costumes and sets are all made artistically out of paper material and show a surreal version of the environments and animals each episode focuses on. She narrates as though she is the animal herself, describing each action taking place during intercourse. Because Rossellini was factual with her presentation of the animals and their biological behaviors, scientists praised her work as an informative and entertaining form of education. Both artists, Painlevé and Rossellini, inspired me to make a documentary that uses ideas of the absurd, societal commentary, celebrity recognition, and pop culture to present science. This is how *Sowing the Seeds of Love* came to life.

The process of creating this film presented many challenges that resulted in beneficial learning experiences. One of the biggest challenges for me was learning how to navigate through miscommunication. This is the first project I did not do the animation and postproduction myself. The animators I worked with were provided by a family friend's company as a pro-bono project. Even though I provided in precise detail exactly what I wanted, there were multiple “creative” differences taking place. I felt trapped between my creative control and their control as they were providing me with a huge part of my film. I had to tip toe around this miscommunication to not to risk the family friendship. Navigating the challenges of working with friends turned out to be an important learning experience. Even though there can be financial advantages to collaborating with friends, when there is a battle for power dynamics, it can be tricky to maintain your true visions without compromise. I also worked with fellow film students for the video graphics for my film. I had a great experience working and communicating with them because it was a comradery where our relationship was to help each other with building our technical skill sets. It felt more of a collaboration, which even though there were some issues with the actual After Effects files, I felt the excitement from them. The graphics are not perfect, but for my budget I am grateful for the outcome.

I filmed *Sowing the Seeds of Love* on 16mm. I made this decision knowing it was risky. My film could have been damaged in any step of the process which added a level of stress to my production. Thankfully, I received all my film back developed and scanned with picture. However, some of my film came back revealing that while filming, there was a fuzz was trapped in the film gate. My scans for one of my film sections came back shaky which I did not notice until I started editing with it in comparison with my other film I received back. The frustrating

aspect of using 16mm is the lack of accessibility to re-shoot. I had to work with the film I shot and try my hardest to make it look the best I could. I pushed myself to use 16mm for this film and learned that, although I value the texture and process of using 16mm, it is not the most practical for this type of shoot. If I had a larger budget, I would continue to use 16mm film. However, with a small budget like I had for *Sowing the Seeds of Love*, I would choose to use a more affordable and practical filmmaking tactic.

I plan to use my thesis film as a proof of concept for a larger project. I will be submitting *Sowing the Seeds of Love* to festivals to gain recognition and aim to have a series on a streaming platform. My first goal is to submit *Sowing the Seeds of Love* to film festival pitch sessions. Each festival pitch session has different criteria for lengths of film submissions. This is one challenge moving forward because most likely I will not be able to submit my entire film to the pitch. I either will have to create a trailer for my film or choose one section to present. However, because I have three chapters completed, I can show there are numerous animal species having all sorts of mating habits. The episode ideas are immense.

Connection to the Field

Documentary film has a wide spectrum of style conveyed through different perspectives of filmmaking approach. Not only are documentary films divided into different modes, as defined by filmmaker Bill Nichols, but also separated by visual style. Documentaries can focus on one single subject, yet each film can represent subjects in a variety of different ways depending on how the film is formatted. This is something about documentary filmmaking I find most interesting, and resulted in the direction of style I chose for my film, *Sowing the Seeds of Love*. My inspiration came from watching three different films on completely different

wavelengths of this documentary spectrum, however they all focused on the mating habits of a seahorse.

To define my use of the documentary spectrum, I will look at Bill Nichols' categorizations of documentary films into six different modes and combine those with different visual styles of my selected documentaries to showcase each film's information. These modes are broad categories to help define the different styles of documentaries, however, these modes can be mixed and matched making the categorization of documentaries sometimes difficult. Keeping it simple, the six modes are: Expository, Observational, Participatory, Reflexive, Poetic, and Performative (Bill Nichols 22). Specifically, I am going to focus on the Expository Mode, Poetic Mode, and the Performative Mode. On top of these modes, I will focus on how my selected documentaries of inspiration have also challenged these modes to create their own spectrum of where they lie. My film, *Sowing the Seeds of Love*, similarly challenges these modes as it takes pieces of different modes to create a singular documentary I put into a category of unconventional documentary. The purpose of *Sowing the Seeds of Love* is to engage an audience through visual entertainment and to produce a commentary on the heteronormative biases in our culture today.

