

TEXT ON PRACTISING

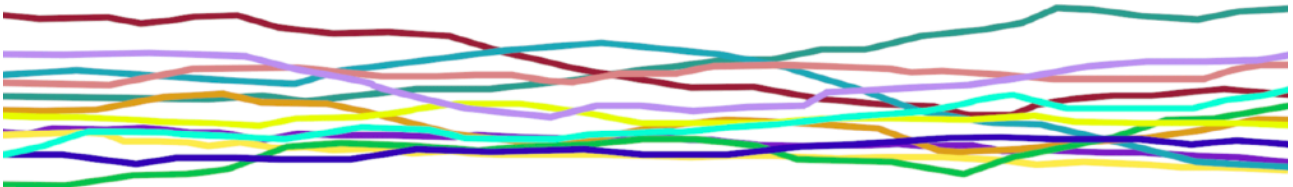
What does my (film)making practice look like? What does me, *practising*, look like? How do I do and how do I learn from doing? If I had to put words to it, they would be: collect, collage, montage.

Collect

verb

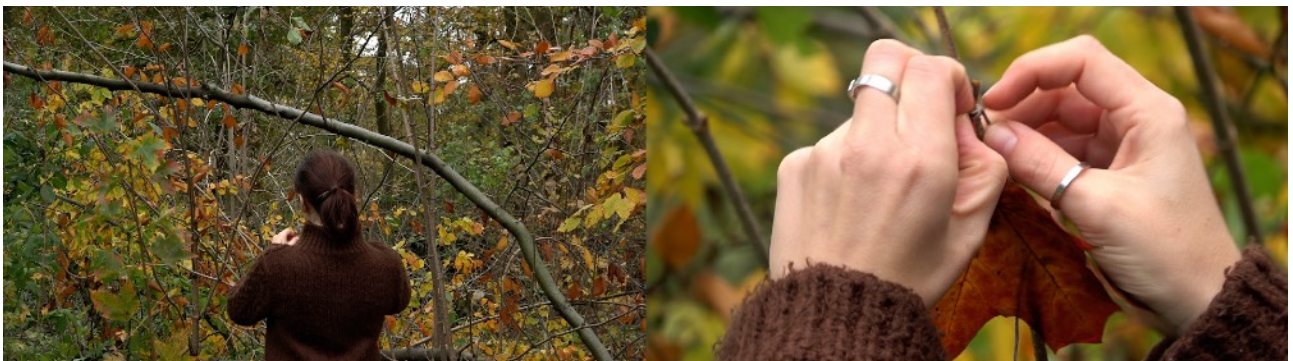
1. To gather, to scavenge.
2. To take things from different sources. Either by removing them from there and taking it with you, or by copying them, by recording them, or by simply being followed around by the effects of your encounter with them.

I have been going to the beach and watching the waves. Listening to them breaking, my toes touching the foam that they spit out. I have been tracing the lines they leave on the sand, where they reach their furthest point before they return to join the rest of the sea. The waves didn't care about these lines. They washed away the drawings and crept nearer with each hour.



I have been walking through forests on sunny days. My steps crunching the leaves in shades of green, red, yellow, brown. I have been tying them back to the trees they fell off, like the girl in Alice's film (*Falling Leaves*, 1912) taught me: stop the autumn, stop the passing of time.

I also let them go again, set them free to fall to the ground and become the compost for next spring's blossom.



I have been looking at the sky, see the sun rise and set, but not the same each time. Each day a different minute and different place, each season a different length. Never mind all the times it is hidden by the clouds. The moon is more predictable. Round each month, empty each month, always coming back.



I have been walking along these linear paths and found nothing but circles. I thought I was going forward but kept breathing in and out, sleep and wake, eat, repeat. My body keeps making hormones in spans of 28 days - or does it? My body makes each cycle a different size, so I feed it a daily pill to keep it in line.

I have been digging up past voices. Tried to make friends with them, but wasn't sure if they were meant to be reawakened. I have shaken the walls of a tower to find the histories they hold and how they feel about their future. I have learned that those voices need certain ears. Or that these voices can become melodies in the ears to which they don't carry meaning.

I read the words of Ocean Vuong about commas, fetuses and continuation. I took them not to mean that we must procreate, but rather that we are already creating more life each day by continuing to live it. I read the words of Trinh T. Minh-ha about stories retold and passed through. Her words became soft whispers I carry with me and repeat, much like the stories she talks about.

(Vuong, 2019, p.139)

It is no accident, Ma, that the comma resembles a fetus—that curve of continuation. We were all once inside our mothers, saying, with our entire curved and silent selves, more, more, more. I want to insist that our being alive is beautiful enough to be worthy of replication. And so what? So what if all I ever made of my life was more of it?

In this chain and continuum, I am but one link. The story is me, neither me nor mine. It does not really belong to me, and while I feel greatly responsible for it, I also enjoy the irresponsibility of the pleasure obtained through the process of transferring. Pleasure in the copy, pleasure in the reproduction. No repetition can ever be identical, but my story carries with it their stories, their history, and our story repeats itself endlessly despite our persistence in denying it. *I don't believe it. That story could not happen today. Then someday our children will speak about us here present about those*

(Minh-ha, 1989, p. 122)

I have been fighting time.

I have been finding time.

Time has found its way back to me.

