



THE CHOICE

by Cathy Dunne

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The Choice is an observational documentary and a cinematic ode to self-employed women as we follow them on their journey from a career that defines them to motherhood.

Self-employed people have chosen a career path in doing what they love. They've already accepted a life of precarious work and instability because their passions outweigh the risks. Their careers have defined them as a person, intrinsically linked with who they are and how they grow as a person.

When it comes to the life of a self-employed person, there's an attitude of "you've made your bed, now lie in it" and even if the reward outweighs the risk, there are disparities in Ireland when it comes to the decision of having a family. The Irish Government funds female initiatives in order to gain some gender balance and equality, and at the same time is failing to provide an equal footing for a self-employed person on maternity leave.

This can create a two way street, where a woman is forced to choose between her career and an identity that comes with that or having a family. This ultimately de-incentivises those very initiatives to give self-employed women a boost in their career and limits positive cultural change and equality in our society. Are we missing a trick?

This feature documentary will aim to follow women during their first pregnancy and how the choices they have made and are making are changing their identity, business and perspectives on life, as well as the world around them.



SAMPLE CAST

The Choice will follow three women during their first pregnancy. What changes for them? How are they being treated in their industry, wider society and networks as the pregnancy evolves? How is their identity starting to shift? And how are their perspectives and outlooks on life changing?

Through further research, we wish to find three women who are in different sectors. For example a Dancer, a Director of Photography and a Small Cafe Owner. The aim of this combination is to capture a wider view across different industries, How does a physical career of dancing impact performance in a changing body? A Director of Photography in a demanding sector of the film industry, how is she treated? And a woman who has staff depending on her business, how does she manage to step away from it while sustaining her own income and those who work for her?

SETTING

During a series of intimate interviews, we will join three self-employed pregnant women on their journey to motherhood. Candidly following them during their work-life, will be important to convey their passion and decisions they have to make. In the first half of this documentary, we rarely see the cast outside of these spaces. This is to heighten how their career and identity are so deeply intertwined. It's only as the pregnancy really starts to grow and become obvious, do we see them in other settings.

There will be points of interaction and collaboration between the three women. The sacred spaces of their studios and places of work become

shared as the documentary progresses. There's a mutual understanding of one's situation that only they understand, and so they open up their spaces to each other. They will work together to create a visual piece of art that conveys their shared experiences as well as unique. For example, the Dancer will choreograph a sequence that cuts between the cast dancing in a theatre, a cafe and a film set visually portraying their journey.

Three women, although from three different sectors, will inevitably have commonalities. The Choice will bring these women together to provoke what is unjust and unequal about their situation, as well as beautiful.

CINEMATOGRAPHY

The Choice is an intimate look into the lives of three-woman. This will be enhanced through movement, lighting and colour palette.

STATIC SHOTS - Interviews will be captured in their place of work in the evening time. This is a reflective time after the hustle and bustle of a busy day and when the dust has settled. The spaces are whimsical, each woman works her dream job and this is her world and her sanctuary. The uses of misty filtrations and warm moody lighting will create this dreamlike space.

HANDHELD - B-roll and walkaround shots will all be captured handheld. This will create an intimate space between the participant and the viewer. There

will be a mixture of real-time and slow-motion to get a sense of busyness as well as moments of joy as we slowly pull into their world.

LANDSCAPES - The start of the film will concentrate on women in their work-place, so deeply entrenched in their dream. As the documentary progresses, and bumps begin to grow we slowly see a little less of this world and a little more of what their life will look like.

COLOUR PALETTE - Organic warm tones will create a connection to nature and a primal state of being. As the film progresses, dashes of pinks will be introduced, a colour historically symbolic of the womb.



SOUNDTRACK

SOUNDSCAPE - Intimate spaces of the women's worlds will be driven by organic soundscapes and wild-tracks, immersing us into the b-roll and walk-around scenes.

THEMES AND MOTIFS - Music filled with celestial sounds create an otherworldly dimension where the women work, this will be the undertone for the interviews, swelling and dropping off at appropriate times. A motif built around heartbeats will signal new life and love, while a more dissonant theme will represent a clash of two worlds.

NOTES ON EXECUTION OF THE PROJECT

We are currently gathering research to better understand what is happening for self-employed mothers and those on maternity leave. This is a sensitive topic at a delicate time in a woman's life and building trust and confidence with groups like MAM, The Mothership Project and Raising Films are crucial in finding our cast.

An ethical approach is top priority. We will do our utmost best to communicate and manage expectations between the crew, participants and edit from the get-go and as the project evolves. Filming interviews in a private, controlled setting with a small sized crew is paramount. This is an intimate space which, should be reflected behind camera as well as in front.

How we represent each character visually will be determined by their own unique experience that develops over the 9 months. We want to stay as true to each individual character's story.

Finally, working with an array of artists to elevate this project to it's full potential is important to us. We hope to work with well a established co-writer, cinematographer, composer, editor and post-production house.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This is a cinematic documentary, which brings us on a journey. In order to fully immerse the audience into this film and have an understanding of the love and passion these women have for their careers, the visuals and soundscapes need to be heightened. I plan a beautiful tribute to these women, their careers and identities, during one of the most transformative times in their lives.

