‘Thinking with my hands’

about the process
of

making the short animation film

‘Framed Memory’

by
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"I think one does think with one's hands. I think that's why a keyboard is not a good place for me to think. Some people think very well on the keyboard; and I need this kind of a fidgeting of charcoal, scissors, or the tearing of something in my hand. As if there's a different kind of brain that is controlling how that works. There's an uncertainty of what you're doing, an imprecision; so that what you do when you look at it is not know something which you're carrying out; but rather rely on recognizing something as it appears."

William Kentridge

Content

1.Introduction graduation project 'Framed Memory'

'Framed Memory'

For my graduation project I made the short stop-motion animation film '*Framed Memory*' where you see how a woman deals with old memories, when returning to her childhood house after the death of her father.

While she is cleaning the house, you see how she is confronted with bad memories. At first isn't aware of them. When she is, she is trying to get rid of them by walking away from them. At the third confrontation she is not longer able to keep her emotions to herself. This results in a destructive panic attack.
After a moment of contemplation she gets confronted with a memory again.
She tries to fight it but then curiosity takes the overhand and she decides to be confronted with the memory. This time she finds a nice memory to keep.

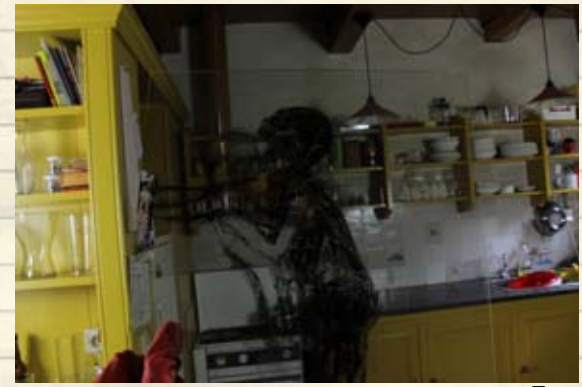





The whole film is made with stop-motion (sequences of still image), but uses the real world as set and a real human as protagonist.
The memories appear as drawings on glass objects (windows, doors, drinking glasses). The glass is as a window to the past and uses the space which is visible through the glass as background.. By using this technique the space is literally given an extra layer. Stop-motion animation brings the drawings to live.

In the drawn animations I am also playing with the drawing and its place in the real space. Through subtle interactions between the real space and the drawing (moving of the chair), I connect both realities.

Pi



The technique I used in '*Framed Memory*' is related to the one I used in a previous research project '*Portrait of an empty house*'.

The similarity with '*Portrait of an empty house*' and '*Framed Memory*' is both in subject and technique. In '*Portrait of an empty house*' , you see a woman pushing a big Plexiglas screen around in an almost empty house, while memories appear on the screen in form of a drawing. In the beginning she is actively involved with the drawing, but she gets more passive in the course of the film, while her white dress gets more black.

Both projects are showing different times and different worlds in one image and are using a glass surface to draw the animations on. They are an attempt to show how memories define a known space.

The location of this film is also similar with the one of my graduation project '*Framed Memory*' : An almost empty house in which you see the traces of the life that has been lived. It has the same emptiness, sadness, piece and quietness.
The difference is that for '*Framed Memory*' I have written a script, a narrative where the animation technique has a function within the story and is not only an interesting technique. The set was also more designed than in '*Portrait of an empty house*'.

In the short animation 'Looking for ', which is made during the NIAF master class with the animator Piotr Dumalan in october 2011, I researched the interaction of the drawings with the space.
There you see a drawn character interact with the real space. The drawing is made on a glass door and uses the space behind it.
This film would have been more special when the glass layer was made visible. By leaving out this information, can it be interpreted as a layer made in a computer and adds the technique nothing to the animation.






2.Connection with Memory

"You can't stop yourself seeing those torn pieces of paper as being a horse, man is unable to stop oneself from seeing a series of static images as movement, even if we know that each frame is in fact a still image. And particularly for animation where you know that it is a static drawing. You can't stop yourself from seeing a movement.The idea of the world as something that changes, moves rather than something that is fixed, the world as process rather than as fact."

William Kentridge

You never step into the same river twice.
Phanta Rhei 'everything flows' **Heraclitus**

What I wanted to research and visualize with this project is how memory is something we always carry with us and how a space can reveal its memories.
It also plays with the unreliable nature of memories and how they are reshaped continually by obtained experience and knowledge.
This film is about things you want to remember, but somehow forget and things you want to forget but still remember.

The fact that, when using stop-motion to record real movement only a fraction of the movement can be captured, makes for me the connection to forgetting and memory. We never remember everything, we always remember small bits and parts. Our memory is dominated by forgetting. The absence of forgetting will not give you a better memory, it will only increase confusion. You need a filter to let memories make sense and useful for the future.

Everyone has a different filter to remember an event and therefore nobody remembers events exactly the same. Akira Kurosawa makes use of this fact. In his film *'Rashomon'* a horrible crime is recalled from differing point of views. While watching this film you do not know who to believe, all visions seem plausible.

Memories are sensitive for revising, they are temporary and subjective. Memories can get new meaning by gained knowledge.
For example: When I was around 7 years old I saw two cats fighting on the street. One was little and the other one was very big and obvious stronger. The little cat seemed to be losing the fight. I pulled the cats apart and I felt good to have saved that little cat. mA couple of years later when I wrote an essay about cats I got the knowledge of how cats mate, which gave a whole different meaning to this 'little cat savior' memory.

Memories are always colored by previous experiences and therefore there is not one way to remember 'the same thing' again.

"From this survival of the past it follows that consciousness cannot go through the same state twice. The circumstances may still be the same, but they will act no longer on the same person, since they find him at a new moment of his history. Our personality, which is being built up each instant with its accumulated experience, changes without ceasing. By changing, it prevents any state, although superficially identical with another, from ever repeating it in its very depth. That is why our duration is irreversible. We could not live over again a single moment, for we should have to begin by effacing the memory of all that had followed. Even could we erase this memory from our intellect, we could not from our will."
Henri Bergson

It is interesting how people want to archive life, save everything. Is conserving the past a way to get hold of the present and future, to order the chaos around us, to help you to filter the impressions? Are we afraid of forgetting?
No one would first write down what they want to forget or don't have to remember, or don't want to. There is no such thing as a forget book.

When you write down memories, you change the memory because you have to translate it in words. The process of stagnation will occur sooner when written down, because it displaces the memory. We use pictures to conserve unforgettable events, so we can use them to remember what we forget. Which often results in that we remember the picture of the event, not the event itself. The pictures do become the memory.

We specially have an intense longing to cherish the memory of deceased loved ones. In the 19th century it was very common to take a portrait of the deceased one. These are today seen as macabre, but it was actually a beautiful tradition that helped families keep a small memento of the loved ones they had lost. Most of the time there was no photograph of them alive, so this was the only way to have a visual remembrance.

' Muiz, eating' 2006

'Post mortum'

Unhappy memories are as important for actions in the future as good ones; you learn what to do and what not to do. If you forget the wrong decisions you made, you will make them again. This is where the film *'Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind'* by Michel Gondry is about.

Our brain is not like a static archive. Memories of the past are constantly changing by experiences in the present. Every time you remember a memory, the memory changes.

"Memory is mystic writing pad that erases memory every time you reveal it. You rewrite it every time you remember it, retell it, reveal it"
Sigmund Freud (neurologist who founded the discipline of psychoanalysis)

Mystic writing pads are children's toys consisting of a thin sheet of clear plastic which covers a thick waxen board. The user can write on it with any pointed instrument, even a fingernail. The tip of the stylus presses through the sheet of plastic and makes a faint indentation in the wax below which appears as a dark trace through the plastic. When the plastic sheet is lifted away from the surface of the waxen tablet beneath, the dark traces disappear; the pad is clean again, like a blackboard just wiped off.
The appearing and disappearance of this writing is, according to Freud, similar to the flickering- up and passing- away of conscious in the process of perception.

This connects to the drawing technique I used last two years. 'Observation Animation' (2011) is a charcoal animation, where I photographed a drawing on paper and changed it, photographed it again, changed it etcetra. The drawings come to life when seeing all these pictures in a sequence. The erased drawing leaves a faint but visible trace on the paper surface.

In the begin of this graduation project, I did consider using charcoal again. Charcoal is already a medium that if you don't fix it, it disappears, or becomes blurry. This animation technique is heavily based on erasure, something I thought would be interesting to connect to the subject memory and forgetting.

But because I was also interested in the connection of the space and the memory and mixing two realities in one image, made me decide to proceed with the screen animation technique, which also is based on erasure. Working on the same surface means destroying and redrawing (parts of) the previous drawing to create the new changed drawing.

This animation technique is of a method called destructive animation. The artist William Kentridge uses this technique on his charcoal animations. Piotr Dumala is another artist who works in this destructive way. But instead of charcoal on paper, he uses painted plaster to sketch the drawings in. (More about these artist in the next chapter.)

