

# Graduation proposal

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## **What**

My objective this year is to make a short film. A short film with one or a few actors. The content will concern alienation of an adolescent in the city of Rotterdam.

## **Working methodology**

To gain a better insight in my own motivations, I started to analyse my own work. After analysing a selection of 127 of my own photos I found the following facets as a lead pattern in my work:

Depersonalisation:

In the majority of the photos which entail people, the people are depersonalised. In most photos the people in the photo are framed in such a way that they are singled out from their environment, which makes the subject look alienated. Another important aspect is that, for the viewer, there is almost no facial recognition possible with the people in the photos. I distinguish three forms where there is hardly any facial recognition possible at all; the people in the photos stand with their back towards the lens, they are too far away from the lens for the viewer to see their faces or their faces are out of focus. This creates an image which feels more like a reference of a human being than as a portrait of a person.

Because of this depersonalised facet, the people photographed, become unreachable. The photographer, me, can only observe them from a distance, but is not able to make contact with them.

There are situations when there are two people singled out of their environment. Although it is clear that they have a relationship and therefore appear less alienated than a single person singled out does, they still appear as depersonalised figures. In the 127 photos, six obvious couples are to be distinguished. In the six photos the viewer sees four of the couples on the back (Image 1-4), one couple on the side (Image 5) and one couple in front (Image 6). Even in the photo of the couple seen from front, the viewer cannot see their faces. This is because the sun behind the duo casts a shadow over the identity of the persons photographed. The role of light and the position of the source of light is important in all my photographs. In five out of six couple photos, the source of light is behind the couples and in the one where there is also a source of light between the couple and the lens, the source of light behind the couple is the most important for the photo. Light travelling to the lens of my camera is thus interrupted by depersonalised couples. Even if they form a clear entity together, the light creates impersonal shadows out of them.

The role of light:

I am enormously interested in the journey of light from its source towards my lens. When there is no strong source of light, say for instance on a cloudy day, I hardly make any photographs at all. When there is a strong source of light I nearly always shoot directly towards the source of light. However there always has to be something breaking the journey of the light towards my lens, because the objects (a person or a tree) that break the journey of the light make the journey worthwhile. The light behind the object creates a stage for the object, but the object also creates a stage for the light. This is evident with people photographed on the back. Because the source of light is almost always behind the people photographed, the people photographed on the back immediately obtain an aura of self-determinism. They look like people who choose their own path with confidence. It is as if the lens serves as a guide to point into the right direction and the source of light attracts the people. The photos of people who walk towards or who look in the direction of the camera, walk or look towards an empty world. As if there is nothing behind the camera. The people seen on the back walk towards the light, towards a better future.

Objects:

Besides people being singled out in many of my photos, there is also an amount of singled out objects to be distinguished.

Most of the time, this object is a lamppost. In these photos the lens is pointed from the bottom of the lamppost upwards directly towards the light of the lamppost. In the background we see the sky or a tree around the lamppost, but we do not see other lampposts or other sources of light. This gives the objects shot a strong form of autonomy, yet simultaneously a feeling of alienation. They are strong enough to survive on their own, but they are not part of the rest of the world. When I make a photo where there is both a singled out object and a depersonalised person in the frame, the person becomes as autonomic and as alienated as the object.

The photos on the escalators are a good example of this. One is shot in the subway of NY (Image 7), the other in Utrecht Central Station (Image 8). Both photos are forthwith framed in the same way, shot from the top of the escalator the lens pointing downwards and shot from the centre which makes the space is symmetrical. The way of framing turns both spaces into a closed space, only available to the object, the person and the photographer. It is like the person is been captivated for a moment by me in that space. The one in NY, we see him on the back, the one in Utrecht we see him on front, yet we cannot see his face. They are impersonal bodies, trapped in a closed space that is just as autonomic and alienated as they are.

### The Moment:

I have a great desire to become a part of the moments I photograph. However I can only function as a distant observant, instead as a participant. I am conscious of this and therefore I hardly come close enough to capture an image of a sharp face, and if I do come close enough I make sure there is a strong source of light behind the person which makes his/her face ambiguous. The distance of the photographer with the subject enables the viewer to observe the moment of someone else without intruding. That is why in so many photos people are seen on the back; the photographer can only capture their moment, walk behind them in their road towards the future and can never become an active participant. The light behind the people creates a special atmosphere around the moment, as if it amplifies the importance of the moment. The framing, the source of light all create something extra, as if the photographer is present of a turning point of his subject without interrupting.

