

TOP



When starting this programme I had some themes in mind that I wanted to focus on, being: preserving memory, senses of home, migration and diaspora, the subconsciousness, community, nostalgia and decolonization. The inspiration for my themes stems from my cultural background. As a result of my grandparents having to flee and leave their homelands, I've been born and raised in a country that on the one hand I call home, but geographically and culturally I have multiple references. Specifically, my connection to my Palestinian heritage is one that brings me a lot of inspiration. Even though my interests are not limited to this, it remains a significant aspect that I have worked with in previous projects as well. Currently, due to the circumstances in Palestine, I feel an even bigger sense of urgency to inform, humanize, spread a hopeful message and to contribute to reconnect and sustain a community that is dislocated. This has prompted me to formulate three research questions that have emerged as I delve into the concept of 'what is home?' through my work:

- What kind of non-tangible senses can create a sense of home; think of memories, smells, stories, dreams, languages, traditions etc?
- How do the 2nd and 3rd generations stay in touch with their home?
- What mixed media approaches can be applied to preserve a sense of home?

With these questions in mind, I planned my first long awaited trip to Palestine, one of the places that is geographically and culturally home to me. I hoped to gain answers to what home means and what that means in terms of my identity as well. Coincidentally, at the same time, we received the EYE assignment. I made plans to film with family and friends in Palestine, with the goal to create a film that highlights our community in a way that isn't directly related to war and pain - as this has become normality when seeing anything about Palestine in western society. When the war escalated I wasn't able to go anymore. I realized that any film that I would make related to Palestine would most likely be linked to the war anyway, which contrasted my aim for the project, so I took a different approach. One that I was aiming for would touch people and convey a message of motivation and hope.

This is how my first project 'FurFur and the watermelon' was created. Inspired by a childhood story told by my grandmother, this short animation highlights the occupation in Palestine. Despite limited experience with animation, this approach catered as a solution for me in a time where I couldn't get the real footage that I wanted and searching for online footage confronted me with a lot of war images that I didn't want to constantly be faced with.

By applying the 'yes and..' method (taught in the first seminar) I eventually came up with multiple stories. Some of which were not going to be able to be used as they went way off subject (as that method can lead to). I was however, able to mix and match versions of the story to eventually come up with the final script.

Next, I went through the family archive of Palestine searching for images, to inspire an aesthetic for the drawings. I then made a shotlist and the drawings. The editing process was a lot of trial and error as I never worked with the software After Effects before. However, wanting to use my strength of drawing and to be able to finalize it in a timely manner, After Effects was the software that could create movement in my 2d drawings and had the smallest learning curve for what I wanted to achieve.



My next project began with reflections on this previous work. During this process, I found myself contemplating how to add a personal perspective, one that can show more about myself as well, in order to captivate the audience even more deeply and to feel more connected to the story I was telling. Even though I was eventually satisfied with the outcome, I felt that I was able to identify a personal challenge for projects to come. This prompted me to consider a new approach for my next endeavor.

Inspired by this realization, I resolved to infuse my next project with a personal touch. With a plan to delve deeper into myself through my family history, I will go on a journey to Tunisia, following in the footsteps of my grandfather, particularly through exploring landscape theory, as taught in Chiads seminar. My intention is to observe, research, and delve into the essence of my grandfather's experiences, as he was able to make connections here that he would later on use for the Palestinian cause. Furthermore, I aim to draw inspiration from the landscape and environment he once traversed. A further aspect I might want to add to this project is the importance of Tunisia for Palestine, as it became the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Tunisian President was one of the reasons that the anti colonization movement in the Arab world started (Aljazeera, 2009). It would be interesting to have these stories parallel through the lens of me following the footsteps of my grandfather in a landscape matter.

I've been grappling with the political undercurrents in much of my art. While I'm passionate about addressing these issues, I don't want to limit myself because of them. Therefore, I've been drawn to the idea of incorporating surrealism and absurdism into my work, allowing me to explore themes in a more abstract and imaginative way. Apart from applying this aspect as a means to expand my artistic skills, techniques and interest, I believe that using surrealism/absurdism/irony creates the ability to lower the threshold when introducing serious and provocative issues. Aligned with my themes and research questions as well, I want to use this interest of mine to 'fill in the gaps' of these stories being passed down on generations. For this specific project I want to experience adding animated drawings over Tunesias landscape where certain parts of the story that I have been told seem to be missing (for instance; certain buildings aren't there anymore, or an event that happened).

Another way I intend on approaching this mixed media approach of film and animation, is inspired by Kate's seminar. We explored different perspectives in storytelling. This eventually led me to write a small story about a girl and her siblings. From the perspective of the girl and the sun. The story is about migration and a longing for home. It is inspired by my family members telling me how they remember poppy flowers growing at the beach. As a kid, I took this literally and always envisioned these flowers growing through the sand. Which wasn't the case, but these stories have altered my memories of my home country. These blurred lines between reality, memory and imagination are scenes in which I hope to apply absurdism/surrealism. The absurdism lies in the lost translation of these stories being told down to different generations, even so, if I ever do see a flower growing through the sand I will get a sense of home.



Stills from test shoot for short film project

While preparing for the trip to Tunis in April and continuing the project about migration afterwards, I have started a project centered around Tatreez; a traditional Palestinian embroidery style that is unfortunately becoming increasingly extinct in the meantime (A, 2023). I envision creating a photo series where I incorporate this embroidery style, using it as a means to honoring and preserving a cultural tradition that holds deep significance for me, but by applying it in a modern way through illustrations of my everyday western life.



Tatreez Prototype



To conclude, my bigger goal is for all these projects to serve as research for a bigger film project: Eventually it is not only about showing different cultures, but it is to connect different cultures as well. In this film, I want the story to be about a Palestinian person and their friends as they navigate a strange seemingly otherworldly creative industry, searching for stability. Much of the focus will be set on examining race, class, identity, existentialism and modern arabic-western culture through a surrealist lens.

The outcome of this film will rely on the outcome of the research of the current projects. However, currently I envision a film inspired by the surrealistic style that Atlanta (2016) uses. Inspired by Afro-surrealism (as applied in Atlanta), I want the film to critique and educate its audience on our racial, societal, and normative structure linked to the arabic-western society. This will be executed with a magical and absurd edge by enlarging these structures.

References

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