Screen Memories
Freud also had a theory about False Memories called 'Screen Memories'.

"The foregoing analysis…may to some extent have clarified the notion of a screen memory as one that owes its value as a memory not to its intrinsic content, but to the relation obtaining between this content and some other, which has been suppressed" ('Screen Memorie' 19).

In other words, an insignificant memory serves as a screen memory for the more traumatic memory; they are related in that they are both parts of the same memory, but the insignificant part is able to be consciously recalled while the significant part is repressed and thus covered by this other memory. Screen memories are thus a result of repression.

The technique of *'Framed Memory'* is almost literary connected with this theory; using a glass screen/ frame to reveal the hidden layer of memories.
But there is also a connection with the content. In the film the woman gets confronted with disturbed memories. But I do not think they are cover ups of other bad memories. I think that in her case the bad memories are covering up the nice memories.

Maybe she had only one or two really bad confrontation with her father when she was young, but because this memories made a big impression on her, every other memory is colored by this bad experiences.

3.Inspiration

When I tried to draw on a computer, its inner logic was very much at odds. The computer had to do with cloning, replication (things staying the same), and effect. You could put an effect that looked like charcoal animation onto the computer (aware of that not being a necessary part of the process, but a kind of decoration added on), whereas the smudge of a charcoal animation is not decoration. It's something you can't avoid; it's there whether you like it or not."

William Kentridge

Lucía, Luis y el lobo & video installation,
LUIS (Lucía, Luis y el lobo - Part 2 of 2)
by Niles Atallah, Cristobal Leon & Joaquin Cociña

Lucia, Luis y el Lobo (Lucia, Luis and the wolf) is a beautiful stop motion animation

This two-part short film was created entirely from still shots taken with a digital photo camera. Materials: charcoal, dirt, flowers, found objects and cardboard.
The film is narrated by Lucia (part one) and Luis (part two), whose images appear as charcoal drawings on the walls of the rooms. The drawings interact with the furniture, and seem to breathe life into the inanimate objects in the room.
This film pushes the boundaries of our imagination.

I like the way real space and real objects are used in creating life. Also the dark and claustrophobic atmosphere appeals to me. It is like a nightmare.
Some scenes are played backwards, which I found very interesting to see. The furniture is in the begin of film totally damaged and becomes whole in course of the film.

I watched his films in the time I made the Charcoal animation
'Observation Animation'

Atallah his animations motivated me to think to use a big space for animation.
This resulted in the introduction mentioned film '*Portrait of an empty house*' which wasn't quit as destructive with the space as Niles Atallah his films.
The interaction I tried with the space I tried out in the short animation I made during the Master class with Piotr Dumala; *'Looking for'*.
In *'Framed Memory'* I tried to tell a good story and have some interaction with the space. This film is again not as destructive as Atallah his films, but I tried to give the viewer a uncomfortable feeling of distress.

Niles Atallah creates in his animations a whole other reality, which sucks you straight into this world. This is even more visible in his installation with these animations and others. He recreates the world of his films in this installation. The audience becomes part of the work. Although I do not think that my film is suitable for such extremes, but it is something to consider when presenting my work.

Paper Memories
Written and Directed by Theo Putzu

This project is really very close to what I want to achieve in my film and I have been watching this over and over again.

An old man watching the world pass by one day decides to find his happiness. Sitting all day in his room, looking out the window, sleeping under the clock and hearing it tick awakens the man to the search for his lover. Hidden among her letters to him are series of photographs that lead him around the city, looking for the next location as shown in her pictures. Passing through abandoned buildings, old parts and stadium; the old man finds her finally at the beach that concludes to a dramatic ending.

Using stop-motion technique, Theo Putzu captures a simple story of yearning and loneliness through a dreamer's eyes. The colors are in paler shades of grey and muted colors to illustrate the sentimentality of his tale.

Using stop-motion technique on the real world gives something surreal and unreal to the motion make the movements you see are very rigid. It shows just a fraction of what was really there and therefore makes this technique for me a connection to forgetting and memory.

The sound is really direct and obvious; ambient sound (clock, breathing, writing etc.) which gets in course of the film combined with a very soft piano melody. This melody grows stronger near the end of the film. The sound is different when the picture shows the second reality. It gets more noisy. You hear people talking in the background and when she walks you hear footsteps. This works really well.

The literary overlap of the past and the present is something I am playing with in 'Framed Memory'. I like the parts where the picture and the real world overlap and the image in the picture starts to live. Especially the part in the end where the old man is in both realities.

Another similarity is that the protagonist carries the past around. Only in my project the past is present through a glass objects instead of a picture, but both use the real space where the protagonist is located.

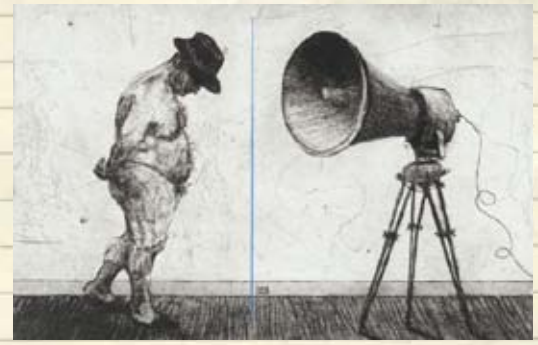
Although in the description of the film it says he used stop motion technique did it made me wonder if they didn't drop frames. Filming and dropping frames will give another feeling to the movement...
I have been doubting what technique to use, but found out that are just a few very expensive camera's who are up for the job. I decided to go for the most convenient route, although it feels a bit like cheating.

Zusje
by Robbert jan Westdijk

In this film Martijn visits his little sister Daantje, after several years without contact. He tells her he is going to make a documentary of her life and records everything about her.
He wants to find out something that happened between them in the past. He was send to a boarding school after his parents caught him with his little sister naked in bed.
Together they are going through that event again and found out that nothing really happened. The interpretation of the parents and the stories around it made them both convinced that there had happened something serious.

The theme of this film has similarities with my short film. It questions the reliability of the memory. It tells how colored memory can be.

William Kentridge (1955)



William Kentridge makes films, animations, drawings, installations, theatre, opera.

William Kentridge has been in my mind for several years and I am really inspired by his work and the way he works. I can't help recognizing my way of working and thinking when listening to interviews. That's why I linked the quotes of Kentridge with chapters in this thesis. His words almost say it all.

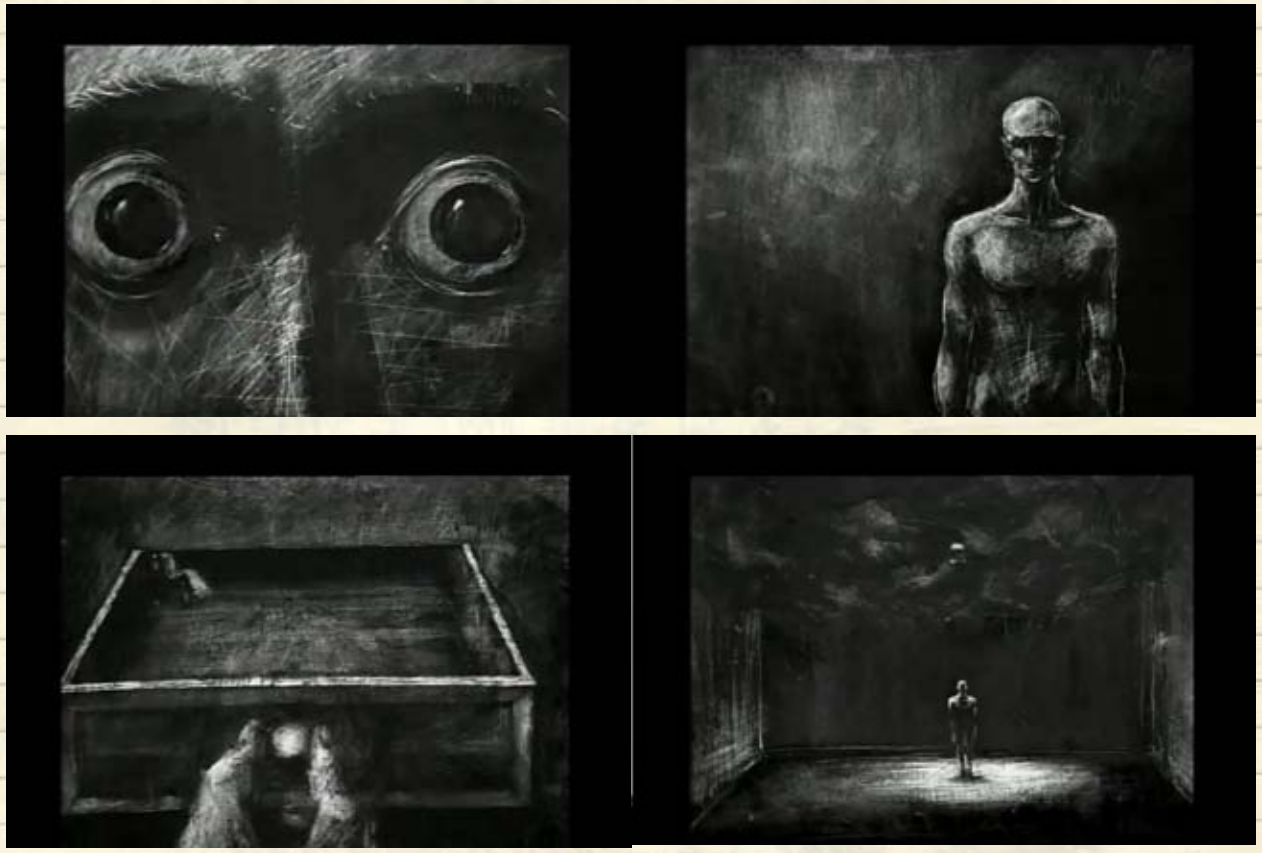
He uses a distinctive technique for his animations: charcoal drawings that are photographed, erased, and redrawn many times. His video animations both tell stories and capture the act of drawing.

