



CAVE PLAY
project proposal

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Lens Based Media

INTRO

When I would live in Amsterdam-Noord, I was but a stone-throw away from a deserted park. Especially in the evenings it would be a desolate and sometimes even dangerous place, due to the lack of lighting and incidents that would happen there. I found myself drawn to that place at night. On nights where I would feel sad, or bored, or excited I would go for a walk into that park and it's darkness. A feeling would take a hold of me combining exhilaration and fear. I could not see much. Nor could others if I were happen to walk there. But the idea of encountering someone in the dark appealed to me. The potential of me becoming a victim or perpetrator excited me, which of the two roles I would take on there mattered little for me.

My graduation project derives from this particular sensation. Later on I stumbled on the word *L'appel du vide* -- the ideosyncratic urge to jump when standing near a ledge or precipice. A feeling a feel often, not only in regards to heights, but also with people. Not shouting in theaters. Not kicking pregnant women in the stomach. Not jumping in front of the passing train. I don't believe I am in anyway psychologically impaired, but still consider these ideas.

In our current society, and the cultural climate in particular, all actions, ideas, effort and thought is put into eliminating suffering, preventing destruction and prohibiting the ideosyncratic. Think of relational-aesthetics or cancel-culture. But with this project I try to intend to reclaim some agency in regards to the things we want that might not be productive or healing. Think for example of Jungian idea of incorporating the shadow into ones life -- admitting and dealing with the darker, less welcoming thoughts one might have, and instead of combating them - finding a place for them in your day to day life.

With this project I intend to explore that and hopefully kickstart a research that stretches far beyond the borders of this particular project. I hope I and others will recognize themselves in these complicated moments where the individual chooses for themselves, regardless of its effect on themselves or others.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO MAKE

Cave Play is a short fiction film of 22 minutes.

Since I have finally settled into my position within a larger, cultural climate, I now feel at home where am I : making fiction films. A short fiction film will therefore be the outcome of my final project at the Piet Zwart Instituut.

I intend for my film to be presented on international film-festivals and streaming services. It will function as a means of presenting myself to a wider audience and facilitate a more friendly and trust-oriented relationship with film-funding bodies in the Netherlands and abroad.

The short film is about the ideosyncracies of desire. It furthermore attempts to explore issues regarding performativity and the relation between seeing and being seen.

Hamara, the protagonist, is in the process of synchronisation with her dark desires after she has left everything she had behind her. Her relationship, her previous work, her hometown. Now, in this unknown place, she develops a strange urge to disappear. Can she act on it?

The film follows the woman as she establishes a friendship. But how genuine is this? Is she playing a role? These should be questions that are conjured up by watching the film and something I find myself returning to again and again when making work.

I will work on this film with a film-crew and will challenge myself to exploit that what I do well but work on what comes less natural. Though subtextual and visual worldbuilding is something I feel comes quite natural to me, I want to focus more on storytelling from an emotional and sensory perspective. How to let the audience really feel and experience that was it told. During my stay in Peru this summer, where I partook in a film-lab with Apichatpong Weerasethakul, I suspect some of these holes in my practice as director could be supplemented by the things I've learned there.

The outcome will be a film that hopefully manages to merge the ideosyncratic and particular, with the general and the relatable.



S T O R Y

logline:

Hamara, an imaginative directing assistant in her forties, struggles to regain her balance when she gets the inexplicable urge to simply disappear. Can her new friend and actress Francys act as an anchor or still be a spectator for Hamara's big disappearing act?

synopsis:

The slightly troubled but wildly imaginative Hamara has moved to the other side of the country to escape her problems. She currently stays in the vacant house of a distant friend. During a particularly traumatic walk in the area, she discovers a long forgotten cave and has, as of late, grown increasingly obsessed with it. Moreover, something has taken hold of her. The need to disappear into the impenetrable darkness of the cave.

In a local theater, where Hamara works temporarily as a director's assistant, she meets Francys, the charismatic leading lady of the ensemble. The somewhat standoffish Hamara is immediately fascinated by Francys' presence.

During an intriguing audio-guide about burial-rites at the local museum, Hamara gets the opportunity to turn her fascination into action. She encounters Francys again and approaches her. They get to know each other after a long walk and end the night in a booze-fueled karaoke dance battle bender. Little by little, a bond develops between the two. Their shared affinity for creativity, be it theater, music or art, which brings them closer together.

