

Text on Practice

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PZI Lens Based Media Trimesters 1-2, 2024

During the first two trimesters, I paid a lot of energy on adapting the new life in a new country, some of my works grew from this process. They are not only art practices, but also a way for me to explore my own position and voice in the world.

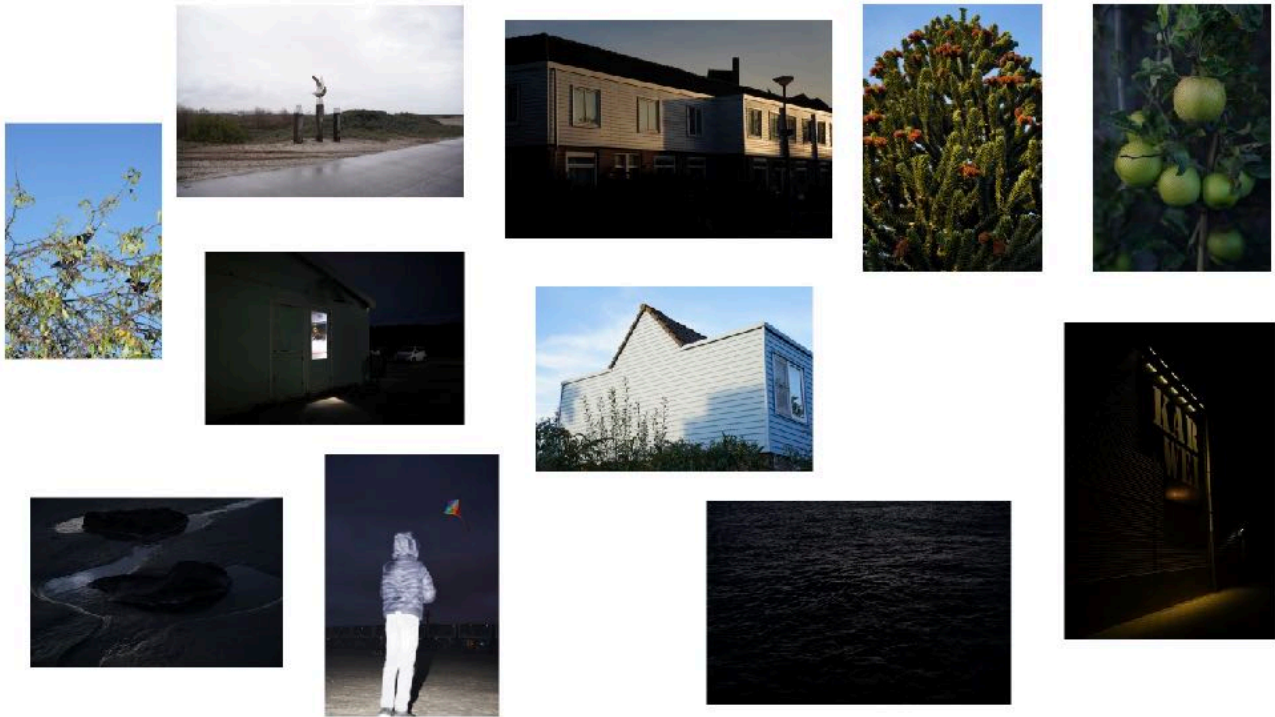
The PreEYE project *His Soul's Still Dancing* was the first work I have made here. Besides the formal EYE project, this was the real first time for me to step into "filmmaking". Because of the totally unfamiliar environment, I really didn't know what to "shoot" outwards. So I turned to my father, who was traveling at the very west of China, to ask him to take some phone videos for me. During the research on the regions my father had traveled/videoed through, as well as the footages, I perceived some potential perspectives on the happened and happening colonized background in behind, so I analyzed and edited the landscapes under this context, wrote a monologue about the modern complex condition there, which was blended with the voice from my dad and one song sang by the local people, finally into the film.

At the beginning I tended to ignore this work from my works list. But after rewatching it, I found it combining my existed concern for the living conditions of human groups under political influences and my exploration of human behavior in a particular cultural context, they are quite a core of my whole art practice. It's also an experiment for me to use some footages shot by my dad without any directing, to edit and play with, into a work of narrative.



