

TEXT ON PRACTICE

During my time at the Lens Based Media course I began several projects from which one prominent work emerged that I will use as a thread to shape this text.

I started out with the plan to make a film that evolved around a digitally animated steamtrain.

After a sincere attempt to connect with this idea (drawing a storyboard, writing out a script, taking a trip on a steamtrain) I realized it did not really work for me.

I tried to like the train trip for the sake of the film, but I felt nauseous and bored. As I was sitting there, in the midst of the rhythmic rumbling sounds and children screaming with excitement, I thought about the beginning of 'Dead Man', where Jarmusch cuts between scenes where the character is sitting on the train by fading to black, implying that the time that has passed was too boring to show. It reminded me of how a (steam)train is embedded with symbolic weight and cinematic associations already.

4.

0. we follow the train, a rhythm and sense of security is established. motion/sound/image are in sync and there is sound that seems to be coming from within the train.

1. the train accelerates and we lose connection, [train movement is out of sync with camera through frame rate, so that we also *feel* like we're losing the connection], distance increases.

2. the train seems to disappear around a corner, and because it's the only source of light, the darkness around us increases and the landscape turns into a void.

3. the train comes to a sudden stop - right before it was going to be dark. this is when we realize that the train is aware of our presence and responds to us.

[.....]

4. conductor or [random] person [or entity] looks at "us". "we" are in fact the only source of light

5. The camera was the only source all along.



possibly footage
movement of train
mothers talking
lovingly to their children
accelerating sound
how the recurring
passengers become
characters in the
video
unintentionally

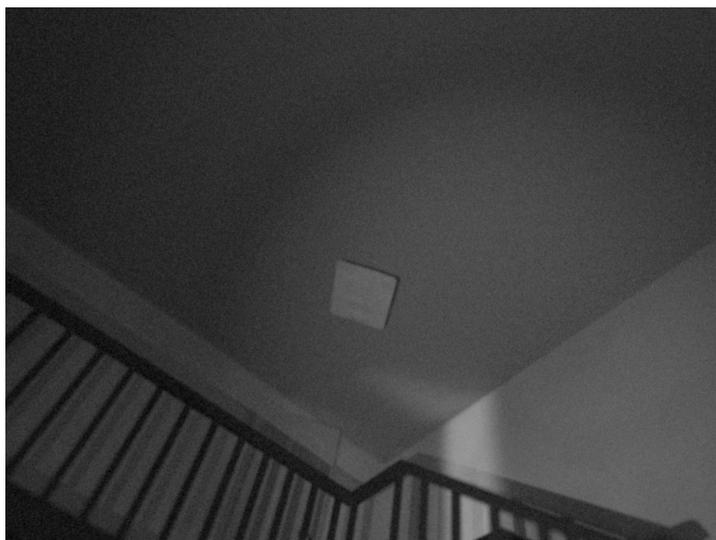
1 camera constraint
to cube (train)
but doesn't so it
"follow" the cube
but the trails
instead

..which can be interesting in itself, but it was very different from the mundane objects that I depicted in the past - lamps, beds, chairs and so on. These are not intrinsically meaningful, so I am relying on the treatment of them to be.

Welcoming back my previous ways of working, I went through some old works. I came across an animation I casually had been working on over the summer, and I thought it would be interesting to expand on this for the Eye project. That resulted in a short animated film:

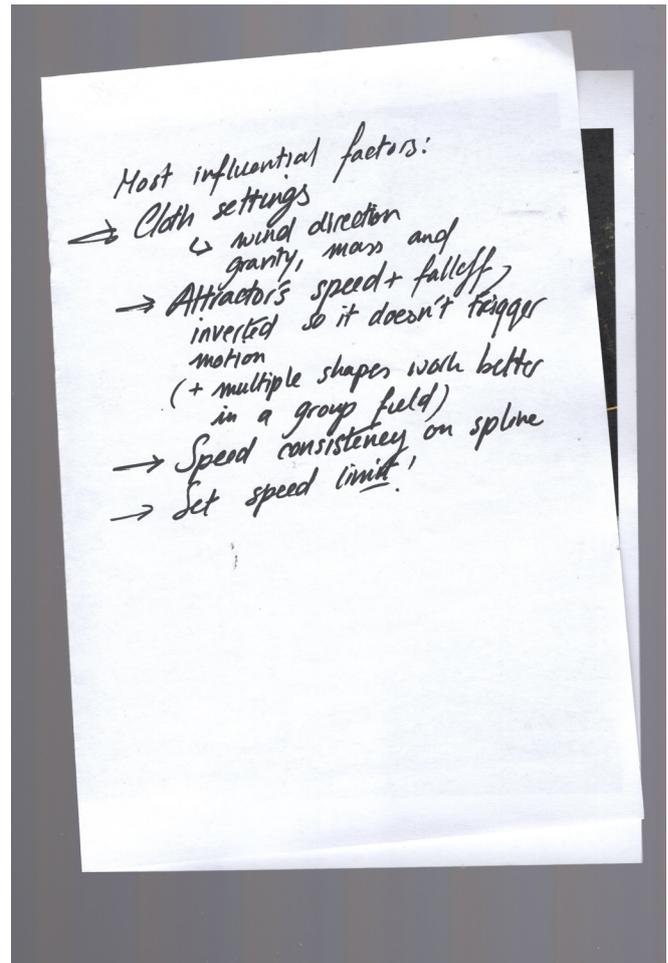
‘a nightpiece for those who feel or felt like they were falling’