Could this burgeoning friendship with Francys, be the antidote to Hamara's idiosyncratic need to disappear? During the blossoming friendship, Hamara seems to realize something. Like the actors she sees on stage at work, she must be 'truly seen' before she can complete her mission to disappear completely.

The relationship of the two women oscillates between that of two new friends and an actor/audience relationship. Who performs for whom? Why does Hamara experience such a deep longing to disappear, when her almost childlike and chaotic creativeness- could easily lift her out of her supposed depressed state? After a heart to heart at Hamara's place, and a final impromptu play at the station.

Hamara finally disappears, without spectacle. An understated last few steps into the darkness, until she is completely gone. What remains is Francys, who watches a group of young people at the karaoke bar, where they once sang a drunken song. She watches with a faint smile in, taking in her new roles as sometimes-voyeur, as she enjoys new kids dancing, in remembrance.

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO MAKE IT?

The first three days of shooting have already taken in place in the beginning of 2022. Some of the material can be seen throughout the proposal. This means that the 'conventional' infrastructure of making a short film is already in place. The film is funded by Prins Bernhard Cultuur Fund, AFK and Limburg Film Fund. Production is done by production company DOXY/FIXY.

COVID and other unforeseen circumstances has brought production to a halt, but with the support of the Limburg Film Fund I am able to finish it. In the mean time I have been able to explore and try out more which in turn has informed my methodology as a film-maker. The pause has for example given me the opportunity to reassess what I wrote and shot, reflect on the material and I am now able to adjust where necessary. The original script was, as per my opinion now, oversaturated with subtext which prevented the viewer to invest in the story and the character. That in combination with quite a monolithic type of cinematography (which was developed to isolate the character, and bring a sense of bewilderment and estrangement the environment she places herself in) turned out to be too effective, as to make it hard to access

the story and character all together. In my latest short THE CRISISISTS I tried out a cinematographic approach that focussed more on long close takes that really helped with the emotional attachment to the protagonist. I intend to use some of these strategies in the following days to counteract some of the coldness that has been shot so-far. I've also learned that if the 'coldness' is diegetically (within the logic of the world of the film) motivated, it becomes a vehicle of story-telling, instead of stylistic gesture. So to show the character upset -- only to show her later cold and standoffish informs us of her state of mind.

Now the script has taken on a more solid form I am ready to invite others to think along. This people will consist of tutors from the academy, a script-coach from the production company, and eventually the actors themselves. Important note here is that their input should be strongly framed by me, as director, to prevent input that serves the actor more than the film. Still I would like to make use of the knowledge of the actresses as they are both highly competent and might offer new insights to the character.

I'm involving my cinematographer now on an earlier time-frame than I normally would. After having shot the videoclip NOOIT MEER SPIJT for S10 ft. Froukje with Martijn van Broekhuizen I realised the importance of communicating clearly upfront with a DP (and all the heads) about expectations and intentions. I did not have the opportunity to do that with him, and felt afterwards; unsatisfied. But if that ground is covered and we as a team are calibrated, a more creative and fruitful collaboration can occur by inviting them to think along from their expertise. This in turn might affect the writing. Sometimes we can show something as effective as telling it!

I find it important to have a culture on set where all the heads are able to offer up suggestions, lift the project up to greater heights than I could have imagined by myself. I express the vision, but they play a major, instrumental part in translating it. Listening to their expertise enriches me and the project. It is my (difficult) job however, to sift through the suggestions and find the right from the wrong ones.

Throughout the post-production I often find it useful to throw out the script. Take a little holiday and come back with a fresh pair of eyes. After writing a script you take that script as a building block to shoot. After you've shot new building blocks are acquired, that which you shoot. These, due to entropy, chaos and in the moment decisions, are different than what's in the script. So I prefer to look at the blocks I'm presented with and see what can be made out of them. With my short film THE CRISISIST'S and the material that I shot in Peru, during a film lab in the Amazon, I gave the material to the editor without a script. I gave an intention. An idea. A feeling. But from that point I believe the material should do the talking.