“Charcoal is good material with working with full animation. Because of its tonal rage it is very good for photographic film, but also because of the speed of its transformability, it is very easy to erase. You can kind of change it as quickly as you can think. It became a way of thinking rather than a physical medium. “

That making is a way of thinking, is something I experienced in the making of all of my projects. I need to remember to trust my intuition and keep my mind open for all the offered possibilities while making.
Working like this I have to draw really fast to keep the workflow flowing, which makes the drawings more lose and energetic than when seeing every frame as a drawing on its own.

Kentridge photographed his charcoal animations with the help of a 16mm and 35mm film camera and could only see what he had shot after developing the film. I can look back at my footage right after shooting the frame, because I use a digital techniques. I have never tried the old technique and cannot tell about the difference between these two ways of working. But I know that seeing my creations coming to live gives me energy and feeds my urge to proceed in creating this life. In this animation I even needed to see what the camera sees, to be able to put the drawing in the right place in relation with the real space behind it.
This way I use old techniques (animation) combined with new technology. Animating is really time consuming and therefore any technique to make it easier is very welcome.

Piotr Dumala (1956)

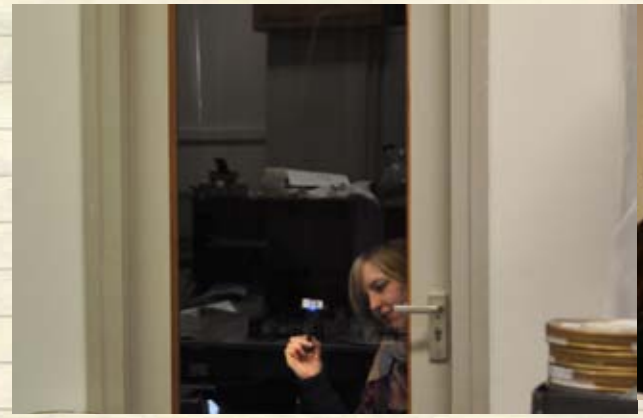


Piotr Dumala is an artist who works in the same destructive way as William Kentridge, only he is not using charcoal but he found that if he painted and then scratched into a block of plaster with sharp tools, he had a surface that he could add to and erase from to make his drawings appear to move under the camera. The mood of Dumala's films can vary according to the quality of his mark-making; his line quality ranges from high-contrast, bold, scratchy and energetic to soft, dream-like, and rendered.

“ I know that there is something I want to show. It doesn’t matter which way I do it. But animation is the best way to show my private, interior world. It is the way to discover my dreams, my desire, all my feelings. I can show this through animation because it is connected with drawing. I have no idea about using a live-action camera, so my way of telling stories is to create everything. I like also this moment of [total] creation. With animation, this is possible.”

A similarity in my way of working and Piotr Dumala his way, is that he also works very intuitive. He makes no line tests, everything is done the firs and the last time. With the life of a new image, comes the death of the old one.
“It’s really destroying my mind. It’s like killing your own children. Only what I get is the effect on the screen. The movement. I’m very much linked to my drawings. Sometimes you still have some of the past drawing and parts of the next one. It’s something really interesting, but you can’t keep it. I work slowly to keep it as long as possible. So I’ll go to the bar and eat something and then it’s time to destroy it. It’s a punishment.”

Only recently I found out the existence of Piotr Dumala by applying for a master class at NIAF Tilburg. It was a really nice and inspiring master class.
He showed a lot of his work, but because he is recently switching to live-action film, did he not talk about his animations as much as we would have liked.
It is a very shy man and I get very shy when meeting people who impress me, so we did not really had a good conversation about animation and the techniques he used.



4.Project Process

Very often it is not rational based, I couldn't give you a reason why I choose a instead of B.But it is done in the believe that very often in our decision making-process, which are unconscious or pre conscious or which you are not in control of, and underlying there is some intelligence at work there.

William Kentridge

It was very interesting to conclude, after reading my notes I wrote throughout the project, that my project ended really in line with the ideas I had when I started with this project.
But I didn't get there in one straight line. There were a lot of obstacles to overcome. Maybe if I had taken a good sprint I could have jumped over them. But I am not really a runner and instead I choose to take a detour on my bike and got lost.

Was it my disorientation or my eye for detail what made me wander around for months? I must say that as a kid I got lost quit some times, looking around me all the time but never paid attention on the road and where we were going.

But is it bad to wander around? When getting lost you will see places you would normally never have seen, meet people who else would never had met and think thoughts you wouldn't have thought.

When I am in motion (sketching, running, cycling, going somewhere) good ideas come naturally. When being lost one tends to move around, move around on unknown grounds and that way find new inputs.

Getting caught in the process and losing yourself is only good when you are able to find yourself back again. Nothing is for nothing.
In this process report you can read how I got lost in time and found my way back through space; an empty house brought me back to the border of reality and reminded me what I really wanted to do.

In this chapter I will show my process with the help of a dated structure and the following chapters:

- Start,
- The tour and its pit stops.
- Go back to start.
- Final destination.

o Start

30 August.
The road I was thinking of taking.

The starting point of this project was my last project of 2012: *'Portrait of an empty house'*.

pictures'Portrait of an empty house'

I wanted to re-use this technique, but in a better way, with more content than I did in *'Portrait of an empty house'* . I wanted to stick with the subject 'Memory' because I am convinced that there is a lot more to get out of this technique combined with this subject then I did last year.

The house I used in *'Portrait of an empty house'* was my grandfather's house and I had made a storyboard based on the memories I collected of my aunt. For some unknown reason I didn't stick to this storyboard, but mostly improvised. This made it loose its narrative. I think I was too connected with the space and its past. In *'Framed Memory'* I wanted to be able to see the project from a distance and not be in it mentally/emotionally.

10 October.
Proposed route.

'To get, to forget.'
You will see how a person deals with his/her memories while walking in a space. The person will be accompanied by a Plexiglas screen. On this screen the memories and thoughts appear. The person can influence what is on the screen by pushing/ dragging it around in the space or by influencing the drawing on the screen by hand.
This project is about things you want to remember but forget and things you want to forget but still remember. It doubts the reliability of memory.
With this experiment I hope to be able to show a space, colored by a personal experience. Or show an event through different point of views.

The themes of this project are;
- Hunting / searching for memories.
- The process of trying to remember and the struggle during this search.
- The protagonist is evolved with the drawing and the space.

Directions I could take it;
- Based on autobiographical memories of a space.
- Based on collected memories about a historical space
- Based on a combination of autobiographical and collected memories
- Based on a fictional story involving memory
- Based on different point of views of several people about the same event.

Obstacles on the road or gaps in the route.

- How do I show something I cannot remember ? In which space?
- How can I show what goes on in peoples head.
- How can I keep the project close to myself, without getting lost or stuck in my own memories.
- How can I make this interesting?
- Think about fake and real
- Which building/ Space is interesting to use?
- Should I combine the history of the building with my own history and use that as the starting point of the story?
- How can I integrate the screen into the story, let it have a function in the story?

First experiments.

