TEXT ON PRACTICE

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In the past months, my research consisted mostly in undertaking a long-term project whose starting point was my interest towards North Sentinel - an island in the Indian Ocean whose inhabitants have been refusing contact with outsiders since the 18th century.

This has made them "the most isolated tribe in the world". Almost nothing is known and very few images of the island and the inhabitants exist.

As a visual artist my interest was never to approach the island in an anthropological-ethnographic way, but rather its compelling status as a place/an object whose images are (almost) impossible to make.

I initially intuitively intended to retrieve all the existing images of the island, to get hold of it by gathering all of its existing representations, A paradoxical attempt - I am fascinated by the lack of images of this place, yet I strive I to see as much as I can of it. From the most straightforward, institutional sources of imagery - colonial maps from the 15th century onwards; aerial shots scattered on the internet; Google Earth Pro's imagery; photographs/footage from scientific expeditions to the island in the late XX century.

Other types of imagery then started to emerge - more informal, less institutional. Amateur videos taken by passenger planes flying over the island, screen recordings of video games in which the island is featured; articles about the "most mysterious, impossible, most dangerous" place in the world - paired with images of wrong islands, Reddit conspirations, a fictional adventure/horror ebook , a "danger tourist" guy tweeting his plans to visit it (…).

The island and the widespread attempt at making images of it became catalysts to speculate about bigger topics that the island alone can't answer but only hint at. I clearly realized that the point of this research is image-making in its essence - human need of/attempt at knowing the unknown, making sense of the world by making images of it.

I then started to follow a more open associative method, including images/objects that do not necessarily relate directly to the island, but resonate with it - a miscellany of audio-visual material metaphorically addressing and unfolding the questions that NS island arises. For instance, paintings by Rothko, Gauguin or Friedrich, a coffee drop on my studio desk…

This project has proven to be a fertile field, definitely worth digging deeper in. However, I feel that to do so effectively I have to properly organize all the materials that it has produced so far and that will produce in the future, to make sense of their complexity. I therefore intend to spend some time building an archive with a non-linear structure, in which each fragment is at the same time clearly classified on its own and multiply meaningfully interconnected with the others.

I feel I also need to start widening/deepening my theoretical research in regards to the topics that the project is addressing - read more, build a solid network of references.

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The Eye Research Lab assignment was an occasion for me to tinker with some of the materials and ideas I had been investigating in this research, trying to make a self-standing piece out of them.

"1 or 2 images (some notes on)" is a 4-minute essayistic/speculative comparison between two of the more outstanding - visually and conceptually - images that I encountered in this research: a painting by Mark

Rothko and Google Earth's imagery around North Sentinel. One seemingly fully realistic, transparent, the other fully abstract and opaque; one made anonymously/automatically by Google satellites, the other made by the hands-eyes of one of the most famous painter of the XX century. Both images have a blue dominant color and feature edges as key elements in their compositions. The piece is built with and around these two images, and aims at presenting/exposing both their objective differences - in terms of media specificity - and, speculatively, their affinity.

I set up a relatively simple set of elements - the two images, unframed; a staged version of them - that I designed/built/filmed in the studio; a text/script, that I recursively re-edited throughout the whole process; a layered soundscape made of oceanic and technical sounds; a blue frame used as a flickering intercut - and repeatedly re-arranged their order and relations. I ended up making five subsequent versions of the piece. Similar in content, yet very different in terms of form and overall structure.
This work was an effective playground - a serious one, though - to try and find my way/voice/stance as a moving image artist and to pinpoint some of the subjects around which my practice gravitates. However, I feel I only partially achieved this intention, and I therefore intend to work more on it, pushing it forward along the lines that the later versions of the piece set up.

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I feel that in the past few months I came to realize clearly some staple points in my work as an artist, that come to me intuitively and that I would like to embrace and use more intentionally:

   - a conceptual/minimalist approach - in reference to conceptual/minimal art movements of the XX century, which I have always been fascinated by and looked up to. I want to make this tradition and its devices mine, research about it, understand their weapons.

   - I make large use of image-collecting/appropriating/hoarding tools - screenshots, download, rip-offs, copy/cut-and-paste-s

   - I write in a short/elliptic/fragmented/cumulative as well as scattered/spatialised/not-so-linear form.

   - my work - be it moving images, writing, thinking - is made of/in/with fragments and layers, that I draw together and costantly re-edit

   - I am drawn to the exploration of edges, thresholds, interfaces, between worlds, realms, ways of being/existing, technology-ies; my gaze naturally lingers on these places of clash, of friction, of shifting, of contamination, of emergence, of creation.

   - I am interested in text as a visual element - that makes sense also - primarily, maybe? - visually - this is again connected to conceptual art tradition.

   - my work shows an underlying, recurrent concern with some general topics - that I came to recognize as the thematic core of my practice. Image-making, knowledge, desire/fear, sublime, unknown, visibility-invisibility, (re)mediation, technology/the technical, production/circulation/ ownership of images, space/place, architecture(s) - and their complex, mutual implications.

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On the side of my main research work, I have been collecting - in the form of scattered textual/visual fragments on notebooks, hard drives, wiki pages - hints for possible projects to develop in the future. Old ideas, new intuitions. They hardly connect together but I feel they all tangentially address intersecting topics. I consider them as short(er)-term projects to keep myself and my practice going and counterbalance the slowness of the more research-heavy part. Serious playgrounds for languages, devices, techniques, skills - but whose ground is soft enough to allow myself to fall and fail totally. Some of them will be partially developed, some finished, some just forgotten.

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I have also been collecting inputs about things that I would like to try out as possibly valuable additions to my practice. These stem both from needs encountered in my self-directed research and from activities at school. Some of them are Touchdesigner, After Effects and 16mm-film dark room experiments.
Very different but in the end all additional tools for image-making.
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I have also been reconsidering my previous work - a medium-length, Youtube-found-footage based, speculative film-essay titled *Dubai Dispositif*. The concept is strong, but the approach I had in making it is not effective. I would like to go back to it and re-edit it, starting by rewriting the script, and then going back to the images. Getting rid of the redundant parts will probably make it way shorter.

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- I feel that I self-impose too many restrictions and high standards and I get often frustrated by not being able to keep up. I lose myself in overthinking and want to be always coherent. I should allow myself to act more freely. Which doesn't mean making things carelessly, just letting go of self-sabotaging and trusting the process more.

- I strive to be fully understood in my intellectual meanderings, but I am not yet confident enough in images alone to do so. I need and want to work more visually, to convey my intentions-thoughts-stances through images rather than through words.

- I want to think myself more as a moving-image/video/media artist rather than filmmaker. It might be just a matter of words, but I feel it allows a possibly more open, free-form, flexible approach, which is what I feel my practice should aim at.

- I don't want to stick too strictly with the plans that i started this master program with - found-footage-based, essayistic/speculative filmmaking, the NS project. I want to take it as a time-space-facilities window to explore in multiple directions.

- I find it frustrating that my work only exists on my computer, in my studio. How can I bring it outside of this small, introverted, self-feeding bubble? In the real world?

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