

[Title

Name

Draft 1]

[Please add plenty of images which illustrate everything you did.]

~~Essay from Graduation Intro~~

## Introduction

Over the past months I have been working on improving my command of narrative in my films. For my final project I would like to continue working on the short experimental film, entitled *Unframed*.

This film is about how I connect with the absurdity of the reality I find myself in.

The work so far was made during the time of the Covid 19 pandemic, when Dutch society had been locked down from the middle of March to the beginning of August. During that period, I experienced the disconnection between my physical body and mental awareness. More specifically, my body was isolated within an eight square-meter room. All this time my awareness travelled through the internet and through propaganda generated by social media:

“News” in online society; “The broken relationship between China and America”;

“The Covid virus is made as a chemical weapon by the Chinese military”; “Black lives matter”;

“Refugees were rejected at the Hungarian boarder” ....

The most influential value that I perceived from this mass of information are numbers and conflicted statements. It brings to me a feeling of being an outcast in the western context.

Mentally, I could be falling apart anytime because of this venerable global situation.

So, to make my struggle more rational, I filtered it down to three main themes:

1) “How to deal with the paradox that when identity is constructed by physical reality, it is at the time deconstructed by virtual reality”;

2) “The play of Media manipulations”;

3) “My life has nothing without digitalisation” (we are defined by numbers and data).

I have been working on methods of visual storytelling throughout lockdown period, by making 3D characters, dialogue, various activities, within a virtual environment.

But the fact remains that those elements are more related to emotional self-expression. The images in my work are abstractions, a personal response to events; they reflect the feeling of distancing and being an outsider. The Covid times amplify these feelings to a larger extent.

However, when it comes to a film with clear narratives, I did the first experiment that during the lockdown. I attempted to translate the emotion of being deconstructed by social structures, to visual elements, mainly on creating virtual environments through 3D programme. It did not fully succeed in transforming personal emotions to rational film structures, especially how the elements interact with each other and produce context. Therefore, there are a few points I want to address regarding the images I make: to figure out the conflicts of identity in specific times and specific situations; to make clearer my own position in this context.

The outcome of the further experiments will involve certain adjustments and achievements: I want the work to express these uncertain, paradoxical situations. This requires a re-assessment of the elements in my work in order to communicate more directly.

Because of my educational and cultural background. I barely feel a sense of belonging. So, these questions are amplified in Covid times, and the large themes of the current day appear superficial.

I would like to go deeper and invite people to slow down and not so easily come to judgment. I would like to use the film I have been working on as an experimental bed. I would like to let people reconsider the relation between human and technologies.

## Chapter one

For past nine years, I have been trying to figure out what is my position in art-related world. Throughout the time of education in design and art, I must say that it is way much more complicated than I could ever imagine, not only because that the depth of the art improvises more questions than solutions, but also lots of paradox comes with critical thinking.

My first bachelor was in Visual Communication Design in China. It was mainly focused on how to create dynamics, to give audiences a better understanding of imagery information. The relation between dots, line, and plane becomes the most important elements for me to interpret with motion graphics. I was fascinated by the work from Kandinsky, and also the philosophy underlining Cubism at that moment. I attempted to create a context illustrating that information in our society are utilised and always exists in three-dimensional space, by combining the elements that I inspired from Kandinsky. In truth, I recognised the limitation of motion graphics, which are unable to effectively constructs a three-dimensional atmosphere. At least I was unable to achieve that. However, based on those experiments, I started to show more interests on dynamics in space. Here comes with my second bachelor in Netherlands, which was Time Based Design. It used to be called Scenography, and changed when I stepped into this Art academy. During my study there, everything related to contemporary theatre art provided the basis for our experiments. This includes performance, sound, video, installation, lighting and how they complement with each other. At first, I experienced more with performance in different locations and situations, sometimes in traditional theatre with sound and lights, sometimes in a more “conceptual” theatre (for example, improvisations in garage that has no professional sets). Later I discovered that the interaction between audio and visual in space (in theatre or any kind of closed space) plays a crucial impact in understanding the coherence of dynamics playing in a given space. In the meantime, I was into the existentialist theory of Jean-Paul Sartre, alongside the absurdism of Samuel Beckett. The philosophy from Sartre and the way how Beckett experienced performance gave my lots of inspiration during the time when I am part of any kind of theatre play. “Time” in this contest become to a core value to represent the narrative, the emotion, the sound, the moving bodies. I noticed the performing of time in the time of my theatre study not only creates physically boundary (The length of performing), but also brings infinite possibilities( In the concept wise, like John cage 4’33).