The three and a half minute film shows three iterations of the same fall of an undefined object (that moves like a cloth, or a piece of paper), and each iteration differs from the last in its pace and sound. It is shot on a stairwell and the object falls into the void underneath. There is a room at the top of the stairs with its door ajar, from which come the sounds of footsteps, kitchen-rumbling and the playing of a piano; revealing a human presence that we don't get to see.



I started by slowly and persistently building the room in the 3d software. In this stage, to keep that door open and to position the light so that it'll cast a shadow on the wall, are deliberate choices that serve as harbingers of the narrative that is about to unfold. In that way I am already thinking about future steps I might make, to set the stage for what might happen.

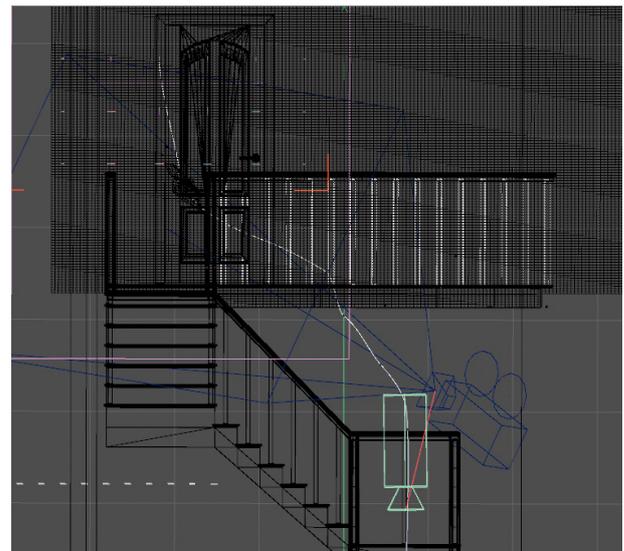
I carefully wrote down all the settings that regard the falling motion, and then again when I changed something, to accumulate information that would help me achieve the movement that I want. I'm too impatient to watch tutorials or to learn something beforehand to execute it later, so I prefer to figure it out by seeing what's happening on the screen in the moment. So, the notes don't make a lot of sense anymore after the animation process has ended.



The repetitive structure of this specific work is something that was partly motivated by practical reasons: with the limited time frame in mind, it was faster to just alter existing settings and render it again, rather than to produce a three minute animation.

It fascinates me that the efficient choices I make in order to work with the restrictions of the software, eventually become artistic choices that shape how the final version of the film looks and feels.

It reminds me of how people are shaped by their surroundings too, that we can't always control: particularly our childhood and the houses we grew up in.



Last year, I did an exhibition and the curator wanted to write something. We corresponded over email and from these emails he extracted information from which he wrote a short text. For some reason I find it confronting to see someone else's interpretation of my work in text, not good nor bad, more: Oh, I guess that's what I make then. Writing this Text on Practice, I thought I'd revisit the text and found parts of it still resonated with me:

“By approaching Langeveld's work from the concept of loneliness as an existential problem, it reveals how a person is a “castaway”. A castaway into existence. One can be very happy with one's life and super enjoy it, but it also remains something that happens to you and that was fundamentally not your own choice. (...) This also makes the link to horror aesthetics clear: it is about that body, which is constantly in danger of being destroyed in all possible and yet unimaginable ways. The finite, and therefore: fragile nature of one's own body is always anticipated from a certain age forward: suspense. Langeveld wants the positive countermovement, an affirmation of existence, to light up amidst the darkness of fear. (...) The rhythmic patterns in Langeveld's work bring order to the chaotic darkness of the anxiety she addresses.”