The Expository Mode is focused on a voice over narration (Nichols 22). This voice over is typically associated with a voice of God, an almost all-knowing figure narration as the film is played out. This brings me to my first film that I am going to discuss, the BBC's (British Broadcasting Corporation) *The Mating Game*. *The Mating Game* is a series documentary with voiceover by Sir David Attenborough, perhaps the most famous voice in the category of nature film. It features different animal species and their mating habits across the world. Each episode is

split up into different environments: grasslands, oceans, jungles, and freshwater, with a focus on approximately eight species and their specific sexual behaviors per episode. This series not only falls into the mode of Expository, but also into the style of Blue Chip. Blue Chip films are defined by high production budget, high resolution cinematography, and often an enchanting narrator taking the viewers into the world on screen. These films are focused on the beauty of nature, presenting environments and creatures to audiences around the world. They are a spectacle of beauty which makes them a successful style of documentary (Louson 2018).

Audiences are drawn to watching these documentaries because there is an awe-inspiring reaction while watching the incredible imagery captured by the high budget, technically advanced cinematography (Louson 2018). Within the ocean's episode of *The Mating Game*, entitled: *Oceans: Out of the Blue*, there is a six-minute segment dedicated to the mating life of seahorses. Within this segment, Attenborough describes the actions of the male and female seahorses as they experience their mating procedures. We are shown beautiful footage of seahorses at every stage of mating. Attenborough uses a suggestion of anthropomorphism as the form of education to connect us as the audience to these exotic creatures. We are given a little taste of commentary of the fact that the "parental responsibilities have been exchanged" as the female seahorse transfers her eggs to the male seahorse (*The Mating Game: Oceans: Out of the Blue* 2021). It encourages the audience to contemplate traditional mating behaviors that the female gives birth and takes care of the young. Here, it is flipped to the male. This segment provides a glimpse into the reproduction style of seahorses with a simple educational script showing sensational footage. This method of documentary filmmaking is successful in educating audiences through beauty and the soothing voice over.

The next film of inspiration is Jean Painlevé's *The Sea Horse*. This film falls into the Poetic Mode, which is characterized as experimental, avant-garde, and emphasized by visual associations (Nichols 22). These films are mixed with art and non-traditional visual associations and story lines. For example, he uses visuals of different marine organisms to portray a commentary on different cultural ideals in society. Painlevé, who earned an education in science, used film to show people a world under the ocean that otherwise was left a mystery to most. By the age of 22 in 1924, Painlevé had degrees in physics, chemistry, and biology. He previously studied in mathematics, medicine, biology, and zoology and later became increasingly interested in the French avant-garde scene where he researched the styles of surrealism (Macdonald).

Painlevé created films focusing on the ideas of surrealism mixed with his passion of science. His most notable films spotlight different animal species, most of which were marine species, where he combined dreamlike filmography with hints of science, sex, humor, and commentaries on society. His film *The Sea Horse* exemplifies all these aspects into one film. This film, which premiered in 1933, showcased the reproduction behavior of seahorses and was revolutionary for its time. Painlevé brought to his audiences a glimpse into the unknown world that lay beneath the surface of the ocean. In this film, Painlevé gave his audiences a look into dissected imagery of seahorses mixed with dreamlike sequences of swimming seahorses, and comparison footage of horses. He used comedic anthropomorphic characterizations to seahorses that helped his audience bring connections to these unknown creatures to something familiar in their own daily lives. He drew comparisons to caterpillars, monkeys, horses, and King Charles spaniels, comparing the copulation habits as a "lovely balletic tableau" (*The Sea Horse* 1933). Like *The Mating Game*, Painlevé uses narration to describe the actions of the animals. However, unlike

The Mating Game, his narration pushes the scientific facts with humor and cultural commentaries. This film focused on the non-traditional gender roles of the seahorse. He emphasized the role of the male seahorse as taking on the female role of giving birth. This challenges the audience to question what normalcy in mating is. By using humor to challenge these societal norms, the audiences are not overwhelmed with this idea, but able to reflect on the facts presented.