In order to think while making, I made some sketches where I tried to play with the screen and its possibilities in interaction with the maker and the space behind it.

o The tour

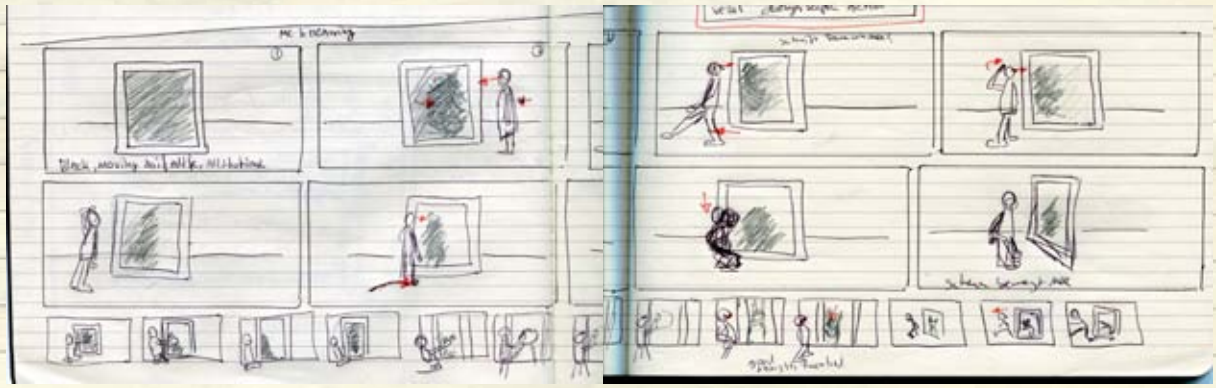
17 November.
Stop 1. Own memories: There is no One truth

On this moment I was more interested in using my own memories than a big history of a building.
I started writing down my own memories and I asked my parents and brother to tell their perepective on these memories (without reading mine), to see if this would show stories other point of views on these stories. The different perception of the memories is something I thought to be interesting to use in my project.
It was very funny that my mother remembered one story very well, but she did swop me and my brother and had a pretty good explanation why. I almost believed that I remembered wrong.

Stop 2. Dollhouse
I remembered a play I saw years ago of the theater production company 'Hotel Modern'.
They use scale in their work, allowing the public to view the world literally from a macro perspective. They have very inspiring projects and made me think about using my old dollhouse to try out my ideas, until I have found a real space to work in.
In A doll house is already referring to the past because it is connected to childhood.

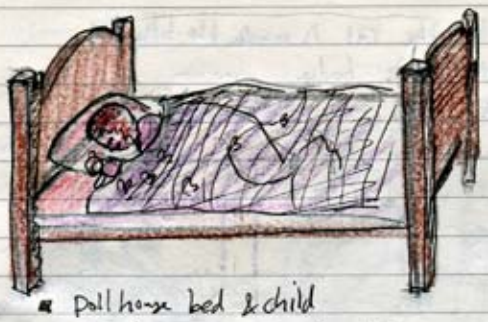
Using the dollhouse could give the atmosphere a very surrealistic dreamlike feeling, what memories and dreams have. I made three storyboards to shoot in the dollhouse.

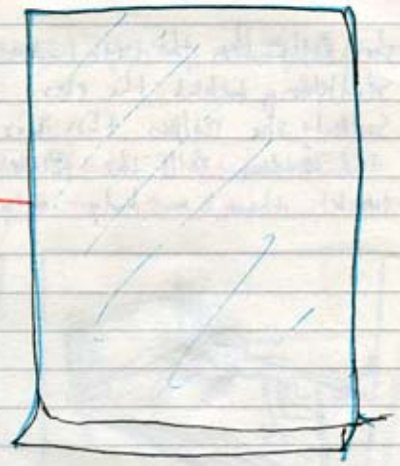
Pictures Three storyboard sketches for dollhouse.



Doll House

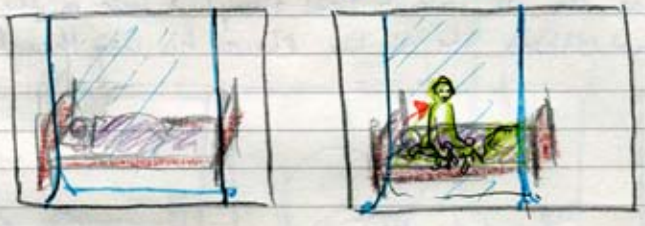
Story 1 # The memory of the dream.





- Doll house bed & child sleeping, you see her breathing

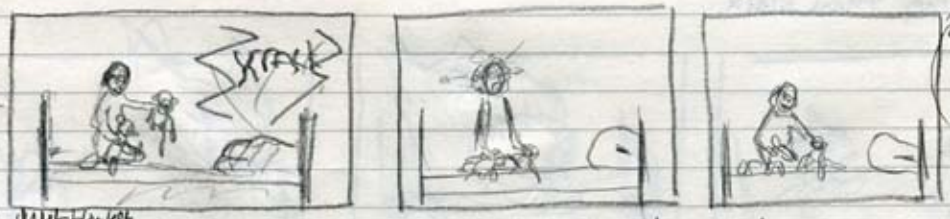
- the screen comes in pushed? or by itself?



- the dream appears on the screen on top of the sleeping girl. as soon as the screen has covered the whole bed.

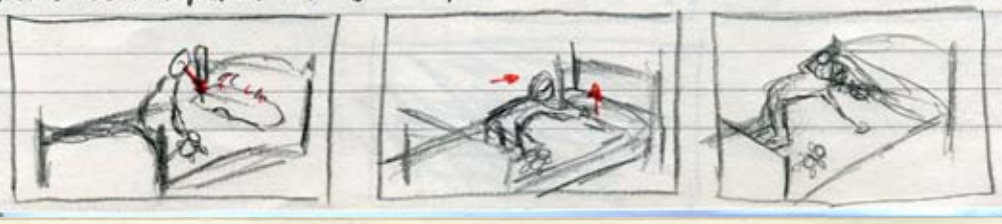
- the dream:

the girl plays with her dolls. Out of nowhere she hears a big "kcack" she reacts frightened, looks around her. Nothing has changed, so she plays along



panning the frame around the bed to make it more dynamic while she plays.

- the blanket is moving. curious what causes that she lifts up the blanket. and sees their Red cat's head looking at her with sweet eyes.

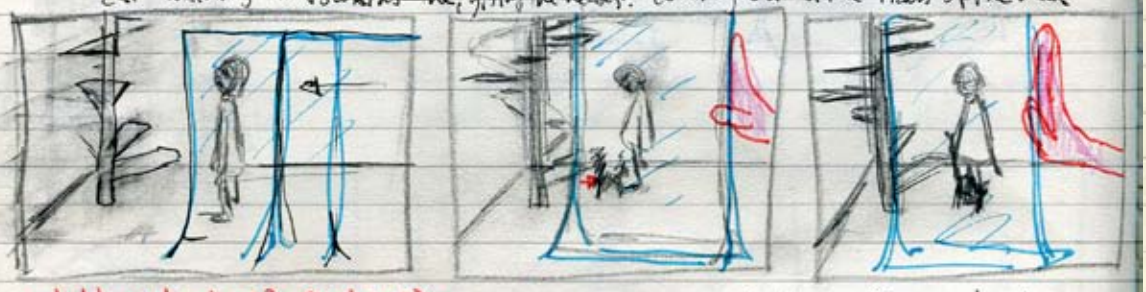


Doll House

Story 2 # the Memory of the cat who wasn't really there.

- Doll house stairs. This time it wasn't a dream.
it is a memory.

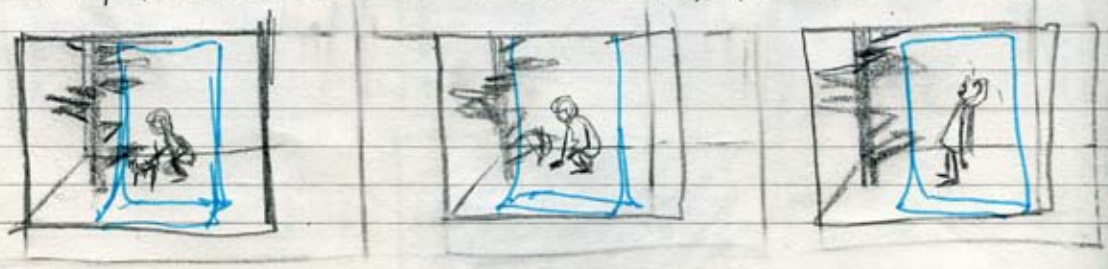
- it happened in the night. I had a nightmare, I use to have a lot of them.
I stood at the bottom of the stairs. the bedroom of my parents was upstairs. it is very dark
I wanted to go up the stairs to go to my parent, but see the cat walking coming out of the Pixels of the dark



pushed by a big hand? (my hand)
or by itself what does it says if there is a hand involved? that there is some-one giving direction to what we see.

- He starts giving me heads

- I realy liked the cat and wanted to stroke him.
To my surprise the I am stroking into nothingness. the cat disappears as a cloud of smoke *Poof*
The cat was an imagination, something I saw in the Pixels of the darkness combined with my sleepy eyes.
As soon as I realised that the cat wasn't real I started crying or yelling for my parents, didn't dare to take a step further.