It bought up two major questions:

- 1) What is time?
- 2) How to think of conceptual time in physical time?

The second is when we admit physical reality has limitations to represent our consciousness, what is the extension of our physical body? To give myself better configuration of dynamics in this medium, I started to seriously work on some collaborative projects. My bachelor graduation project, *Enter the Void*, is a good example to illustrate the outcome of interpretation. It has two modes of presentation: as a live performance and in the cinema. If it’s in the cinema, you can see it as five minute animation. If it’s in theatre, it’s an interactive video installation. The storytelling is about me, reflecting the relation between me and society, while talking with my second character that is completely doesn’t fit in the society. The inspiration source is from philosopher Jacques Derrida's and artist Peter Eisenman. The whole ideology

was based on the connection between deconstruction and construction, how it's reflected on my lived experience and the way of perceiving the culture difference. The element of animation that I generalise are broken faces, concrete construction, falling man, rusted metal, marble, a headless walking man... When they come together, it gives you a feeling of two different worlds: on the upper world has face with emotions, lower world only exists numb movement with emotionless characters. You can link with Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927).

With the music, it gives you the absurd feeling of how humanity and society has been shaped. At that moment, I had paradoxical feelings of what is my way of understanding the world, I do believe that there are more detentions and more perspectives to feel, to understand, to communicate. But the fact is my world is surrounded with full of those propaganda and dogma, which gives me paradoxical feelings of how I can balance myself in this metaphysical world and how I can communicate with inner time and physical time. This project is not a conclusion of my final research, it is only an infinite quest I left to myself. The more practical experiments on theories of "conceptual time" and "unlimited body", The more confusions came up. I noticed that the outcome of art practice mostly become a space where you leave your emotions or questions. Besides that, deconstructing already-existed common sense or principles become part of my research. It seems like I am trying to create a virtual space where I could communicate without bias. But I still need to develop my ability of creating a "space", and also illustrate clearly what's inside of this space.

Then I stepped into master study and started to figure out more in-depth solutions. From how I mentally and physically connect to myself with reality through the master study. I have to say that it was really unstable and chaotic. This was mainly because of the unfamiliar circumstances in the art education system, and also widespread manipulated information from mass media. However, this chaos and uncertainty presents the possibility to be more conscious about what is my sensibility on artistic language and how can I improve my research ability with different materials.

The first-year of my master study can be divided into three different time periods: a) warming up the master programme through my own practice; b) self-reflection on the medium (this starts with the project I did for the EYE Museum project); c) reconsidering the approach that transformed abstractions to metaphorical objects (this starts with the "Lock down" time).

In the beginning of the first year, there were two approaches that I mainly concentrate on: Combining school practice, (such as building an analogue camera, making a photo-book, participating in the EYE film project, writing an artist's statement...), with my own research method; discovering more layers of "perspective" from the moving images. Those two disciplines intertwined with each other, constructing more paradoxes and confusion during the time of experiencing. This is because my bachelor study was theatre-based art, that was time when we just had a first glimpse of what art is, and how to connect it with my own language. During my bachelor study, we spent most of time broadly researching on what are the dynamic in space, which involves the element such as lights, sound, installation, choreography... At that time, I was interested in the constant improvisation on relation between video installation and choreography. [cite the work and give a description (what How why)] My concept was that my consciousness does not effectively interact with body because of the limitations from its own structure, psychedelic materials are able to extend the meaning of physical structures to infinity on this idea, I attempted to define what is my transformation of psychedelic materials: it has character that is on the edge of real and surreal, it is unexplainable but you feel so familiar with. I came up with a solution of bringing transformations of a real situation into digital three dimensions, this can be profound and self-representational.

This is why I decided work on computer generated images.

