



girl inside

a film by Maya Gallus



Photo by Cylla von Tiedemann

"GIRL INSIDE goes beyond typical 'Trans 101' documentaries that focus on the fundamentals of transitioning — as important as this genre still is for mainstream audiences — and goes deeper into the life of one individual, with her own desires and opinions."

- John Davies, *Xtra*



Women Make Movies • 462 Broadway, 5th Floor • New York, NY 10013
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Synopsis

Following twenty-six-year-old Madison during a crucial three years of her transition from male to female, heartwarming GIRL INSIDE delves well beyond "Trans 101" basics. Sharing the spotlight is Vivien, Madison's glamorous 80-year-old grandmother, who has taken on the job of advising her on all things feminine. While Vivien's attempts to school Madison in old-fashioned codes of fashion and behavior are often hilarious, the juxtaposition of two vastly different experiences of womanhood, from very different generations, raise profound issues about the nature of gender, femininity, and sexuality.

As Madison finds her own way into becoming a woman, this beautiful film tracks her emotional, intellectual and spiritual journey of self-discovery that is as important as – if not more than – the physical journey of hormones and surgery. Accompanying her on her gender metamorphosis is Madison's rural New Brunswick family who must go through their own transformation as they struggle to accept that they now have a daughter instead of a son, a sister instead of a brother. Madison's transition asks those around her – even grandmother Vivien – to question their own understanding of gender identity.

Sometimes funny, sometimes painful, this sweet coming of age story is both an intimate portrait and a thoughtful exploration of what it means to be a woman.



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Festival Screenings

For the most updated list, visit www.wmm.com.

- St. John's Int'l Women's Film Festival
- Atlantic Film Festival, Halifax
- Hot Docs Int'l Documentary Festival
- DOXA - Doc. Film Festival Vancouver
- Frameline - SF LGBT Film Festival
- NewFest - The NY LGBT Film Festival



A WOMEN MAKE MOVIES RELEASE

Credits

Canada, 2007, 70 Min, color

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY

Maya Gallus

PRODUCERS

Justine Pimlott

Maya Gallus

Red Queen Productions

COMMISSIONING EDITOR TVO

Rudy Buttignol

EDITOR

Miime Jan Eramo

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Stephen Adamcryck

Scott Brown

Eve Lamont

ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY

Harald Bachmann

Chris Romeike

Derek Rogers

ORIGINAL MUSIC

Keir Brownstone

LOCATION SOUND

Justine Pimlott

Attila Laszlo

ADDITIONAL CAMERA

Maya Gallus

SOUND EDITOR & MIXER

Grant Edmonds

The Dark Studio

ON-LINE EDITOR

Andrew Mandziuk

Fearless Films



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Quotes

"Quietly fierce and deeply intelligent, Madison's story is enlightening without being preachy, and Madison is a fantastically open and candid subject. The peripheral characters are similarly captivating, particularly Madison's martini-swilling grandma, Vivien."

– **Sarah Liss**, *Now Magazine*

"GIRL INSIDE gives a frank glimpse into that last bastion of LGBTG-dom to be embraced by the mainstream: the trans-gendered. Tackling family reaction, surgery and falling in love with her best friend, Madison, nee Mathew, explores what it means to be a woman with the help of her colorful, cocktail-loving, 80-year-old grandmother."

– **Susan Oh**, *Eye Weekly*

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– **John Davies**, *Xtra*

"A touching and personal look at what undergoing a sex change entails and how it affects others."

– **Maryam Siddiqi**, *National Post*



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Director Biography

Maya Gallus' provocative feature-length documentary *Erotica: A Journey Into Female Sexuality* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 1997 and screened at international festivals including the Melbourne Film Festival, MostraRIO, Rio de Janeiro, the Feminale Festival in Germany, the Fetisch Film Festival in France, Frameline in San Francisco, Outfest in Los Angeles Out Fest, and many others. *Erotica* played theatrically in Toronto, San Francisco, San Sebastian and Tokyo and was broadcast in Canada, the U.S. and internationally. *Erotica* was nominated for Best Feature-Length Documentary at the 1997 Genie Awards and Best Arts documentary at the 1998 Hot Docs.

Her first film, the award-winning documentary *Elizabeth Smart: On The Side of the Angels* in 1991, which she directed, wrote and co-produced, premiered at the Montreal World Film Festival, then screened at the Toronto International Film Festival, the Boston Museum of Fine Art, Canada House, UK, and other festivals. *On The Side of the Angels* won Best Production of the Festival, Best Documentary and Best Editing at the 1991 Yorkton Golden Sheaf Awards, as well as Best Narration at the 1991 Atlantic Film Festival. *On The Side of the Angels* was nominated for Best Direction at the 1992 Gemini Awards and has been broadcast in Canada and internationally.



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In 2002, Maya Gallus formed Red Queen Productions with her partner Justine Pimlott. Together they created, produced and directed *Punch Like A Girl*, the critically acclaimed six part reality series on amateur women's boxing. *Punch Like A Girl* was broadcast in Canada and the U.S. and was nominated for two Gemini Awards for Best Direction in 2003.