14 December.
Stop 3. Piotr Dumala Masterclass

In December I participated in a 4 days master class with the animator Piotr Dumala. During this master class I made the short animation *'Looking for'* where I experimented with the drawing on glass technique.
In this animation I tried to give the animated figure a lot of rest moments. And I experimented with the interaction between the animated character and the space. The result gave me a lot of satisfaction. It worked. It was really looking like the drawn figure had influence on the real space.

(See chapter 1. Introduction graduation Project, for the stills of the film)

18 February.
Stop 4. Collecting memories of others

In '*Creature Comforts*' Nick Park interviewed people about certain subjects and took this as the base of the animal clay animation. This made me think about the possibility of using recorded stories about memories as core of my project. Instead of starting with images to make the story I could make the soundtrack based on the interviews for the animation.

Having different people talking about the same subject will give different point of views on that subject and will point out the subjectivity of memory.

I recorded 5 families and 5 couples talking about their memories. Most of them I recorded separately in the hope there stories would be very different. Later I did duo recordings in the hope to get disagreement into the discussion.

9 March
Stop 5. Autistic Uncle

During a recording session with my parents, I found out that the differences in the memories of people who experienced something together aren't that big.
"I am afraid that this recordings will not give me something I can work with. I do not feel comfortable about this project anymore. I get insecure and feeling the urge of running away from it as hard as I can. But instead I sleep a lot and shift my focus to my other duties."

I hoped by recording a conversation about the past between my father and his autistic brother to get the different point of views of an event. An Autistic person really sees the world differently. Maybe this will give the contrast the project needs.

13 March
Stop 6. Just get out of my head!

Also the idea of recording my autistic uncle to get a real different point of view didn´t give the result I expected. I had the feeling that I have been wasting my time in a search to nothing.
I was waiting for that magically feeling of the pieces falling in the right spot...waiting and waiting...
This is the moment that I started to think about writing a story myself which visualizes my theory. Than I would have been more in control than I am at this moment. I had to get out of my head:
"I have to make something or else I think I will get mad".

16 March.
Saving attempt 1. Just get out of your head!

After the tutorial with Barend Onnemeer, I felt a bit more secure again. Looking forward to work on the project.
Instead of over-thinking, Barend told me to follow my intuition.
"I am going to make a sound collage of the interviews I recorded, by taking out the interesting parts and putting them together in a random order.
I have to remember that my project is about subjectivity of the memory and not about making a documentary!

The soundtrack can content several hints of content and work with this like I did in 'Observation Animation'. Use the fragments to create a poetics new reality.
Things do not have to relate, because the brain will search for an connection."

I listened to 5 interviews now and wrote them all out and selected from the text, but the new way of working will be editing while listening.
Next week I want to have a soundtrack of max five minutes. I will only use two or three persons in the beginning, or else I think I will get lost again.

20 March
I can smile again.

This day I edited my first sound mix, which is more than six minutes long. It felt good again; I was able to smile.

25 March
Manic

I had moments where I felt wasting my time, alternated with euphoric feelings. I felt getting a little manic.

"It is time to let the project get its shape, and not being able to shape it yet is making me nervous. While writing about my project 'Portrait of an empty house' I considered redoing this piece in a proper way, so it can be a beautiful animated story.... But maybe that is not good to do now..And I need an empty house..... (Maybe in Kees his house...) "

26 March
Do not get lost in details

This day I tried to focus on the location, subject and story in the sound edit and tried to find a common thing to connect the different memories.
"Do not cut that much than you lose the dynamics of the spoken words.' See if you can make it into one bigger story or else try to make several shorts. " Was Aymeric his advice.

27 March
Saving attempt 2. Multiple screen table.

Together with Simon I came till a great idea, something that will be in line of my *'Portrait of an empty House'*. There I played around with one screen and this time it might be interesting to use for each point of view of the story a separate frame. The new plan was to have maximum three screens with stories drawn on it. The camera will alternate the focus between the screens. It works a Kind of like the multi-plane camera of Disney, but then bigger and shot sideward instead from above.
More about sketches and inspiration in the chapter 5.

29 March

Barend Onnemeer: "Do not forget what that your project is about subjectivity and collectivity of the memory. It is not reality but truth where you are looking for in the project. You are not making a documentary. It is the truth intensified. Bringing it in a new context, finding a new truth."
An interesting question: what is true and what is reality?
I started with the edits I had on the same subject and tried to build a interesting 3 minutes soundscape out of that, without making it to subjective, not to concrete.
I had to work fast now; Ready to storyboard by the end of this week.

29 March
Saving attempt 3. Found Location

I have found a location where I can work on this project.
It is in a empty house of good friends of mine. The man who lived there (Kees) died last summer and is has the same abandoned emptiness, sadness and quietness as my grandfather's house I used in '*Portrait of an empty house*'.

o Go back to start.

6 April

The story results I had until now from editing the recorded interviews needed more friction. Only then they would become more suggestive, provocative and dramatic. And this is what the project needs in order to let it communicate.

Barend Onneweer: "Lets not stay captured in editing sound which will not provide the blueprint for the project. Give this project a turn by returning to the idea where you started. Where did you want the project to be about?"

Time for something constructive. It didn't even feel that bad, I did not feel lost, the opposite. I felt free again, floating on the possibilities.

10 April

With the help of asking myself questions about the project and getting inspiration by visiting the location I had come to a story. The story has one person, so only one screen.

Synopses of the story
A woman visits her childhood house. It is where she was born, grew up, her parents got divorced and her father died, alone... She is saying goodbye to the house, walking through it for the last time. Memories come and go. Good Memories are alternated by bad ones. The bad ones she rather not remember and she changes them into something less bad or pushes them away replacing them for a nice memory. It ends with her, packing last small things in an old suitcase and walking away leaving the house behind her. There is a 'for Sale' sign in the garden. She doesn't look over her shoulder.

12 April

Things to consider.

- The place must look abandoned.
- What secret does she carry with her?
- How is the screen connected with the woman?
- Are there pictures of her? When she was small, together with her father?
- How do you explain visually the relation between the women and the house?
- Think about what you want to tell
- Consider lightning the set.
- How is the screen related to the woman?

17 April

Thinking while making, made a photo sequences of the story with a stand in. To be there in the house with a person helped a lot in making decisions for the story and visualizing the story.

20 April
Synopses Story/ Script

A woman enters an empty house with cleaning materials and empty boxes.
She is hesitating to go in. She gets the boxes and steps inside, putting the boxes on the floor and stares around her. She will look at the objects on the desk in that room and picking them up or touching them. And takes place in the chair where her father used to sit.

You will see her memories appearing as drawings on the window. She is not aware of them. They start nice but when turning bad, she walks away to start cleaning the house.

When she want to pack to object in a cabinet memories appear on the window. This time she notice them and is at first happy to see them, but when her father comes into the picture again, she wipes the memory away with her hands and walks away. She goes to the kitchen table and starts wrapping and packing all the glasses who are standing on the table. In one of the glasses a memory appears. She doesn't want to remember so she throws the glass on the ground. It breaks.

This is a crisis moment where she cannot take it anymore and out of frustration and fear throws all the other glasses of the table. She is really up sad and runs upstairs half crying and sits rolled up on the bed in her old sleeping room.

When she got herself together again she looks out of the window. A memory starts appearing there. She pushes it away again, wipes it out again. She wants to run away again, but she hesitates. After a moment of contemplation, fear makes place for curiosity.
She takes the glass plane from the window and walks through the space, going back to the memory, which made her panic. She is going for confrontation.
Through the frame she will see herself giving a drawing to her father and sticking it beside the fridge. When lowering the glass she finds that the drawing is still there. She puts the glass down and takes the drawing. Looking at it while crying and laughing at the same time.
She will sit down at the kitchen table while looking at the drawing and smiles with tears.

23 April
Assessment comments conclusion.

The technique is interesting and has a lot of potential, but I have been too polite with the disturbing memories. I have dig into those memories more, it must have a real confrontation.
I am shining away from some sense of violence, which is in the middle of my story. It is the subconscious level that is missing in the story now.

I am using the technique to politely too.
The technique is really nice, but how it is used now it becomes artificially. Narratively it doesn't make sense.

o Final destination.

Thinking about the bad things the woman had experienced, I decided that her father became and alcoholic when she was around 5 years old and used a lot of violence against her and her mother. The house had to look more neglected. I found some pictures on the internet to mimic this.

To let the panic attack make sense, I decided that she tried to get rid of the memory on the glass, while packing it. But after every swipe the memory gets worse. In the end she doesn't want to see it anymore and throws the glass on the ground and smashes all the other glasses.