Stills, *His Soul's Still Dancing*, Film, 3:34, 2023

After the film, I felt like I fell back into that rut of being stuck in a new environment and not knowing how to start my next work. So I naturally tried to sort it out by the medium I was familiar with, which was photography. I roamed around Rotterdam city and its suburban area, took some photos, tried to get deeper connection with this place and the communities. I was using the eyes of a new visitor to look at it, sometimes I can feel it was responding/echoing me as well. Still, the core of my attention was on the living condition of the people here, how the environment/water body was changed by the city. These photos finally assembled as a series **Rotterdam Syndrome**, and probably will be continued into a photo book.



Selected photos, Rotterdam Syndrome, Photograph Series, 2023-

In my previous practice on photography, I usually used theatrical flash light to build a dreamy staged atmosphere, also to magnify the object/figure. At that period I was deeply influenced by Lieko Shiga, especially the album *RASEN KAIGAN*(2013). For recent practice, I was trying a more “daily” shooting method, like Alec Soth and Todd Hido, but pretty much a hybrid with many styles, to explore a wider image language. This might be a new start point of my study on landscape theories, and to see things in different ways.

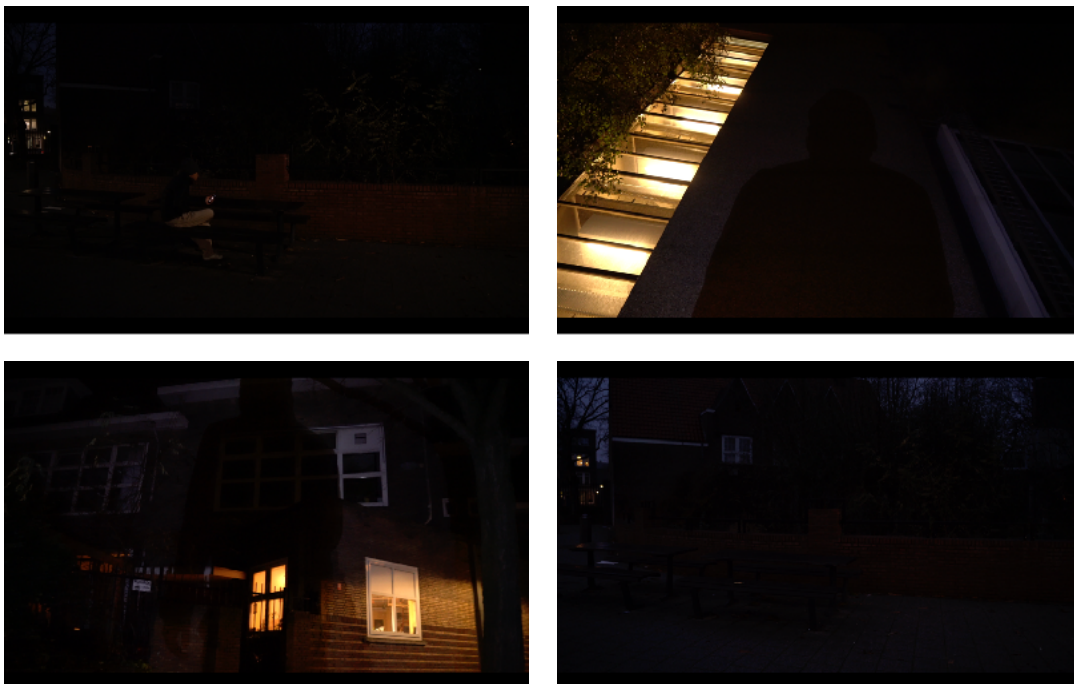
When I started to dive into the EYE project, I was faced with the basic question again: What to visualize? I thought if it's difficult to find connection with outside world, maybe I can try digging something out from my own origin, my family, my country, just like I asked my dad to take videos for me. When I was at China, I didn't have much feeling about being Asian, since all of the people there were the same as me, the concept of race and culture difference didn't function at that situation. But after I came here, the difference became a significant issue, by which I was almost reminded everyday that I am an Asian person in Europe. This “new” identity impacted me, and I decided to embrace the changes, to discover how I can benefit from it. So I turned to some Asian artists who were basically in similar creation context with me, to find if there is any method I can learn from. During that time I was deeply inspired by Apichatpong Weerasethakul's works. The form of a private letter from *A Letter To Uncle Boonmee*(2009), and the family talking scenes in *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*(2010), helped me to build the structure of my work. From *Blue*(2018) and *Memoria*(2021), I absorbed the method of how to blend the sound and images together, make them working in a parallel gesture. *A.K.A. Serial Killer*(1975) by Masao Adachi, which was screened to us by Cihad also gave me a brand new knowledge, it impacted the way I see landscapes.