Like Painlevé's films, Isabella Rossellini's series, *Green Porno*, uses non-traditional visuals to communicate different sexual behaviors of animals and brings to light a conversation of sexuality. Beginning in 2008, Rossellini teamed up with The Sundance Channel to premiere her short web series entitled *Green Porno*—an artistic representation of animal sex with Rossellini portraying each organisms' mating behaviors. Each episode is uniquely designed like an arts and crafts project, with costumes and props made from paper, cardboard, and foam. Viewers are transported to a universe reminiscent of our planet, with artistic imagination. This is comparable to the Poetic Mode in the sense it falls in line with avant-garde and experimental traditions. However, because of Rossellini's performative involvement in each episode, this series falls into the Performative Mode. This mode is characterized by an expressive aspect of the filmmaker's own involvement with the subject (Nichols 22). In this case, Rossellini takes on the role of an animal and depicts their actions as though she is the animal. Her celebrity helps in the marketing and attraction of her series (Sinwel 26). Celebrities bring a sense of authority to audiences, making them a good source for marketing (Brockington). The use of a celebrity for wildlife documentaries is not uncommon and these films tend to be how the public learns about nature in the wild. Traveling the world is limited in communities, and documentaries act as a

visual source to different environments around the world. Having a celebrity presenter heightens the enjoyment of education with characterizations of the liked celebrity (Brockington). Having Rossellini portray the celebrity of herself heightens the marketability of her series. A spinoff of *Green Porno*, also made by Rossellini, called *Seduce Me* is where we find the episode called *Sea Horse*. In first person, Rossellini dressed as a seahorse, acts as a male seahorse, outwardly commenting on the human given thoughts of a seahorse during mating. She expresses, once a female seahorse is introduced, “she holds my tail. She likes me. She wants to dance. She wants to be seduced.” (*The Sea Horse* 2010). Rossellini’s first person take on this scientific exploration allows her to use actions in our human life to recreate actions an audience can relate to. As Rossellini continues, she breaks the fourth wall to speak directly to the audience about her next actions as a seahorse. Once the females’ eggs (represented by chicken eggs, again to align with human relatability) are transferred to Rossellini, she exclaims that she is pregnant. Throughout this episode, Rossellini’s script and actions are depicted with a sense of comedy. She takes this absurd topic of animal sex and combines humor in hopes to “recruit more people to listen to the variety of nature” (Rossellini). The goal of her series is to “engage viewers with ecological issues in a wildly entertaining way, exploiting the pornographic and anthropomorphic tendencies of wildlife films to evoke a sense of wonder and induce a desire to care” (Wade). The simple term of “pornographic” produces a feeling of shock to audiences that is not normally associated with wildlife. However, the mating habits of animals that are expressed through these shorts are accurately pornographic. The sexual actions are visually expressed, just not in the literal human form that is associated with the word in our society, which ultimately makes it even more successful in drawing the attention of viewers.

All three of these films, *The Mating Game*, *The Sea Horse* (1933), and *The Sea Horse* (2010) specifically details the sexual mating habits of seahorses, yet each film expresses this information through different stylized techniques. Each one of these films is successful in captivating an audience through their filmmaking formats. For my film, *Sowing the Seeds of Love*, I chose different aspects of each film to portray the sex lives of different animals. I used the education-based ideas of the BBC's *The Mating Game*, the comedic tactic of Painlevé to produce a commentary on societal gender norms, and the celebrity persona used in Rossellini's *Green Porno*. *Sowing the Seeds of Love* is a three-chapter film featuring a different celebrity and animal per chapter. The different animals featured perform sexual behaviors that are considered non-traditional in society. Not only is the term non-traditional used for the sexual behaviors of the animals within this film, that term also describes the style of documentary of *Sowing the Seeds of Love*. It captures essences of the different modes that help categorize documentary film, without fitting into a singular mode. It slides back and forth on the documentary spectrum making it a non-traditional category of documentary. Its purpose is to educate. It uses elements targeted towards entertainment, shock, and a personal connection to its viewers. This makes it stand out amongst the initial notions of documentary film. The episodes in *Sowing the Seeds of Love* use animals to bring attention to organisms that have multiple partners, change genders, and question the societal hetero-normative ideas of gender roles. The first pull of this documentary is the use of famous celebrities to capture the attention of the audience. Then by using animals performing activities for reproduction success, it opens a discussion as to why these behaviors are not openly accepted by all in society. Like Painlevé, this topic within my film is subtle in challenging societal norms through including elements from different traditions of documentary

filmmaking to achieve my goals. The first goal of my film is to educate audiences on the variety of mating behaviors of unlikely species. The second goal, utilize animals as a critique on modern society and challenge the heteronormative culture through a multitude of Earth's species that break away from that norm.

