

A Mother is a Clock

The House of the
Good Shepherd
[1907-1973]

DOCUMENTATION
Riah Buchanan

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A Mother is a Clock is a performance, video and publication staged at the Good Shepherd Center. The project uses audio that has never been heard before in a public setting, recently digitized from poor quality cassette tapes from 1999. These tapes were the result of an oral history project by archivist Toby G. Harris. The video layers the stories of 'wayward' girls and the nuns who were charged with reforming them at a Catholic girls home in the 1950s, resulting in a complex portrait of a repressed society. The recordings extend to the expanded text in the publication, and even to the building itself, to produce a feeling of being inside and outside the stories, and spaces, at the same time.



PROCESS: CATEGORIZING WRITTEN TRANSCRIPTS

Categorize and retype transcripts from special collections iPhone photos. Edited hundreds of pages into a 26 page booklet.



PROCESS: CLEANING AND ORGANIZING AUDIO

cleaning: many hours/gigabytes of audio were run through izotope over a four day period probably totalling around 16 hours, with multiple passes of spectral denoise, eq, and dialogue isolation specific to each voice and recording setting

editing: breathes, extra pauses, noises etc were removed over about an additional 10 hours, and then layered according to the logic of the sentiments expressed and a 'storyline' of sorts over an additional 4 days

result: Edited around 10 hours of audio down to a 15 minute video.

Hear original audio from MOHAI:

<https://mohai.box.com/s/ui19w69s7yddxbrf3263m21n6qpy9sf9>
password: oralhist2019

NOTE: additional introductory audio was recorded from a telephone conversation with my father, who grew up a block away from Good Shepherd