The fact is that I only witnessed a tiny corner of the computer-generated images, and also worked on the first layer of the relation between emotions, desire, the communication, and narrative through the CGI moving images. Somehow the relation between these elements are unstable and venerable, especially happened on the process where I articulate my emotions to the concrete conclusions. It is true that the more I discover on techniques, the less communication on the narrative in motion's perspective. On the other hand, I had more discussions with tutors on my approach of adding up audio to moving images, that caused a number of misunderstandings: the disconnection between melodies and visual storytelling; emotions from the rhythm are too dominant; Is it a music video? or all those confusions on how do I see CGI moving images as my visual communication bloomed up through the process of working on "EYE" museum project: "Louder Louder", which is a 3 minutes 8 seconds short experimental CGI film.

[title] was a collaborative piece that I work with my band [Sunmass] on the audio part. There is no concrete story in this animation, all elements inside work for two parallel worlds: one is called *Already Gone*, which contains four gigantic human sculptures, Asian style rocks, infinite road, small scale headless people walking. Another one is *Going On*, which represents by hundreds of weird bodies moving in different transparent boxes. In the world of "already gone", four human sculptures have different gestures. Based on camera perspective: The gesture from the first sculpture is kneeling on the ground with its head down; The second sculpture spreads its legs and hold its head; The Third one opens its leg and arms; The fourth one stands 30 degrees and holds hand behind the back. Those four sculptures are made by fragmental rocks that connected by wireframes. Beside that, they are all standing above the path in this cubical space. In the same time, a tiny white human sculpture without heads walk slowly on the path.

The world of *Going On* has infinite black space, irregular broken wireframes stays in the transparent boxes, bunch of figures that has characters of polished marble skin, losing neck and head. They are manipulated by wires that is connected with the world of "already gone". Horizontally you see those figures moving in an over-exaggerated way inside of transparent glass boxes. I started with visualising my emotions based on the topic of Cloud Cuckoo Land. At that moment, a lot of fragmental images came out of my mind. They are not solid, and from all kinds of resource. it could be a scene from the Film *Blade Runner 2048*, or from neo-psychedelic punk music.... I recorded it and put it together, trying to see what is the outline of this group of mess.

After these constructing and deconstructing processes, I decided to not tell a concrete story, at least not give the audience a clear storyline. Instead, I chose to create "A" space by using CGI techniques and surrounding sound that triggers you to experience what I want to tell. During the time I was researching what emotions are when realities become unreal because situations are endlessly shifting. This project became more and more irrational.

*Louder Louder* for me means a struggle, struggling about what my position in those two conflicted realities is. It is a confusion, or a hesitation of me wanting to fit into this physical world, but I also want to escape from it. What is the reality I am facing? Massive groups of people and movements, very strong criteria and causation, unescapable perception management from social media, also dogmas. Especially when I move to the big city, everything become so vivid and so absurd.

This is what I visualised in the world "going on". At the same time, I do realise that the reality that I am dreaming of only exist when I deny or refuse to accept most standards from the real society. Then the question is how can I balance myself, how do I find an approach to solve it? This paradoxical feeling drives me to create a visual language, telling the public what I am experiencing. It is really complicated which takes all of your strength. This is also why *Louder Louder* does not have a narrative: It's a context for bring all those questions. *Louder Louder* was a piece where I seriously started to think of why those

CGI elements from animation insufficiently represent my feeling of being an outsider. What caused the miscommunication? Do I really make myself clear what the symbols represented?

With those questions, I started to experience more visual storytelling that had deeper connections. Firstly, I would like to figure it out what are those abstractions, from my desire? From my perception?

Or from my perspective? Then I dive in the transformation process from abstractions to metaphorical objects in different platforms. Based on this method, I accomplished two short animations (“Inside out” “over-dued apple pie cookie”) and one live performance (*Inside Out* in Grand theatre, Groningen) during the Covid lockdown of 2020. Through those practices, I started to be more aware that visual elements has multiple layers that illustrates the dynamic of abstraction. If the first layer is its individual characters like colour, shape, material, composition. The next layer could be interaction or association in different perspectives within circumstances. Furthermore, constructing how they performed in space gives me more understanding of what this situations tell me, is it clear? Do I still confuse?. It was very profound to practice this method, that gives me a sense of understanding on how do I communicate with myself through my visual languages. This also encourages me to start with the next project: *Unframed*.