We will apply for separate funding for post-production, as I would like to spend more time and attention to that particular part of my process. The story telling that occurs in sound-design and grading has become recently more important in my practice. It fills the world and directs the attention as much as the camera does. These accents, the finetuning will return the film to the original tone and intention and can offer up new solutions to old problems.



exerpts of material already shot for CAVE PLAY



exerpts of material already shot for CAVE PLAY

WHAT IS YOUR TIMETABLE?

pre-production

DECEMBER

- Script sent to test-readers
- Start new decoupage with DP
- Involving Maastricht section of crew for preparation in location scouting and finding last additional local crew.
- Arrange transfer DOXY to FIXY
- Watch movie-recommendations
- Distill essence of concept to keep into mind during further development.

JANUARI

- Incorporating response from test readers + second round of writing.
- Developing decoupage with DP
- Recce's
- Re-engaging with actors

FEBRUARY

- Final incorporation of script notes - (focus on details & character idea's actors)
- Finalise directing advice
- Fully established decoupage with DP
- Contacted actors -- thorough development character

shooting

MARCH

- | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| SHOOTING | POSSIBLE | SHOOTING | POSSIBLE |
| POSSIBLE | SHOOTING | POSSIBLE | SHOOTING |

APRIL

- | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| SHOOTING | POSSIBLE | SHOOTING | POSSIBLE |
| POSSIBLE | SHOOTING | POSSIBLE | SHOOTING |

post-production

APRIL

- Applying for post-production funding Film Fund.
- Mandatory time off.

MAY

- Edit (2 to 3 weeks with couple additional call back days)

JUNE

- Sound-design (2 weeks)
- VFX (2 weeks - simultaneously)
- Music - first idea's

JULY

- Grade (4 days)
- Final music (4 days)
- ADR (2 days)
- Mix and master (2 days)

WHY DO YOU WANT TO MAKE IT?

Over the last two years my aspirations have solidified into that of becoming a fiction filmmaker. Though I have sought far and wide to find my place as a maker, I feel now finally at home within fiction film. This field comes with its own sets of challenges and opportunities, it is however now the medium I want to grow in. The result of a fiction short-film is thus the imminent end-result.

I intend to use this short film as proof of my self-sufficient status of a film maker. The ubiquitous presence of the Film Fund in nearly any Dutch film shows that they are the real gate keeper to most fiction film production in the Netherlands. I intend to use this film as an introduction from me to the fund, in the hope of establishing a relation with the fund that will enable me to make more in the future with their support.

Moreover, due to the unfinished status of the film, I think it will prove an interesting endeavour to combine that what has been shot with that what I have learned over the course of the 1.5 years I've been studying and working.

With the format of a fiction film, intend for film-festival run in mind, the reason to make CAVE PLAY has become more and more apparent the last months. My fascination of characters that synthesize with their shadow is something I find again and again in the new ideas I develop. To finally capture that in a short film would solidify that long period of fascination and research.

The film itself is an amalgamation of some of my recurring interests. The treacherous relationship between real and fake / performativity and lying is something I have worked on with FEIGNERS (Apichatpong Film Lab) and NOOIT MEER SPIJT (videoclip S10 ft. Froukje). In this film we see a lot of that, a director's assistant and an actress navigate the world through story-telling, playing, singing and pretending.

WHO CAN HELP YOU AND HOW?

Within my methodology and aspirations as filmmaker I simply never work alone. I like to see filmmaking as robbing a bank, where everyone assists in bettering the plan from their particular area of expertise. This means that when push comes to shove I often work with around 30 people on a full day on set. It is important for me to know who I need and where. And who I can invite to be involved creatively, and who is there to assist me practically.

As I've already shot some material the first days, most of the pre-production casting and crew-selection has already taken place. This crew consists of everyone one might expect on a 'film' set. DoP, focuspuller, gaffer, 1st AD, sound, make-up, runner -- everyone. Thanks to the production company DOXY/FIXY I don't have to worry about the logistics and I can focus on my job. Directing.

I intend to work with the tutors from the academy, prefer to work with shotlists, and will spend at least a month with my DP and team on this. Same intention as script. I especially hope to get a hold of the tutors with experience in fiction-film e.g. Simon, in order to talk more about directing strategies. How to get more out of a performer? After the final days of shooting have taken place, and the filmrolls have developed, this team can be gathered again to think along with edit, grade and sound design, with a possibility for ADR if I find out conversations or information is missing to make sense of what is seen and shot.

As a child of a montessorri school I find it important to see learning not as something that needs to be facilitated by others. I therefore always strive to surround myself with people I can learn from. This results into working on a broad and intensive network of colleague-friends and mentors that might aid in the development of script, this in addition to the script-coach present at the production company DOXY/FIXY.



