Q: How much of your day as a director is actually planned, and how much do you leave free for improvisation and experimentation? Or do you address that once you get out into the world—is it all about “Okay, I know what I have to accomplish now”?  
A: Yes, it’s not set in that way, like it’s blocked. Or people know exactly what they’re going to say, it’s again, here’s the situation. It’s like us tonight, we know we’re going to get together, we’re going to talk, I don’t know what you’re going to ask me, I am a little anxious before we get together, but we just go with it, and it becomes a dialogue. And of course we have talked before, you’ve seen my films, we’ve e-mailed, so now we are ready and prepared to talk.  

You say a few things and so it goes. What is demanding and how things go is that everyone does understand that we have very limited resources. So everyone has to give their best, and move, and go, and there’s not many retakes, let’s put it that way. There’s not time for redoing. People have to be very self-reliant and cooperative in that sense.

Q: Once you’re on-set, what’s your process with your cinematographer? What’s that like?  
A: That’s, you know—I’m smiling because, you know, when I did my movie Exploding—I don’t know, we did maybe eleven setups a day, something like that. Everything is planned and choreographed, and it’s very slow, but the lighting and design is very nice.  

In Revolution we have two people shooting, a flip camera, me shooting a camera, Marcus shooting his camera, since then I am always using multiple cameras, not always at the same time but throughout shooting.  

I can give nothing but compliments to Marcus Burnett, who shot much of these last three films. We speak very little, I may say, “Don’t be afraid to shoot right into the light, or find the small textures along the way, the drops of rain, or follow the hands,” and that’s it. He records the event in multiple ways, he shots what’s in front of the camera, behind the scenes, before the scene, he is moving between documenting the film being made and shooting the film. In this sense it all becomes one seamless event and the emotions and thinking never have a fourth wall, there is no division of inside the film and out.

Q: On to Hi, How Are You Guest 10497. Here you truly present the life of a person living in recording.  
A: Yes.
Q: The gaze has been proliferated and, with it, identity. It’s interesting how your film uses the codes of cinema to look at new media.
A: Whereas the new media was often used to re-create the old media, here the new media, the condition of the network, the network as recording and screen apparatus, is seen through and by the cinematic codes of classic cinema. Yes. It is of course a cinema that is informed by experimental cinema, the sixties and seventies cinema of Warhol, Jack Smith, Chantal Akerman, in that the takes are long, not much is seemingly going on, it is a strong and concentrated milieu, but something else is here, yes, the classic cinematic code of Joan of Arc, of Jeanne Dielman, in that the film follows closely a protagonist, there is a telling of a story, an arc and resolution.

Consider Warhol’s Screen Tests as the essential building block of the Hollywood cinematic text. This test, where the camera is set up to test the cinematic potential of the actor, the charisma, the X factor, the sex factor, the screen power of pure presence, the photogenic raised to an exponent, the star power—where the cinema or recording brings to the screen that absolute pleasure of seeing, of seeing and not being seen, voyeuristic pleasure—in the new media seeing is being seen and seeing again.

Q: Yes, we see her seeing herself be seen.
A: Today we ask two questions: How can we be at the center of our network effects, and how do we create a screen presence that can afford us this? How do we pass the test? How do we construct an image of ourselves?

The online world, as an always-on recording rewrites the purview of cinema and splices us into this new social or über-cinematic apparatus, the network. Unlike the classic code or traditional form of handling recordings, in this film, the young woman works to create an image in real time of herself. It is a cinema for the network age. Her work is the work of the screen test. And of recording the recording itself, of bringing to the network her screen persona.

At another level the project, which is a twenty-two-hour installation, uses the film format, and in this case, film’s classic codes, to condense installation’s long, multible, and spatial sense of time, what we might consider network time, in that we can enter at any point into film. Cinema here looks at the new formats of social networking, formats such as Chatroulette and MyFreeCams that bring us a new intimacy and immediacy and show us how these new screen tests exceed and extend the cinematic.

It’s very simple but in that, complex issues emerge: What is it to be alone? What is it be a self? What is it to be a woman today? What is it to be real, to be naked, with another—who is only on screen?

Q: I am sure both the film and its installation have their own rhythm and allows one to inhabit a different sense of time.
A: Yes.

Q: In fact, you might say that the film is a recording or a document inside and about a certain condition of network culture. But I’m not sure that the network is the best context to present the work, and I think that small screenings at a remove from the network are more effective to give visibility to this subject.
A: There is something to that. Yes. Things at a remove from their context, or recontextualized are easier to see.

Q: I’d like to see your installation. I do think you use the conventional cinematic codes in a very effective way in this film.
A: Perhaps cinema here returns to its earliest of beginnings, employed as an instrument of observation, an apparatus of heightened seeing and recording, as an instrument that does not turn away, does not blink, but surveys and examines untrarily. Exceeding human perceptual faculty, the human capacity to stay attentive to seeing, let alone seeing at micro and macro scales, here cinema as the instrumentation of camera and recording-playback returns to doubly seeing itself, both in its new incarnation as network, as cinema, and as a formulation of codes, of relays of prerecorded shots, of representations and genres as cinemas past. Here cinema looks both at itself and the new world in which it carries on, the network.

Q: It is simultaneously an exploration of what it means to make—and watch—film today; what it means to inhabit a system that is always recording, where identity is always and already enmeshed in the web of becoming. The cinematic code turns out to be a unique way to look at this condition, to look at seeing and looking, at representation and self-representation, at the always-recording, always-seeing condition of the network.
A: Cinema made sense of this event, very much so, yes.