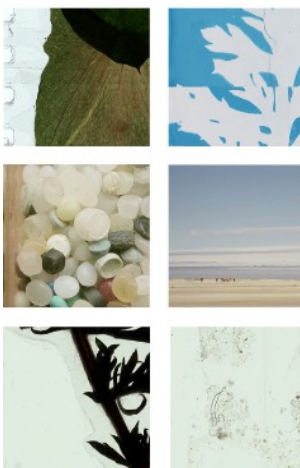
I have been feeling the need to always go forward, to grow, become more successful, to follow the structure that society tells you to follow in your life. And yet each day is mostly a repetition of the previous one, and the only way to grow and learn is by doing things over and over again. I am trying to find some peace in this. To not feel like I have to either fight or weaponise time, but simply let it flow through me.

Collage

noun, verb

1. Bringing the collected things together.
2. Creating new compositions with different source materials.
3. The components are marked by difference. In style, medium or finding place.

My practice has never been one of unity. I have always found joy in composing and juxtaposing the different layers of the audiovisual medium to find new meanings in their combinations. For the pre-EYE thematic, I combined “real-life” footage of the beach and the sea with screen recordings of their online representation in data or live-cams. For *Chère Alice*, the project I started working on after that (and then abandoned forever), I combined archive material of Alice Guy’s films with shots of the books and websites I went through in my research into her, as well as with stop motion or life-action scenes in which I imitate her techniques or her films. In *Little Tower*, the film I showed in the EYE, I used the possibility to detach the layers of image and sound to make new things come alive. While the image stayed on the surface and scanned the walls, the sound attempted to go beyond that and reach their insides.



(Geographies of Solitude, 2022)

I think I can go further in these explorations of incorporating differences between the layers. But also in stepping into other media for a bit. In Nan’s thematic, we saw many examples of experimental and hand-made film. What stuck with me most were the chemigrams, where the image is not created by exposing the negative, but by how you develop it, what materials are used in the developing, and which parts are left undeveloped before they are fixed. There is something organic in this process that really appeals to me.

The film *Geographies of Solitude* by Jacquelyn Mills shows great examples of how something like these chemigrams can be incorporated in a larger work, to create moments where it is almost like the landscape itself is doing the filming rather than it being filmed.

Nan also introduced us to TouchDesigner. Although I haven't quite gotten the hang of it, I think it is interesting how the software is not made for a linear timeline, such as is the case in Premiere. Instead, you have to think in loops, and each element can have a different looping time. I am curious to see what things can sprout from learning new ways of experiencing time through the tools you use.

Montage

noun, verb

1. In English, it is usually used to mean a specific style of editing that brings attention to itself through rapidness or rhythm.
2. In Dutch, it just means the edit.
3. In French, it means to edit but also to assemble or to mount.

To edit or to mount? Film or installation?

I will always want to chase the magic of the many screens of Beatriz Santiago Muñoz's exhibition *Oriana* as it was at Argos in Brussels. The installation shows ritualistic scenes of a group of militant feminists in the forest bathing, washing, relaxing, playing, dancing in increasing degrees of mythical-ness. There is something about how the many scenes were edited and shown without really having beginnings and endings, but simply building and building the more you see of it. It created a completely different experience of time and causality — or lack thereof.

But what I found in Eva Giolo's *The Demands of Ordinary Devotion*, which shows the repeating (and many of them circular in shape) motions that come with certain jobs and crafts or with motherhood, is that the experience of repetition comes across better when shown in a linear, cinematic setting than in a looped, installed one. There is something about making the audience sit down for the entire duration of a film that seems to be doing the same thing over and over again. Only in this incapacity to move, do you notice that it is actually changing and growing and taking you somewhere.



(Oriana, 2022)



(The Demands of Ordinary Devotion, 2022)

And what structures to mount it to?

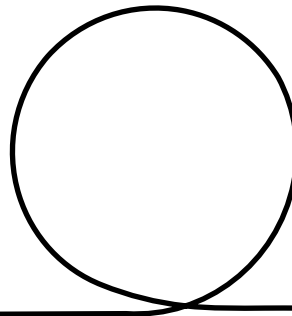
It could be ecology. How we go against nature's cyclical time and cut down trees before they are dead. How we go against ourselves as well, as we are made of nature. But also how our presence is not circular enough, we waste non-renewable sources and our "waste" does not actually rot away anymore but only pile up on plastic mountains.

Or imperialism and industrialisation, and the idea that this linear, productive, progressive consideration of time has everything to do with our contemporary and western forms of capitalism, forced down everyone's throats.

Or it could be mental health. The stress we experience from trying to be only ever linearly productive. The comfort we can find in our routines. The influence our hormonal cycles have on our mental health. The fact that the perception of time becomes all tangled up when the mind is in trouble.

Either way, I need to read, hear, see and learn much more about these possible thematic links. I don't want to just think about and around them, but also have actual information to build stories from. And I think that in the end, I need to choose one of these themes to focus on, at least within one outcome, or else it will all be too blurry.

To Be Determined. To Be Continued.



References

Falling Leaves (1912) Directed by A. Guy-Blaché. USA, Solax Studios.

Geographies of Solitude (2022) Directed by J. Mills. Canada.

Minh-ha, T. (1989) 'Grandma's Story' in *Woman, Native, Other*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Oriana (2021-2023) Directed by B. Santiago Muñoz. Brazil, USA.

The Demands of Ordinary Devotion (2022) Directed by E. Giolo. Belgium.

Vuong, O. (2019) *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. 2nd edn. UK: Vintage.