At the start of this course, I was reading *The Body Keeps the Score*, which is a renowned book on trauma and focuses on childhood trauma. I couldn't help but draw parallels with the way Van der Kolk describes some of the ways trauma can be treated and the way I see my work. I was glad to, honestly. There is a chapter about how a recurring yoga practice can be effective in teaching the body that certain poses may be challenging, even uncomfortable, but there's always the option to 1) breathe through it or 2) get out of the position. Anyway, the combination of the words that grabbed my attention were: “*it [a specific sequence of positions] creates a rhythm between tension and relaxation*”.

Throughout my practice I've been interested in a way to create rhythm that can provide a meditative state that the spectator can relish in (*relaxation*), while at the same time feeling a bit uncanny (*tension*).

A while ago I made an installation called ‘There's Something Warm in Everything’, which I think shows how I use this “prompt” of relaxation and tension in a spatial context. I used an Arduino to synchronise the intensity of a lamp to the sound of my breath.

With every inhale,

1...2...3...4,

the light would gradually come alive,

with every exhale,

1...2...3...4...5...6...7,

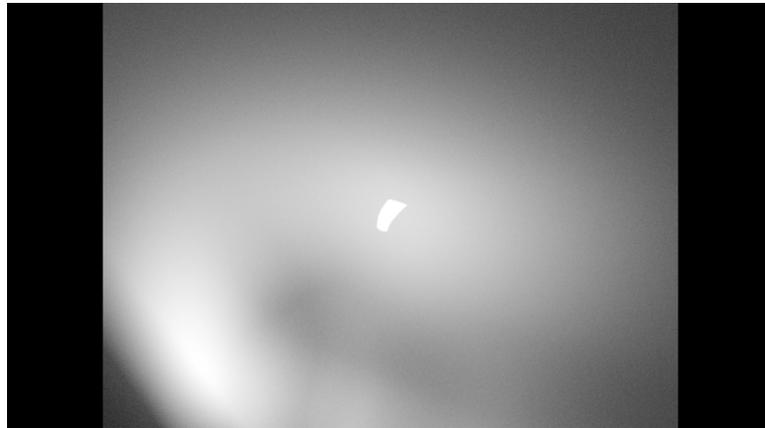
it would slowly die.

The room would be completely dark inbetween the inhale and the exhale, aside from any light coming from the video projections, so that you would have to time your steps according to this pattern in order not to fall.

Going back to the Nightpiece: I use Nocturne Op. 15 No. 2 in F-Sharp Major by Chopin. It starts playing from the room with the open door, but comes along with us as we traverse through different 'dimensions'. I tried to achieve this illusion by animating the reverb and position of the sound according to the image/camera movement, and the logics of the architectural layout.

Whenever the F-sharp note is being played, the white fills up the screen (allowing for that screen to become an object for a bit) before the camera pulls back and the nothingness is revealed as another shape, and the camera pans to the right to return to the first position on the staircase.

Only in the last iteration, when we go up the stairs, is there the relief: it wasn't some grand explosion somewhere, it was just the sound of a door falling shut, but we couldn't see that because we were following the falling object.



And now that the door is closed, where to go from here?

One of the first ideas I had was that I would like to learn the specific piece of Chopin that I use in the video. I have no prior experience with playing the piano, or any musical instrument, but it has always been something that interests me as a medium to integrate in my practice. So I found a space that has a piano where I've been practicing for the past month.

In the case of 'nightpiece', I want this new skill to open up ways to approach the work from different angles, beyond the screen. For example, I can play along while its screening in an installation setting. Maybe from the other room?

Eventually, I am thinking in the direction of a field-recording based approach to the piano, where the performative, experimental aspect is more important than playing a preconceived set of notes.

While studying Chopin, I stumbled upon a video with Seymour Bernstein, a pianist. In it, he talks about the piano in a way that resonated with me very much:

"Unfortunately, every note on the piano dies. So if I press this key, it's going to die. Can I make this note louder? I can coerce.. It is never going to change. Once the hammer is propelled to the string, it bounces back, and our responsibility ends."

References

Dead Man (1995). Jim Jarmusch. Miramax Films.
exhibition text: five inbetween days (2023), Ton Kruse, Room for the Study of Loneliness
The Body Keeps the Score (2014). Bessel van der Kolk. Viking Press.
Seymour Bernstein teaches Chopin's Prelude in E Minor,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRLBBJLX-dQ>