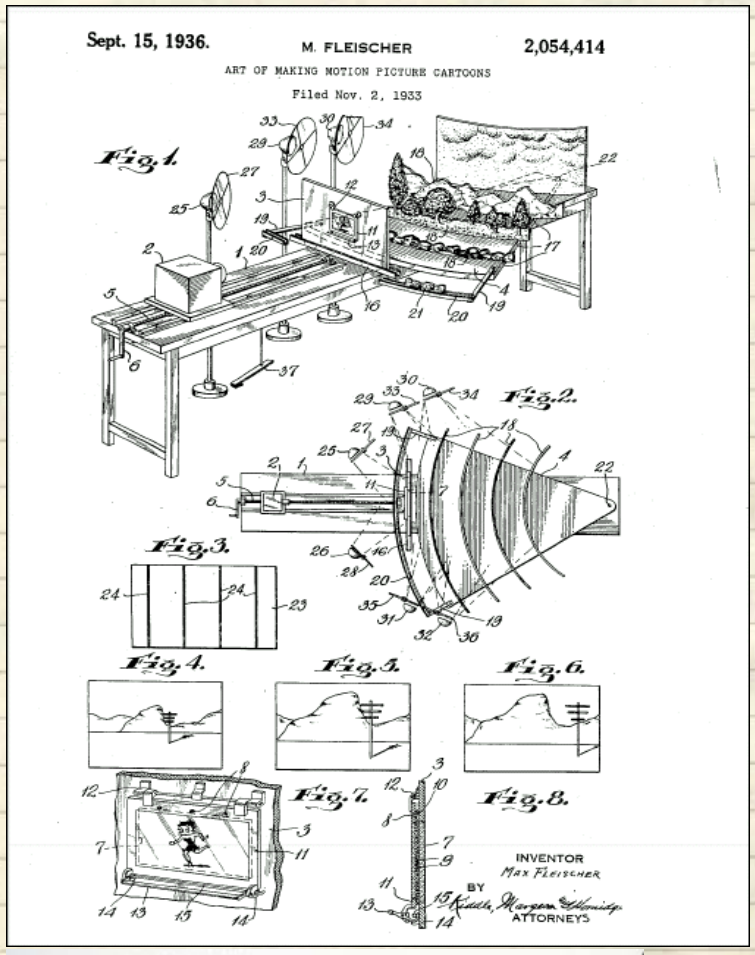
The change in the function of the glass, to avoid the artificial:
After a moment of contemplation (a time-lapse of here sitting with her head hiding between her knees) she starts playing with the glass. The glass she played with forms itself into a whole. It is the glass of a picture frame. A black scribble appears on it. She smashes it again, but the frame mends itself again and shows again the black ink. She smashes it again and it mends again and this time a child drawing of a butterfly with some color appears on it. This makes her doubt and she decides to pick the frame up and see what it has to show her.

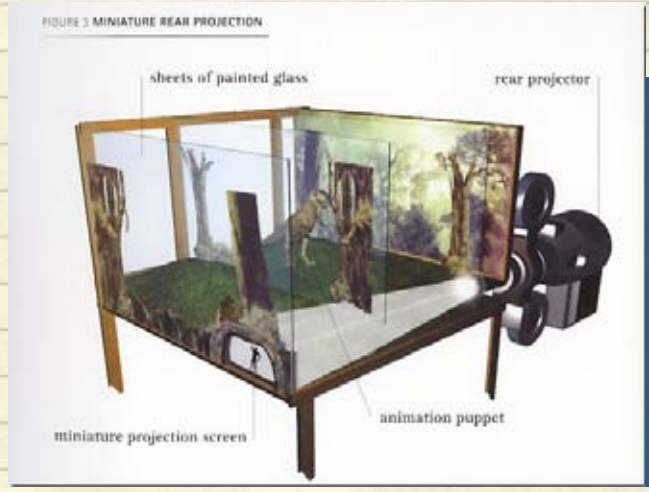
The end is the same, but still had to figure out how to end the whole thing properly.

Sketches for the animation.

5. The development of the Screen Stand Stanley

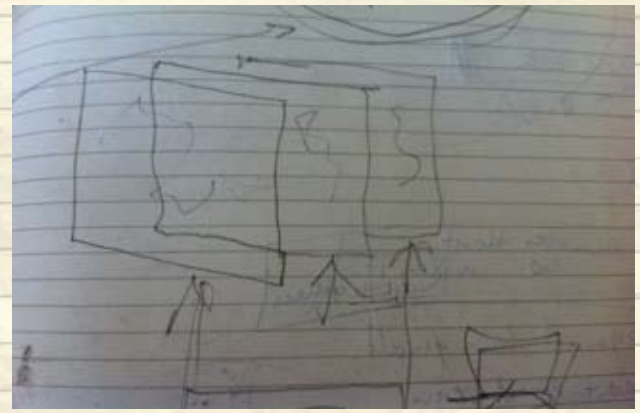
When beginning a project I always start with very big ideas with a lot of possibilities. This narrows down in course of the development
The development of the tool to hold the screen is a very good example of this.

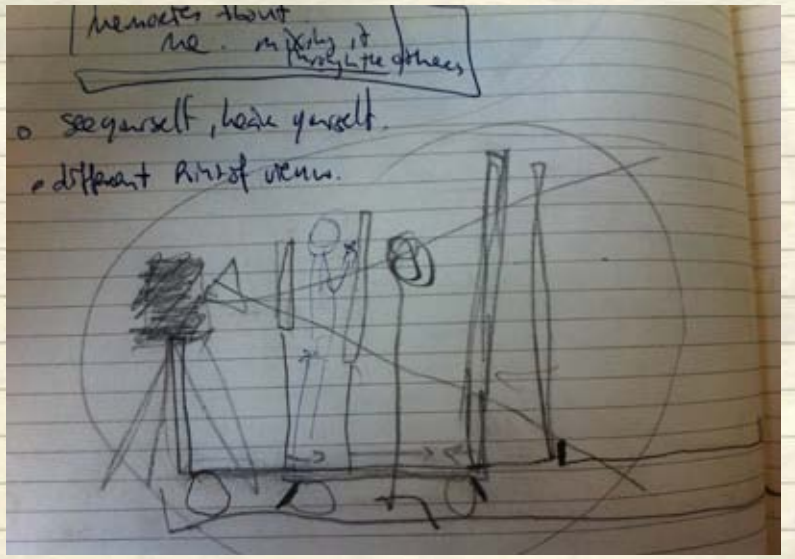




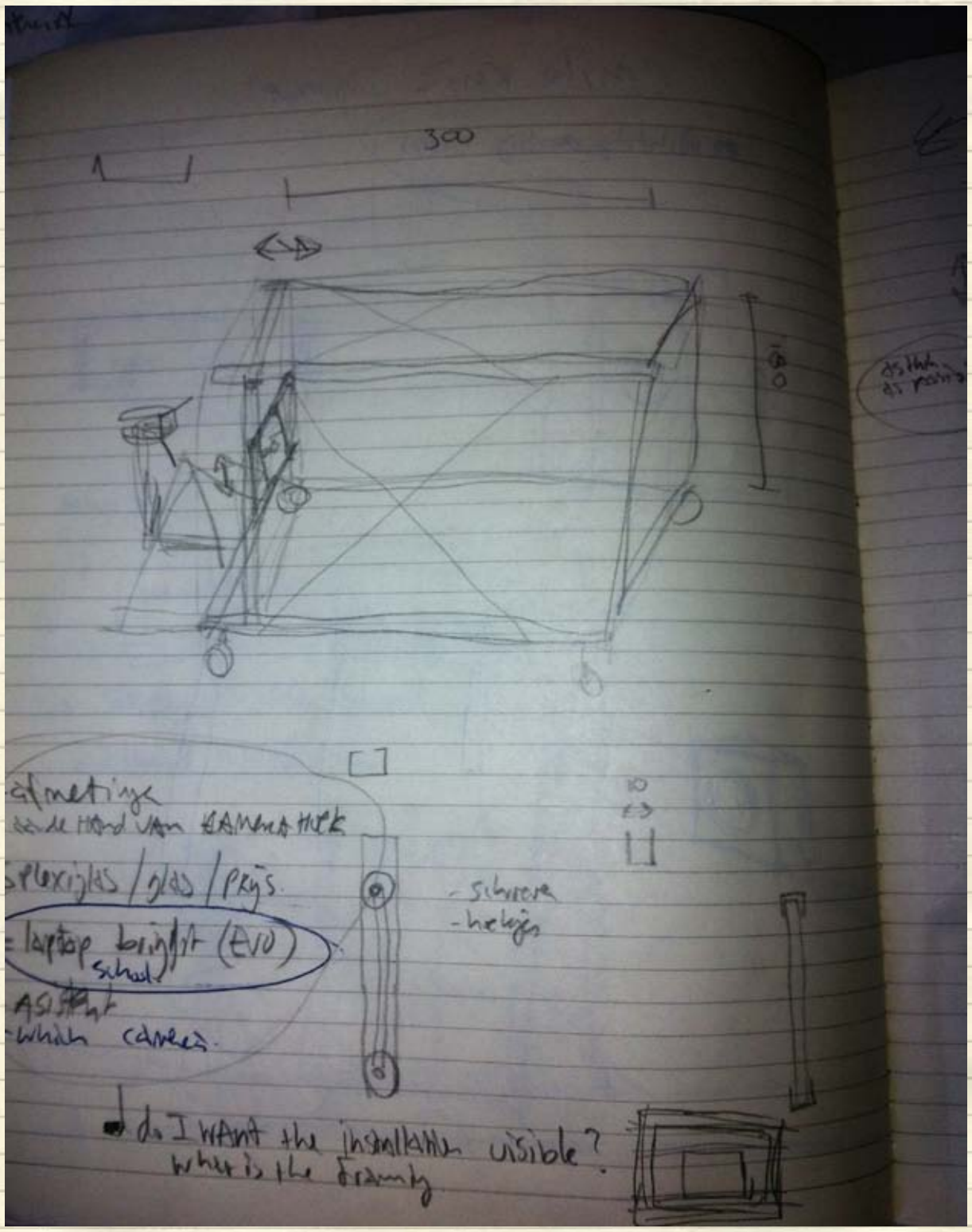
Animation is a good medium to experiment with and this is done a lot in the past already. When looking for some inspiration for my screen holder I found some really nice set ups with screens. Especially the multi-plane camera of Disney. I am still amazed by this technique.