As a self-employed woman hoping to start a family someday soon, the reality of trying to balance a business and love for what I do with pregnancy and motherhood is frightening. Will I have to give up one for the other or is there room for both to co-exist? I don't believe there is adequate support for self-employed women, so I, like many others in my position, am trying to

find solutions and possibilities to a situation that could leave us with an impossible choice: do we abandon our career for motherhood, or motherhood for our career?

Unfortunately, even among my own self-employed friends, this is a topic we rarely approach. The reason for avoiding this topic boils down to two things 1) we are scared to admit what the outcomes could be or 2) we have already accepted them. This documentary will help get us talking and start a wider conversation on how we can support self-employed women throughout pregnancy and motherhood. It will be a cinematic ode to women working their dream job, the joy of bringing new life into the world, while also depicting a conflict of identity and struggles they face.

PRODUCER'S NOTES

It is not often that you come across a concept as original, intuitive and authentic as *The Choice*. When speaking with Cathy one can't help but become caught up in her passion and curiosity about this topic. There is so much to mine in this documentary. I believe it to have the potential to be truly groundbreaking.

In media and popular culture notions of resilience are increasingly addressed to women, and that middle-class women in particular are presented as possessing the stuff it takes to become successfully resilient. The fact that this ideal of the resilient woman has coalesced at a time when precarity and inequality are on the rise and as women in the western world are being disproportionately

affected by austerity policies is not lost on us as filmmakers.

We are suddenly being told of so many more "opportunities" On the one hand, being offered resources to develop resilience as a way to navigate an unequal industry, on the other hand the emphasis remains on harnessing individual resources to overcome precarity. Rather than serving to expose and challenge the social and structural sources causing the crisis women experience, we continue to tell women to work on themselves and assume full responsibility for their well-being. In this way, discussions about the conditions that created precarity and inequality in the first place, and the responsibility of the state and society for addressing them, are effectively silenced.

PRODUCER'S NOTES (CONT'D)

As a young woman working in film, pregnancy/motherhood/caring aspects of our lives are all too often dismissed as something that the industry itself does not need to find a solution to. And so we leave, leave in droves. A creative industry is robbed of so many talented artists and creatives because it fails to invest in a redistribution of priorities and fails to see the value of such an investment. But it is not just our industry, it is the precarity of the self employed, more presciently; the precarity of the self employed woman.

Cathy and I have many wonderful collaborations behind us; Through The Pane (2020), Imprints (2021), Where Have All The Old Gays Gone? (2022), Echo's Bones (2022). Cathy always brings a distinct visual approach to the documentaries she makes, a sensitivity to her subjects is never at the cost of a visually engaging piece. She manages to ensure a cinematic experience wrought out of the mundane. This is why she is such an exciting filmmaker on the rise.

I found myself completely absorbed in the themes and distinct tone at play, and truly fascinated by Cathy's individual approach to

the subject matter of the self employed women navigating pregnancy. Depictions of complex female characters are still quite few and far between on screen, particularly when considering stories about motherhood in documentary - we are to fall into neat categories of good and bad; virgin and whore; but we do not, we are more complex than that. Imbuing the representation of imperfect female characters, with complex inner lives; whose narratives exist outside of generic tropes, which can consume female protagonists on-screen is something I as a producer wish to explore not only through straight drama but through the vehicle of documentary and nonfiction.

This is a striking, dynamic, stimulating and highly authored project with a distinct voice, which is introspective and thoughtful in perspective, but outward looking in its perception of contemporary preoccupations. It also has huge market and audience potential, due to the subject explored, the themes at play, and the style and tone invoked.

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTARY FILMS

CATHY DUNNE - DIRECTOR/ SHOOTER/ PRODUCER
THE CHOICE 2022

SHOW DAY 2018 - Feature Documentary -
Produced, Shot & Edited
RTÉ One and RTÉ Player

SEAN 2020 - Feature Documentary -
Director of Photography
RTÉ One and RTÉ Player

THROUGH THE PANE 2020 - Online Series
Director/ Shooter/ Producer

IMPRINTS 2021 - Short Documentary
Director/ Producer
Film Festival Circuit 2021- Present

"WHERE DO ALL THE OLD GAYS GO?"
'Experiences of the Older LGBTQIA+
Community in Ireland' 2022 -
Director/ Shooter/ Producer
Commissioned by Age & Opportunity
Film Festival Circuit May 2022

MAGGIE RYAN - PRODUCER
THE CHOICE 2022

THROUGH THE PANE 2020 - Online Series
Producer

IMPRINTS 2021 - Short Documentary
Producer
Film Festival Circuit 2021- Present

LISTEN 2021 - Short Documentary
Producer, dir. Aoise Tutty Jackson

Anua 2022 - Short Documentary
Producer, dir. Aoise Tutty Jackson

"WHERE DO ALL THE OLD GAYS GO?"
'Experiences of the Older LGBTQIA+
Community in Ireland' 2022 -
Director/ Shooter/ Producer
Commissioned by Age & Opportunity
Film Festival Circuit May 2022