FILM PROPOSAL

Film Logline

Sowing the Seeds of Love uses a trio of notable celebrity hosts to both entertain and educate a general audience about the unconventional animal mating science, which ultimately shares a connection to our own society in the important conversations around sexual identities.

Film Synopsis

Sowing the Seeds of Love explores the obscure and peculiar sex lives of animals through the eyes of Hulk Hogan (1980's WWE wrestler icon), Joyce DeWitt (Janet Wood from the popular 1970's sitcom *Three's Company*), and Robert Picardo (known for his character as the Holographic Doctor on the 1990's *Star Trek: Voyager* series). Their role in this film is to satire their popularity to make the subject of animal sexuality more digestible to those without a scientific background.

Each chapter is dedicated to a particular celebrity and shot in the style of show they are each known for. Because the popularity of these celebrities was of a pre-digital age, I incorporated the use of 16mm film to amplify the nostalgia of generational change. Each chapter contains animation of the animals' sexual behaviors and draw on animations from relevant eras to further expiate the details of each animal.

These three decades—the 70's, 80's and 90's—are not only nostalgic for baby boomers but are relevant today for younger generations. *The WWE*, *Three's Company* and *Star Trek* are iconic in pop culture and still relevant today as they are all shown as reruns on television. This film is made to target a wide range of audiences, specifically targeting adults, of not only fans of

each celebrity, but also intrigued by the quirkiness and humor of this series. It is designed to engage the viewers through different successful film tropes and step away from traditional documentary styles.

Artistic Approach

I came up with this idea with inspirations stemming from Isabella Rossellini's *Green Porno* and Jean Painlevé's *Science is Fiction* films. Both artists take a surrealist spin on animal species while also providing a commentary on our own human society. They also focus on animal mating behavior as a main intrigue point in their films. I thought the idea of animal sex, is so in your face and absurd that it captured everyone's attention through pure shock. People will either absolutely love the idea of animal sex or be completely traumatized by the idea, emphasizing the intrigue of this subject.

I took this idea of animal sex and thought about how I can add another layer of interest to it. The answer, celebrities. I added the addition of different celebrities to host separate episodes of animals that have some relation to what each celebrity is famous for. Hulk Hogan paired with the penis wrestling marine flatworms. Joyce DeWitt partnered with threesome mating wolf spiders. And finally, Robert Picardo and the alien species of our planet, the sexual parasitism's of the deep-sea anglerfish.

Now that I had the celebrities paired with their animals, I used 16mm film to bring the sense of nostalgia associated with each celebrity. This type of film adds a familiar textural element to the film reflecting a generation of pre digital. Although not each celebrity was shot entirely in 16mm in their prime of television, it pays homage to the time when our now digital 4K (and above) cameras were not even a notion nor conceivable.

The idea of animation came to me to make the animal copulation scenes fun. The animation differs in each segment and is styled to represent that celebrity's era. Each celebrity represents a different era in pop culture. Starting with Joyce DeWitt, *Three's Company* represents the height of comedy from the 1970's. I researched different cartoon television shows that were popular in the 1970's and came across the educational yet entertaining *School House Rock*. This show depicted not only the common animation style from that era but was also a show focusing on teaching kids from History to English. This style of animation allows for the audience to be embraced by the visuals and sensations of the 1970's. I did the same method of research for the next two decades, the 1980's for Hulk Hogan, and the 1990's for Robert Picardo. Hulk Hogan had his own cartoon television show, *Hulk Hogan's Rock 'n' Wrestling* that premiered in 1985. I took this as well as another popular tv show, *He-Man*, as my influence for Hulk's segment of my thesis. Both shows focused on the brute and brawling performance of the characters ideal for representing the wrestling of the two marine flatworms. Although Robert Picardo was part of the cast of *Star Trek Voyager* which premiered in 1995, the *Star Trek* franchise had its own animated series in the 1960's. I wanted to pay homage to *Star Trek* history by having my animation inspired by the previous animated series. Robert Picardo is representing *Star Trek* in my thesis to attract the loyal "Trekkie" fanbase, thus choosing the animation style of that animated series. However, some shows from the 1990's shared very similar animation styles, like *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* which focuses on the importance of environmentalism. It was ideal to combine the 1960's and 1990's styles of these two shows to represent both *Star Trek* and educational cartoons from different decades, including the 1990's.