The first sketches of the installation are of Simon Pummel his hand.
It shows 3 layers of screens who all are moveable and can be used for showing the different perceptions of the different people. At that moment I still had in mind to use the interviews about memories.

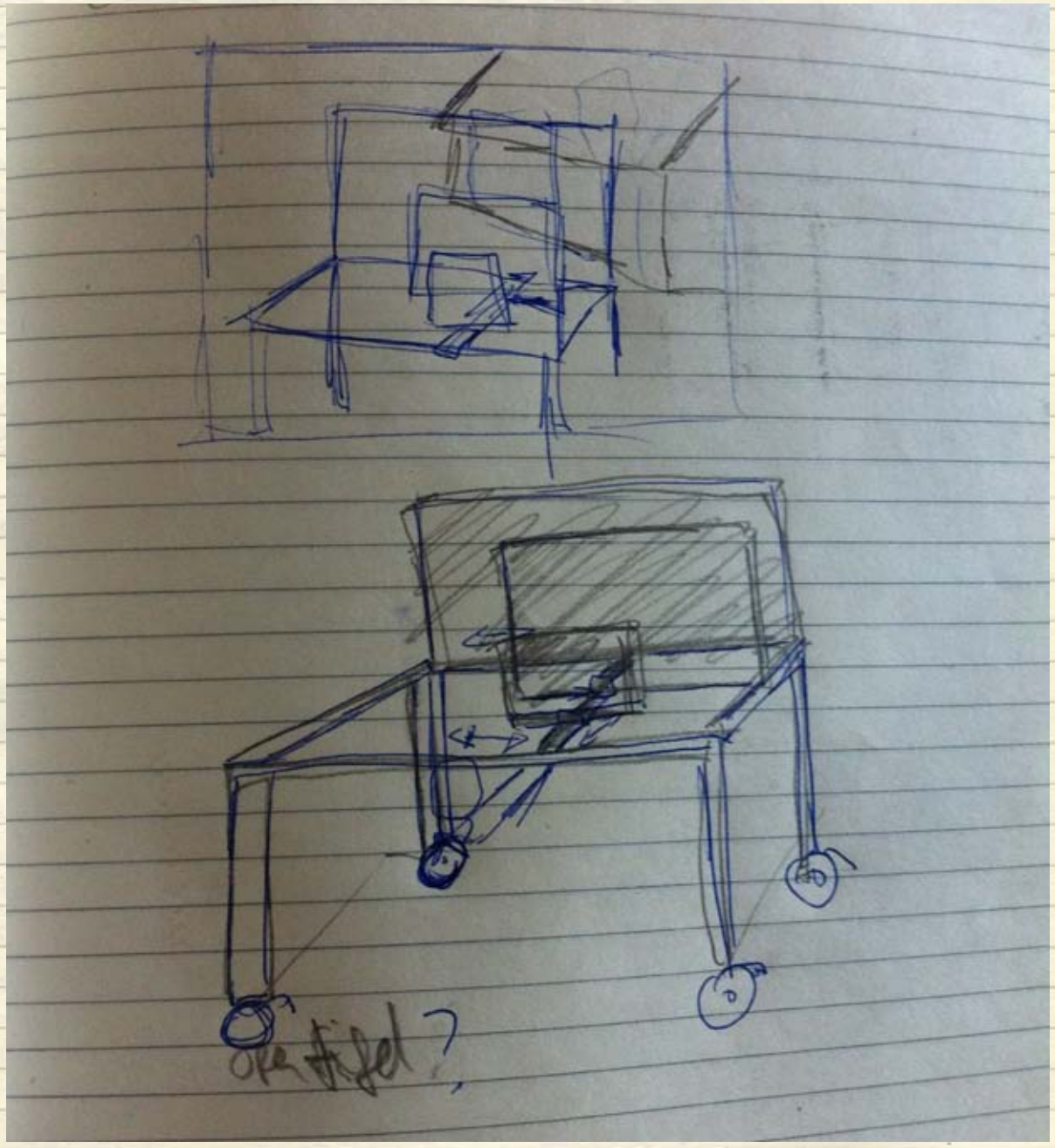




After this I worked with Stock to get this idea in a model and to find out what materials to use.



I looked again at the inspiration pictures and considered to make the installation smaller to have not too much of the construction blocking the view of the camera. And to make it less time consuming in the making. It was more practical to use a table and connect the glass bottom to it.

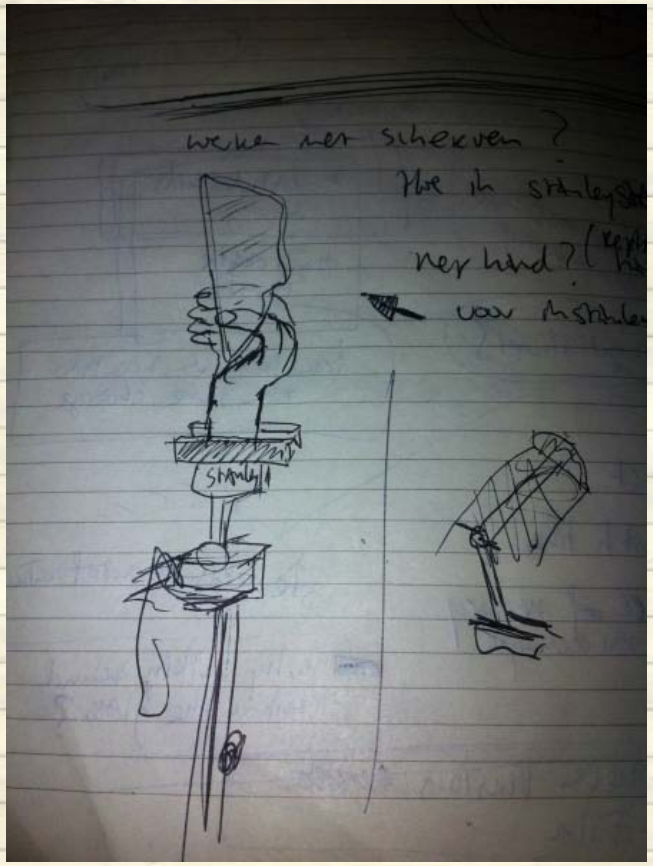


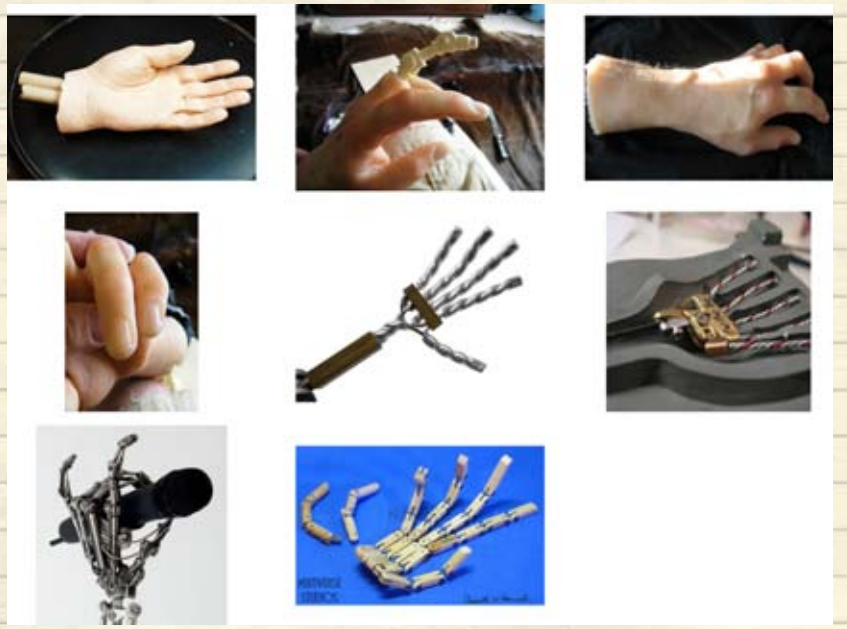
How to hold the glass plate so it will not be surrounded by framework but only be hold at the bottom?