DOCUMENTATION

invitation



original sketches of poster and alternate video version stills



with title



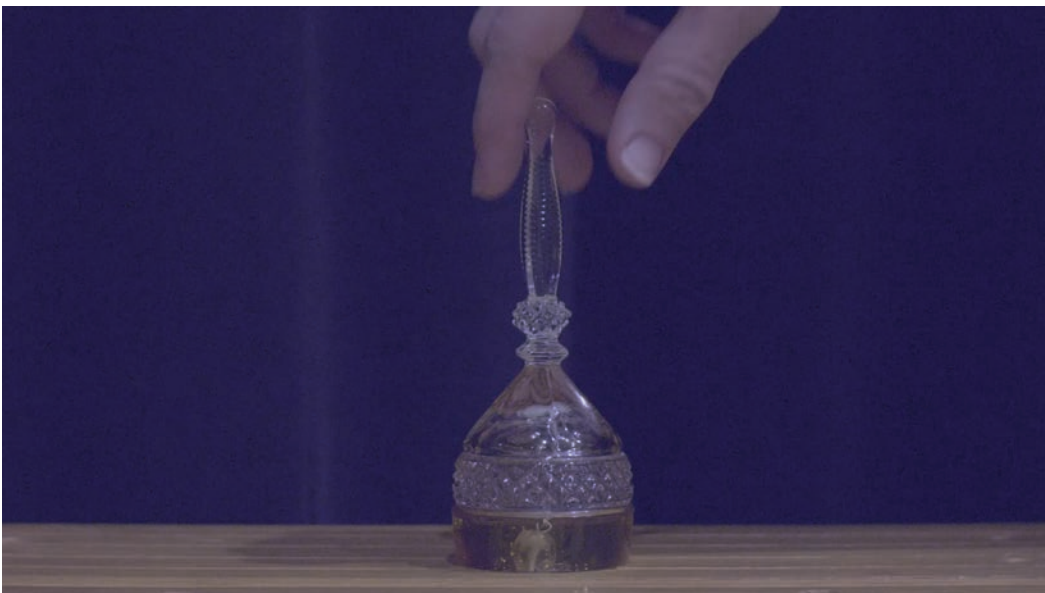
girls only



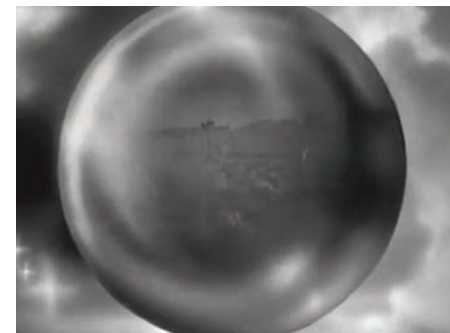
nuns only



learning to riso



alternate video sketch



alternate video sketch

video

edited audio

**performance with two actors,
choreography:**

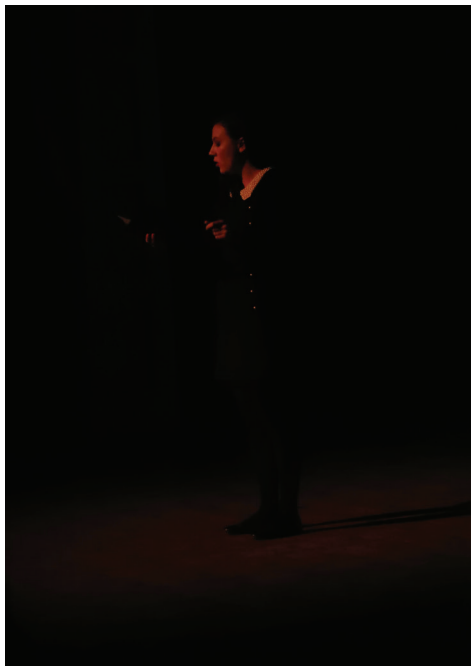
The video is meant to look like a live feed of the front of the building. If you look outside at any time you will see the chair in the same place as it is in the video.

A woman sits centered onstage with her back to the audience. A different woman sits centered in front of the entrance to the Good Shepherd, where the audience will have entered the building. The woman onstage rises several times and each time sits back down. When the woman in the video rises for the 7th time and walks inside the building, the woman sitting onstage rises at the same time and speed and faces the audience to sing *Avis Maria Stella*, a Catholic hymn. She sings over the voices on the video until they die out and she is left singing alone. She exits the stage as soon as applause begins, as the woman from outside enters and sits on the stage, replacing her. Then the singer returns and takes a bow, blocking the sitting woman, at which point the audience again applauds. Both then leave the stage once it fades to black.

The women outside represents the girls while the woman inside represents the nuns and/or the church. They echo and obliterate each other.

view video at

[https://drive.google.com/
open?id=1ebZ_bGyxvfXb8zH-
JEaI3ob623UDF8SEp](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ebZ_bGyxvfXb8zH-JEaI3ob623UDF8SEp)

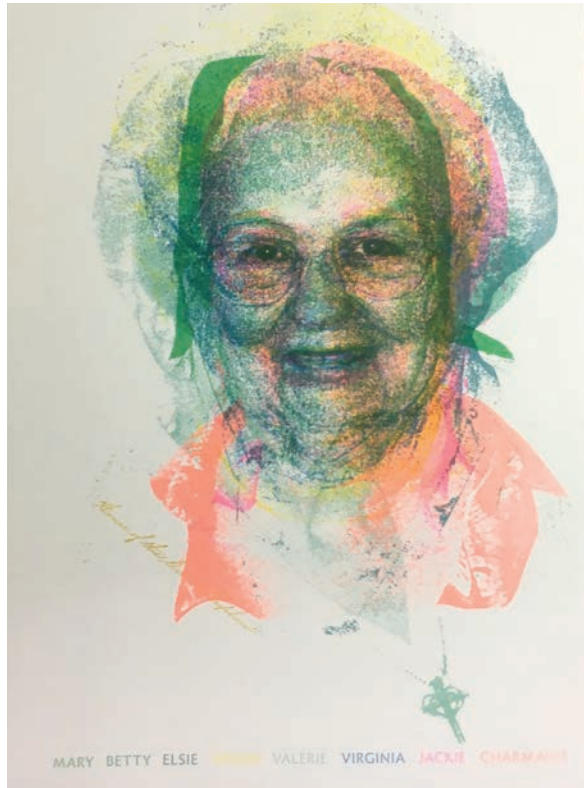


posters

learned to risograph print as this was the method used by churches at the time to print religious tracts

**PRINTED AT OTIS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
& PAPER PRESS PUNCH IN GEORGETOWN**

**8-color poster
with gold stamp
detail (at right)**



**3 color posters,
detail (at right)**



publication





REFERENCES + BIBLIOGRAPHY

Spokesman Review 1952 Sept 21

Everett Herald October 9 1971

Seattle PI Jan 9 1973

Seattle PI Oct 25 1973

Seattle Sun Oct 26 1977

Indianapolis Times October 1 1924

US Census 1940

National Register of Historic Places, filing

Aerial photo 1975, Seattle Municipal Archives



Written Transcripts, note: only available by photographing at special collections, using type detection - not effective - and retyping the rest: Home of the Good Shepherd Oral History Project, 1999, Toby G Harris, Special Collections

Newly digitized cassette tapes received March 8th, note: only able to get 4 interviewees due to restrictions: Audio interviews excerpted from the Home of the Good Shepherd Oral History Project, by Toby G Harris, Museum of History & Industry, Seattle, 2002.39. (one-time use via written contract)

Ave maris stella, Hymn by Grace Williams, Javier Busto, and Otto Olsson