My whole thesis idea focuses on elements of nostalgia to attract audiences to watch a short film about animal sex. By using humor, animation, and celebrities, people will be thinking about the connection between different animal mating habits and society's thinking around sexual orientations and identities. Like Rossellini and Painlevé, my film is a social commentary on our culture.

Distribution and Marketing

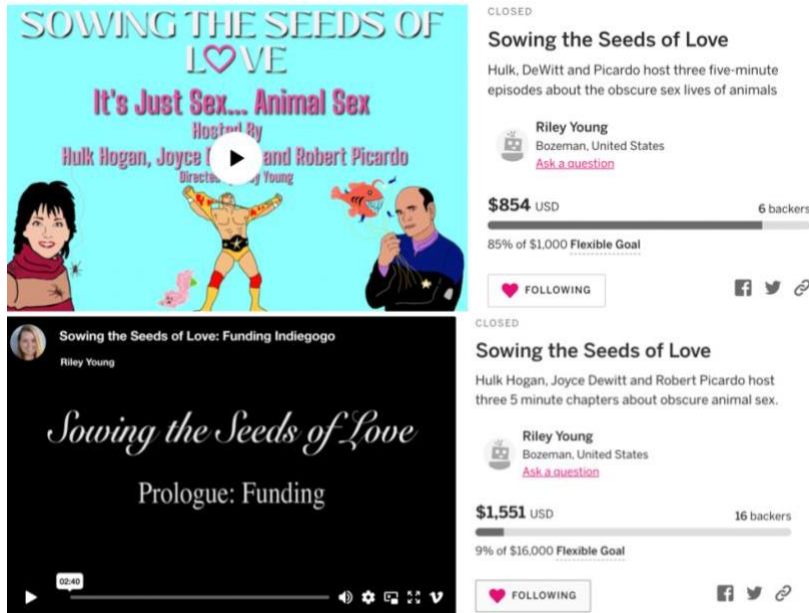
My long-term goal is to use this film as a proof of concept for a larger project. I plan to pitch this idea as a series containing more animals and more celebrities as exciting science communication and further the discussions of sexuality. I have three popular celebrities for this project and by expanding to other celebrities, this project will attract a larger viewing audience. I have planned who I am going to pitch this series to, based off projects similar to *Sowing the Seeds of Love*. I looked at unconventional documentary programs and discovered a web series is a successful way of distributing to a wide audience. Isabella Rossellini's *Green Porno* was started on the Sundance Channel and was shown on their web series. *Drunk History* started by premiering on the Funny or Die website before transferring to HBO and then Comedy Central. *Epic Rap Battles of History* is another web series that started on YouTube providing historical information in an unconventional and entertaining way. This shows there is a niche and a following for unconventional documentary styles and a web series looks to be a successful start for the expansion of this project.

My first step of distribution is to use my thesis film as a proof of concept to pitch at different festivals. *Green Porno* started as an idea by Isabella Rossellini and Robert Redford as a series that can be viewed on handheld devices people can watch anywhere. Redford has his own

center focusing on environmental filmmaking. The Redford Center has its own pitch series at the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, and I plan to submit my film and pitch at this event first. Robert Redford had worked previously on a project similar to mine, and I plan to pitch this as an exciting expansion for their film community. Because social media is continuing to expand throughout generations, having my idea be presented in a social media format can give it the attraction it needs for all audiences. Based on the popularity of media pages, my film idea can be presented as short episodes on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. These web pages expand to audiences of all ages.

There are also pitch sessions at different festivals that have a heavy industry following where pitch ideas are picked up by a variety of film companies. Some of these festivals include American Documentary and Animation Film, Austin Film Festival, Imagine Science Films, Sundance Episodic Pitch Parlor, Sunny Side of the Doc, and The Film Shop: Breakthrough Pitchfest.

Figure 1. Crowdfunding pages.



Key Creative Personnel

Hulk Hogan, host “Flatwormmania”

Joyce DeWitt, host “Three Really is Company”

Robert Picardo, host “The Voyage of Sexual Parasitism”

Director, Producer, Editor

Riley Young is a current graduate student finishing up her MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking at Montana State University. She has a background in marine science including scientific research conducted through NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). She has made films focusing on translating scientific communication in a creative and engaging way using film. This includes her films “A Race Against Life” which has been shown at the Florana International Film Festival, and “A Landlocked Ocean” which has been shown at the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival as well as the Nature Now Environmental

Film Festival. She is experienced in directing, animating, and editing documentaries, as well as having expertise in working with digital cameras, 16mm and 8mm cameras.