The several person story is changed into a one person story. Instead of building a multi-screen table, there is only need for a one-screen stand, to hold the glass screen on its place during the shoot. The music stand will be the base of this stand.

'The Stanley' is a multiple angel vice that will be attached to the music stand to hold the screen.

The glass screen must look like it is hold by the hand of the protagonist. This made me consider make a fake hand to hold the glass.

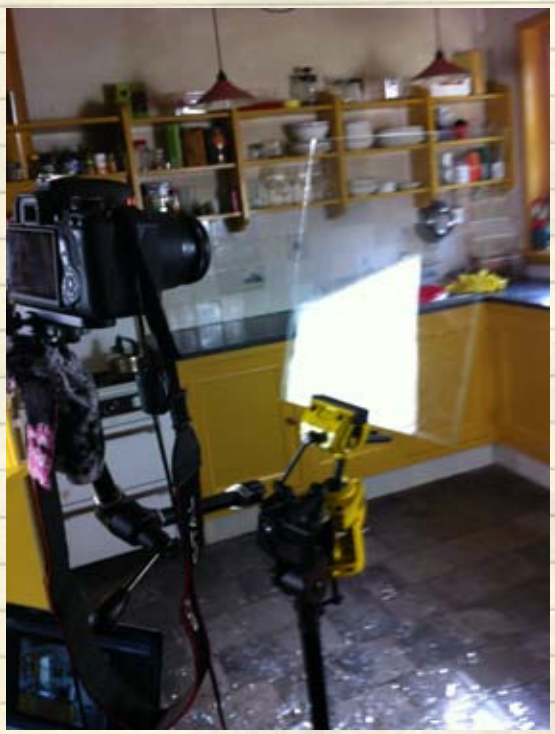


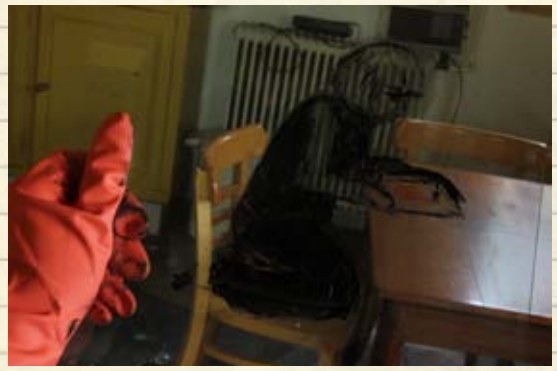


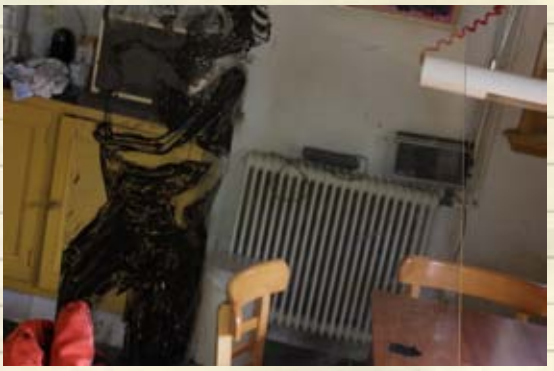
While working in the first scene's I thought of letting her wear cleaning cloves. This would emphasize the fact that she is cleaning the house and makes it easier to create the fake the hand.

In the end I decided to use my real hand in combination with the Stanley Stand, for my reflection was faintly visible and a real hand is more real than the fake one.

With the help of the 'magic arm' I made a real nice stand for my last scenes of animation.







6.Reflecting on the shooting

If you are working with a team, with a crew of people, you have to know what you are doing.You can't just have a appearance of what you know you are doing, you actually do have to know what you are doing.
While when it is just me and the studio, I can just wonder around
the first two hours just looking at the paper and think well...
do I what to start with a cat, or do I want to start on the beach
.....this could a kind of drive anyone nuts .

William Kentridge

There was a moment of stress because the house had to be cleaned to let the agents make pictures of the house to sell it. So instead of the month there was planned, there would be only two, and maybe three weeks.
This made me push myself even further and happily I managed! Maybe I even needed this time pressure in order to get the right focus.

For this film I needed a protagonist who would have time enough to be around all the time and patient enough to wait in between the animated frames. For practical reasons I choose that I would be acting in this film.
Therefore I had to find assistance, somebody who liked helping me out and had the time to do it. All my fellow student were busy with their own projects.

I found two very eager persons. The photographer; Marieke Mamarazzi. And the editor and filmmaker; Rowena Crow, whom I med at the master class in Tilburg. There is a big different to work with people or on your one. As William Kentridge his quote in the begin of this chapter explained, if you work on your own, you do not have to explain to anyone else but yourself what you want. And can take all the time you need to make decisions.
On the other hand was it really good to have to be clear about what I wanted. This made me make decisions more conscious.

Rowena was really a big help. She had a different view on how to shoot things because of her editing experience. She helped me solving a lot of problems and will be helping me out with postproduction.

But I cannot say if the result is living up to my expectations,
because the film is not finished yet.

Tomas Navarro helped me out with setting the light. He sketched light plans for me and gave me tips. It was hard to stick to the light plan, because when the light plans were made, I was not sure about the camera point of views yet.
I played a lot around with the light and hope the result will be good.

The many roles I played in this project (Director, set dresser, light and camera woman, catering etc.) made it hard for me to get really involved in the acting. I also had to act slower, because we decided to drop frames (keep 8 of the 24 images the camera shoots in a second) it was useful to act slow-motion to get the same awkward movements as stop-motion has when shooting thins in movement, and to avoid motion blur.

The parts I enjoyed and surprised me most are the drawn animations parts; Create life and see it becoming better than imagined. I enjoyed every single second of this! During this animating, I found a lot of presents in the form of solutions to problems or just new insights in how to create this second reality. That is probably why I liked the animating part the best, letting my hands do the thinking.


Canon

7.Conclusion

With this project I wanted to give the use the screen animation technique with more meaning and with a better thought through connection with the subject Memory.
I wanted to be able to tell a story without being emotionally too involved.

At this stage of the project I think I succeeded. The technique fits the story and is not only a impressive technique. The process of remembering, which takes place in the head is made visual; it is brought outside the head and placed in the space.

Although I feel very confident about my end product, I wished to be able to include more theory about memory. There are a lot of books to read and films to see which are valuable for this project. I had a really hard time researching and reading difficult philosophically written books. It made me getting stuck in my head and in order to get out of my head, I decided to stop reading and start watching inspiring animations and other films. This helped me to get the project in motion again, so this was really a good decision. I still wished that is was easier for me to read into the subject of the project, while making without getting stuck.

It would have been more useful if I had come to the final form for this project sooner. That way I would have had more for experiment and improvement.
This is a repeating element in my process, which I maybe have to learn to accept instead of fighting against it.

The way I am functioning the best is when I can think with my hands and have moments in the process where I can let my intuition do the work.
By thinking while working makes me stumble onto problems, which I wouldn't have thought of when only thinking about the project. And instead of thinking out these problems, I have a hands on way of solving them. This makes the process more dynamic.
It is like William Kentridge said:
"Very often it is not rational based, I couldn't give you a reason why I choose a instead of B. But it is done in the believe that very often in our decision making process, which are unconscious or pre conscious or which you are not in control of, and underlying there is some intelligence at work there."

This film will be the first film I want to send into the world by sending it to film festivals I will make it visible.

I feel I am not done with this subject memory. There are a lot of books I want to read about memory and the function of the brain. Also my knowledge about animation can be enlarged.
But the thing I am most interesting in to develop further is combining animation and real space; combining more realities in one image.
There is still al lot to learn, but based on my experiences during this master I know how to get a higher level with my work, and want to keep this development in movement.

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Artists

- william kentridge
- Niles Atallah
- Yuri Norstein
- Piotr Dumala
- Caroline Leaf
- Aleksandr Petrov
- Martine Chartrand
- Jan Svankmeijer
- Robbie Cornelissen
- Quay brothers

“I have to change to stay the same”

Willem de Kooning