Under this research and reflecting on Asian films and landscape theories, I encountered a book named *At the Edges of Sleep: Moving Images and Somnolent Spectators*(2022), by Jean Ma, which introduced many practical scenes of how filmmakers and artists use sleep and dream as materials to make works and how audience interact with them. It encouraged me to use dream as an entrance of my work, and since I had collected some stories from my dad about his childhood, which was mainly overlapped with the Culture Revolution period, I decided to pick one of the stories as original material, edited it into a format of letter about my dream. The story was used as a slice of window, to demonstrate one small aspect my father had encountered at that specific period. For visualization, I planned to add scenes of me talking with my dad by video call, and take my abstract shadow on the streets here, as a ghost figure. A person is limited, but a ghost can roam through times and spaces. And, to show my lonely isolated condition in a unfamiliar place.



Storyboards or draft of shooting, *Copper Dream*, Film, 4:03, 2024

The outcome is *Copper Dream*, in which I wrote a letter to my dad to talk about my dream of him finding a room full of copper bullet cases at his 10 years old. The sound of metal impact were notes of the nature of that room and bullets, as well as a metaphor of conflicts at that time. The snoring is more like a background sound outside of this layer of reality, to subtly remind an outer world and exit(or illusion) of the dream.



Stills, *Copper Dream*, Film, 4:03, 2024

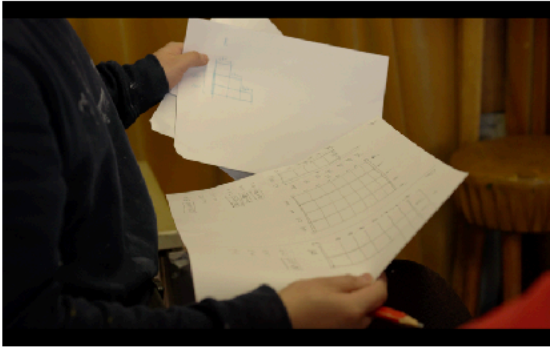
Have been gained much new understanding on landscapes, I found it interesting when visiting zoos. Normally our attention was on the animals, but when the animals were absent, what kind of landscape does the zoo become? Do those special designs gain a new context? What will we experience in that new landscapes? This time I focus my sight on the scenes in zoos without animals, and got some photographs, they assembled as a series named **Zoo**.



Selected photos, Zoo, Photograph Series, 2024-

This is another practice for going deeper on landscape theories. When I was taking the photos, I felt something new growing from the scenes, this is not only a sympathy on animals in the zoos, but also a reflecting on ourselves, to revalue our condition as human beings who live in man-made buildings(zoos of human) everyday in modern life, and how do we understand the others' requirement of life. I continued to develop my shooting method further after **Rotterdam Syndrome**, more nontheatrically, but with deeper context hidden.

Recently I found a Chinese bookstore named 野渡, which means **Ferry In Wild**. I thought it was quite related with the Chinese diaspora context and the Chinese communities abroad, and they coincidentally decided to rent and renovate a space in real instead of online, so I contacted with the owner, to take some videos of them, to see if I can develop them into a short documentary film. The whole production process is new to me, as I need to finish the shooting, sound recording and editing all by my own, and even communication, which is super important during documentary filmmaking. The footages are not edited yet, so there is no video file, only stills.



Stills, Ferry In Wild, Documentary, TBC

Since I have started these projects, I want to finish the two photograph series in the future, as close circles on landscape photo theories, as well as motivations for me to explore new environments, maybe I will find more new themes during the process. The short films for EYE project are basically finished, but they created an entrance for me to step into (Southeast) Asian films as a source to learn from, this can be a start point for me to look for my own position and voice on filmmaking, as an Asian creator. But I'm also trying to put myself into more universal art context, as a world citizen.

I'm really attracted by practices on how landscapes function in image art, and the society context which can reveal our condition as human beings. This is a core I want to develop with in the future, whatever the material and method is.

Reference list:

RASEN KAIGAN. (2013). [Album]. Lieko Shiga. Akaaka Art Publishing.

A Letter To Uncle Boonmee. (2009). [Movie]. Directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul. Kick the Machine.

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