Director of Photography

Zach Robinson is a freelance cinematographer and filmmaker who has shot and created many award-winning films and documentaries. His Montana State University student film “Two Beers” won an Audience Choice Award at NFFTY (National Film Festival for Talented Youth) the largest youth film festival in the country. Zach Robinson has expertise in both narrative film and documentaries using both Arri, RED, and 16mm cameras.

Animation

The Marlowe-Pugnetti Company, INC (MPC) is a full-service Media and Event production company with Domestic and International experience that caters to the Fortune 100 and 500.

Graphics

Lex Harold is a filmmaker focused on the intersection of fiction and nonfiction as well as the relationship between humans and the environment. He graduated from Wesleyan University with a degree in Biology and is currently finishing up his MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking from Montana State University. His current research interests include 16mm film, social justice advocacy, expanding the form and ambitions of documentary storytelling and graphic editing.

November Katsaris is a Greek-American filmmaker who focuses on the power that visual storytelling can have in sharing knowledge with a community. She graduated from University of Denver with a BA in Film Production and a BS in Biology as well as a minor in Criminology and

Emergent Digital Practices. Her work has been featured at Big Sky Documentary Film Festival.

She is interested in uncovering stories about how niche communities connect with the world.

Jered Mcafferty graduated from Montana State University with a B.A. degree in Film, May of 2023. He is focused on following a career in video editing and graphics.

Composer

Dayton Mark Borders is a keyboardist, singer/songwriter producer, and professional performing/recording musician.

Cody Christian is a musician from Torrance, CA and is the guitarist of Seahaven, and American indie rock band that gained recognition for their introspective lyrics and atmospheric music, drawing in listeners with their emotive style.

Authorship and Access

The three celebrities chosen are family friends of whom I have a close personal relationship. Having these connections offers a relaxed and natural feel to the series. This relationship will transpire onto screen and will help the audience feel like they are a part of an intimate conversation while also being educated. I have a bachelor's degree in Marine Science and I am now getting my MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking. I had a fellowship with NOAA during my undergrad in which I researched multiple aquatic species. I presented my scientific research at multiple conferences and discovered the difficulties of communicating science successfully. It takes a certain skill to explain science to audiences without a scientific background and without an initial intrigue in science. I have taken that idea and skill to create this documentary. I want to instill in audiences the desire to learn more about any species.

Because this documentary is filmed in such an exciting and interesting manner, I believe I can achieve these goals.

Sowing the Seeds of Love deals with both science and fiction elements that speak to me as a scientist and filmmaker. Science can be a very intimidating subject, especially to try and communicate it to people who do not have a background in science. Fiction films are watched by audiences of all backgrounds. I wanted to create a film that both communicated science and intrigued audiences of all different backgrounds. To do this, I decided to include fictional elements within my film to better communicate the scientific elements within *Sowing the Seeds of Love*.

I was able to have three fiction-based celebrities as hosts for my thesis to ease the intimidation aspect of watching science. Hulk Hogan, Joyce DeWitt and Robert Picardo all have their own following of audiences, so their presence alone gave me access to a community of people who will want to watch this film. I chose to focus on their specific characteristics they are famous for so their audience will stay connected to their individual character. I also included the element of animation that combines the specific animal they speak about with their famed characters. The marine flatworms are represented as wrestlers battling in a ring. The wolf spiders have the faces of Janet, Jack, and Larry from Three's Company. And finally, the male anglerfish wear Star Trek inspired red shirts showcasing the running theme of the lack of contribution of characters in red shirts.

I am uniquely positioned to make this film because of my background in science, my passion for fiction films, and my connection to my subjects.

Financial Information

The bulk of my budget is dedicated to 16mm film stock, processing and scanning, and travel necessities. My Director of Photography and I traveled to three different locations, Santa Fe, Tampa, and San Francisco, to film with each host. As seen in my budget, this included airfare, lodging, car rentals, checked baggage, and meals. My DP and I spent three days in each location which resulted in a total of 9 days of production. My total budget is \$11,104.61 and I raised \$5,121 from crowdfunding and funding from family. A total of \$2,405 raised from crowdfunding.