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RELATION TO PREVIOUS PRACTICE

As mentioned before several topics and methodologies I've gathered throughout the years present themselves into the development and production of CAVE PLAY.

The idea of performativity and deception is found within the fibre of the film. An imaginative director's assistant strikes up a friendship with an actress during a particular difficult period in her life. There is dancing, singing, playing and performing within the script -- always ways to escape or transcend everyday life. Their interest and grasp on the arts is something I find myself drawn to again and again in the work that I make. I write from what I know.

Like in the CRISISIST'S where a young book binder strikes up a complicated friendship with her tutor. Together they recite poems and pretend to be wealthy British ladies. This not only establishes a particular mode of interaction between the characters (simulating perhaps a more real friendship) but it also draws our attention to the world around them that we do not get to see. The more imaginative and performative a character is, the more possibilities it gives me as director and writer to explore eccentricities and idiosyncrasies a character might have.

The shots I've shot so far are grounded in a world dominated by large open spaces, high ceilings -- they have an air of non-placeness. Something I have studied in my Bachelor studies of Fine Art and Design. I wrote my bachelor thesis on fixed liminality and the spaces it resides in, and made a large scale immersive installation inspired by these qualities. Resulting in a room reminiscent of a waiting room, storage space, dressing room and hallway in one.

This architectural affinity is seen by the portrayal in said open spaces. It also enhances a sense of alienation. Being alone and 'not in the right place'. This feeling is very dear to me as I always have felt being born in the wrong family and place. This sense of alienation and not understanding your surroundings is something also presented in my first attempt at a film called MEN DISCUSSING THEIR FEELINGS IN AN EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY WAY, where a man struggles to deal with his day to day life, unable to express any type of feeling he might experience. It can also be seen in the videoclip EEN TEKEN where the artist lies apathetically on a couch. She sings about the need for a sign or signal in her life. She laments the lacking thereof but forgets to look behind her, where a glowing lamp clearly tries to tell her something.

REFERENCES & BIBLIOGRAPHY

annotated bibliography

Paglia, Camille - 'Provocations'

A manifest to fearless inquiry into whatever. Breaking open age-old taboos and lifting her status up as a provocateur pur sang.

Nelson, Maggie - 'The Art of Cruelty'

A compendium of thoughts, works and texts on cruelty. Asks questions if image-making of cruelty make us part of it. Not afraid to break open taboo, whilst being inquisitive and interested in not stepping over into idiot-cruelty.

Bandura, Albert - 'Moral Disengagement - How People Do Harm and Live with Themselves'

Textbook that asks the question: How do otherwise considerate human beings do cruel things and still live in peace with themselves?

Sontag, Susan - 'Regarding the Pain of Others'

A series of analysis of how to picture suffering.

Nietsche, Friedrich - 'Beyond Good and Evil'

Bernel, Albert - 'Artoud's the Theater of Cruelty'

works / inspiration

Wolfson, Jordan

Von Trier, Lars

Haneke, Michael

Cooper, Dennis - 'The Marbled Swarm'

A fiction book about high art, old money and the unspeakable system of coercion and perversion. Dennis Cooper as a figure is interesting as one who has completely synthesised his dark sides in his work.

Queen for a Day (tv show)

American radio and TV show where contestants, women, were asked about the recent financial and emotional hard times they had been through. What does the participant need most. Therapeutic equipment for their chronically illy child, or a hearing aid? The winning contestant was selected by an applause metre. The gameshow makes suffering and sadness the goal and the prize.

Oppenheimer, Joshua - 'The Act of Killing'

Documentary film about individuals that reenact the mass killings of certain war criminals that live out their lives in current Indonesia.

Dahl, Roald - 'Cruelty'

A collection of short stories exploring the notion of cruelty and why it is we make others suffer'



E A R L I E R
WORK

[NOOIT MEER SPIJT](#)

Videoclip
Director / writer

[FEIGNERS](#)

Impression shots (possible short film)
Director / writer / cameraman

[THE CRISISIST'S](#)

First edit for short film
Director / writer

[ZONDER GEZICHT](#)

Videoclip
Director / writer

[EEN TEKEN](#)

Videoclip
Director / writer

[NIETS TUSSEN](#)

Videoclip
Director / writer

[MEN DISCUSSING THEIR FEELINGS IN AN EMOTIONALLY
HEALTHY WAY](#)

Short film
Director / writer