In 2005, Maya Gallus wrote and produced *Fag Hags: Women Who Love Gay Men*, directed by Justine Pimlott, which won the audience award at the 2005 Inside Out Film Festival and Best Canadian Film at the 2006 Reel Out Film Festival. The film has since played at NewFest, the Miami Gay & Lesbian Film festival, San Francisco's Frameline, among others and has been broadcast in Canada and internationally.

Her most recent film, the feature-length documentary, *Girl Inside*, premiered at Hot Docs, played at DOXA in Vancouver, New Fest in New York, and at Frameline, San Francisco Gay & Lesbian Film Festival. She is currently developing feature documentaries and narrative fiction films.



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Director Statement

I first met Madison at Trans Youth Toronto (TYT), a weekly gathering of transsexual, transgender and questioning youth, aged about 15-26. I attended to learn more about their experiences, as it seemed to me their perspective was quite different from that of an adult. Instead of dealing with issues of marriage, children and job status, these youth were coming out to their parents, siblings and schoolmates – sometimes getting kicked out of their homes – while at the same time coming of age and discovering a sense of self.

Madison had just started to transition, and I was struck by how articulate she was about her experience. She mentioned that her family, who were mostly in rural New Brunswick, was trying to be supportive and that her main support in Toronto was her 80-year-old grandmother, Vivien. I was intrigued, and after meeting Vivien, I knew I had an interesting film – a story juxtaposing two vastly different experiences of womanhood, from very different generations. I was interested in the idea of metamorphosis, and how the people around someone transitioning must also go through their own transformation as well.

My intent was to document Madison's journey up to, and immediately beyond, her sex reassignment surgery. Neither of us thought I would be following her for three years, but it took that long for her to save the money for the surgery. Although this made the filmmaking process more intense, it also allowed for deeper layers of understanding of Madison's experience. As a result, the film speaks to many people on many levels, and became, ultimately, a portrait of self transformation and metamorphosis.



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Madison's Statement

I grew up in Saint John, New Brunswick, not too far from Calais, Maine. Most of my childhood was good, but public school was pretty difficult from the start. I was often assaulted for being a "sissy", a "fag," a "wimp".... You get the idea. I was very effeminate from a young age, which caused me a lot of trouble. As a young kid I didn't have the words I do now, but looking back I can say I was uncomfortable as a "boy" and was always much more comfortable around girls.

During my transition I was very fortunate to find a group here in Toronto called "TYT" (Trans Youth Toronto), a casual drop-in for transsexual, gender-queer and questioning youth. When I first went to TYT I was terrified about what it meant that I was transsexual. I was worried I would go through life looking like the proverbial "man in a dress," and that I would be a social outsider forever. There at TYT for the first time were two other people, all three of us looking like men.

I found out that one was a young transwoman at the beginning of her transition who grew up not too far from my hometown. The second, who was the charismatic group facilitator, I realized only after he told me, was a transman. I nearly fell over! Here was a transperson who had "made it to the other side." I would never have guessed he was born physically female. As the evening went on others showed up, including two young women whom I also would never have guessed to be transwomen. By the end of the evening I was floating...here were several trans people who were normal! It was the first time I ever felt like I had a chance at being happy, and it quite literally changed my life.

My physical transition took about three years to fully complete. This covers the time from when I restarted HRT (hormone replacement therapy) until I had SRS (sex reassignment surgery). A big part of the time was needed to save the money for the SRS, which was about \$17k Canadian. I was very lucky in that physically I was never very masculine so I only needed a tracheal shave (to remove my Adam's apple) and a bit of electrolysis around my chin and upper lip. Many transwomen need electrolysis on their full face and neck, facial feminization surgery (FFS), and so on.

For most transpeople, this biggest goal is to "pass." This means to be seen by society, including friends, coworkers and others who don't know the person's past, as their preferred gender without question. For some this is very difficult because things like big hands, big feet, wide shoulders and such make it difficult – but not impossible, it is very important to note! These people need even more support because society is often most harsh to people in their situation.

A transperson usually just wants to get through transition and on to living as normal a life as possible. We don't want to be "freaks," or social outcasts, or to be ostracized any more than anyone else. We don't go through this as a "lifestyle choice." In fact, most of us drive ourselves very close to madness trying to stay in our socially expected roles before deciding to transition. It is not overly dramatic to say that for most of us, the point where we decide to transition is one where not transitioning could lead to suicide.



Understanding, even just attempting to understand, can go miles and miles toward helping people like me through those early, scary days. You don't have to pretend to "get it," just be supportive while you learn, and you will have already done more than enough to help.

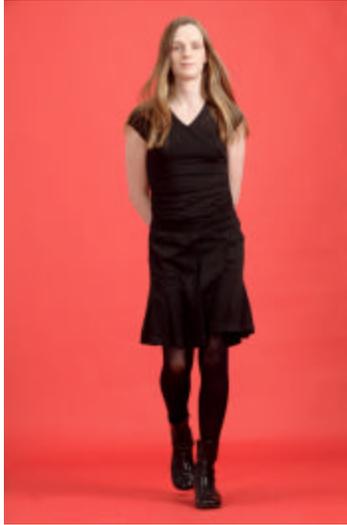


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