Table 1. Budget breakdown of *Sowing the Seeds of Love*

Cast honorarium	\$250
Camera DP	\$1,000
Travel and living	\$5,395.95
16mm and digitizing at lab	\$3,558.66
Animator	\$100
Graphics	\$300
Music	\$200
Post color and Sound	\$100
Legal	\$100
Total	\$11,104.61

Figure 2. Detailed budget of *Sowing the Seeds of Love*.

Sowing the Seeds of Love

PRODUCTION COMPANY: Riley Young

PREPARED BY: Riley Young

ASSUMPTIONS:

15 minute Mini Series

\$11,105

Filmed in 16mm

Location: Bozeman, MT

9 Shooting Days

8 Months Post

4K Delivery

SUMMARY

TOTAL

1000	DIRECTOR & PRODUCERS	\$0.00
2000	WRITING	\$0.00
3000	CAST	\$250.00
4000	CAMERA	\$1,000.00
5000	PRODUCTION SOUND	\$0.00
6000	TRAVEL & LIVING	\$5,395.95
7000	TAPE STOCK, STORAGE	\$3,558.66
8000	EDITORIAL STAFF	\$100.00
9000	GRAPHICS	\$300.00
10000	MUSIC	\$200.00
11000	PIX - POST PRODUCTION	\$100.00
12000	SOUND POST PRODUCTION	\$100.00
13000	LEGAL & INSURANCE	\$100.00
BUDGET GRAND TOTAL		\$11,104.61

Total with Crowd Funding

Crowd Funded: \$5,121

\$5,983.61

ACCOUNT	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	UNITS	X	RATE	TOTAL
1000	PRODUCERS					
1002	Director	1	flat	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL PRODUCERS						\$0.00
2000	WRITING					

Figure 2. Continued.

2001	Staff Writer		1	flat	1		\$0.00
2002	Story Editor		1	flat	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
	TOTAL WRITING						\$0.00
3000	CAST Honorarium-Family Friends						
3001	Lead Actors Honorarium		1	Flat	1	\$250.00	\$250.00
	TOTAL CAST						\$250.00
4000	CAMERA						
4001	DP with Gear		1	Flat	1	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
	TOTAL CAMERA						\$1,000.00
5000	PRODUCTION SOUND						
5001	Principal Sound with Gear		1	Flat	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
6000	TRAVEL AND LIVING						
6001	Airfare			2 Round Trip	6.00	\$431.59	\$2,589.52
6002	Lodging		7	nights	1	\$114.35	\$800.44
6003	Car Rentals		9	days	1	\$114.00	\$1,026.00
6004	Checked Baggage		2	Flat	3	\$70.00	\$420.00
6005	Meals		24	allow	1	\$15.00	\$360.00
6006	Gas/Parking/Tolls		1	allow	1	\$200.00	\$200.00
	TOTAL TRAVEL AND LIVING						\$5,395.95
7000	TAPE STOCK, STORAGE, TRANSFER						
7001	16mm Film		9	Rolls	1	\$180.12	\$1,621.11
7002	Film Development/Scan		8	Rolls	1	\$242.19	\$1,937.55
7003			3600	Ft	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
	TOTAL TAPE STOCK, STORAGE, TRANSFER						\$3,558.66
8000	EDITORIAL STAFF						
8001	Animator		1	flat	1	\$100.00	\$100.00
	TOTAL EDITORIAL STAFF						\$100.00
9000	GRAPHICS						
9001	Design - Logo, Graphic Opening, etc.		1	flat	1	\$300.00	\$300.00
	TOTAL GRAPHICS						\$300.00
10000	MUSIC						
10001	Original Music & Recording		1	allow	1	\$200.00	\$200.00
	TOTAL MUSIC						\$200.00
11000	PIX - POST PRODUCTION						
11001	Professional Color Correction		1	flat	1	\$100.00	\$100.00
	TOTAL PIX - POST PRODUCTION						\$100.00
12000	SOUND POST PRODUCTION						
12001	Professional Sound Mixing		1	flat	1	\$100.00	\$100.00
	TOTAL SOUND POST PRODUCTION						\$100.00
13000	LEGAL & INSURANCE						
13001	Legal Service		1	allow	1	\$100.00	\$100.00
	TOTAL LEGAL & INSURANCE						\$100.00
	BUDGET TOTAL						\$11,104.61

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