### Conclusion:

The light that shines from the sun or lamppost can be seen as a spotlight for the people or object to make their moment seen by the world, yet the people or object are also a stage for the source of light, because they break the journey towards the lens. The use of light by me changes the person or object from an unseen person to a reference of a human being captured

in, which seems, an imported moment of their life; the light creates depersonalised figures in a phantasm environment or creates shadows in an alienated space out of them. However the role of light is ambivalent, because although light presents the people a stage to be seen by the world, light also makes them depersonalised. The photographer of these images, me, can only be a distant observer of people who I have no facial recognition of, I can never become an active participant of the world of my subject. I can only capture as a depersonalised subject in a closed alienated space.

#### **Connection with previous practice**

When I made the above analysis of my own work, it was at the end of my week vacation on Schiermonnikoog. The first two days my girlfriend was with me and we made a short film, with ourselves as only actors in the film. After writing the above written analysis, I realised that all these aspects present in my photography are present in this film. Most of the shots made of my girlfriend are of her back (Image 9), and the ones that our in front, I use light in a way that you cannot see her face clearly. The role of light is again very important, it makes the main character depersonalised and unclear to the audience, the light is most of the time behind the actor and the lens points directly towards it (Image 10-11). The framing creates an autonomic, alienated person out of my main character. Thus I believe that these trademarks I got are part

of my instinct as a photographer and as a filmmaker, I will always use this, and thus this will also be my approach in my project. I also noticed that going out shooting without preparation feels liberating to me. I always find interesting images, yet now I need to connect a small story line to it and go out and shoot.

### **Previous films**

#### **Will you play with me**

The film consists of three different shots. All three shots are made by me walking with the camera around a football cage. In the first two shots the football cage is empty, except for a football lying still in the middle. The difference between the shots is that one was shot when it snowed, thus the shot has a cold blue character and the other one is shot without snow, which has a warm character because the floor of the cage is red gravel. The third shot is of kids playing in the football cage, who kick the ball around. Because it is shot with an extreme low shutter speed and this is the only shot when the sun shined it has a dreamy atmosphere.

The framing of the three shots is important, because the framing turns the space into a closed space. It gives the ball, in the first two shots, an autonomic, alienated character. The sunlight and the extreme low shutter speed

create a dreamy atmosphere, yet it also makes the kids depersonalised, there is no facial recognition.

### **All around us**

The film consists of six shots that capture different spaces with none, one or a few people in it. It captures the atmosphere of the space shot. The framing again turns the spaces shot into closed, alienated spaces. The last shot of the bridge on Rotterdam Central Station (Image 12), is an example of a shot I would never have made in daylight, because especially the light of the lampposts in contrast with the dark background of the night makes the space an autonomic, alienated space. There is one shot in the film, where there is a slight form of facial recognition (Image 13). Although we can see the man's face, the access of the camera to the person is obstructed by the glass of the elevator, thus there is still a distance between me and my subject.

### **De Krokodil & De Uil**

I call this film a narrative film, because it is based on a screenplay I wrote and it is with actors instead of non-fictionalised persons. In this film, there is facial recognition of the audience of all my characters. There is no form of depersonalisation with my subject. What is still present as is in my photography is that the characters are placed in a closed, alienated space.



## **My Generation**

The first months of the year I was occupied with writing a screenplay about an alienated adolescent figure in Rotterdam. Although I am not going to re-write the screenplay, it is important for me that the characters of my story, as was the fact in the screenplay, will remain of my generation. Last week I wrote a pamphlet about my generation which describes a general vision on my generation. Viewing my own photos I realise the ones that interest me most are often the ones of people of my generation. I know now, I need to be aware of the dangers of writing about my generation. Hereby I mean that the problems with the transformation from puberty to adulthood should be visually clear to the audience and not only be present in the head of the protagonist.

## Concluding

I want to make a short film with the elements I distinguished in my analysis of my own photography and give an impression of my generation. I want to create atmospheric, closed spaces that amplify the alienated feeling of my adolescent character in Rotterdam. I want to use the source of light as a spotlight for my characters, but immediately also depersonalise my characters. There should originate a strong sense of the distance from the filmmaker with its subject. The audience has

to feel the desire of me to come close to my subject and be part of their moment, but also understand that I can only capture the moment of my subject if my role remains as a distant observer.

Images



1



2



3



4



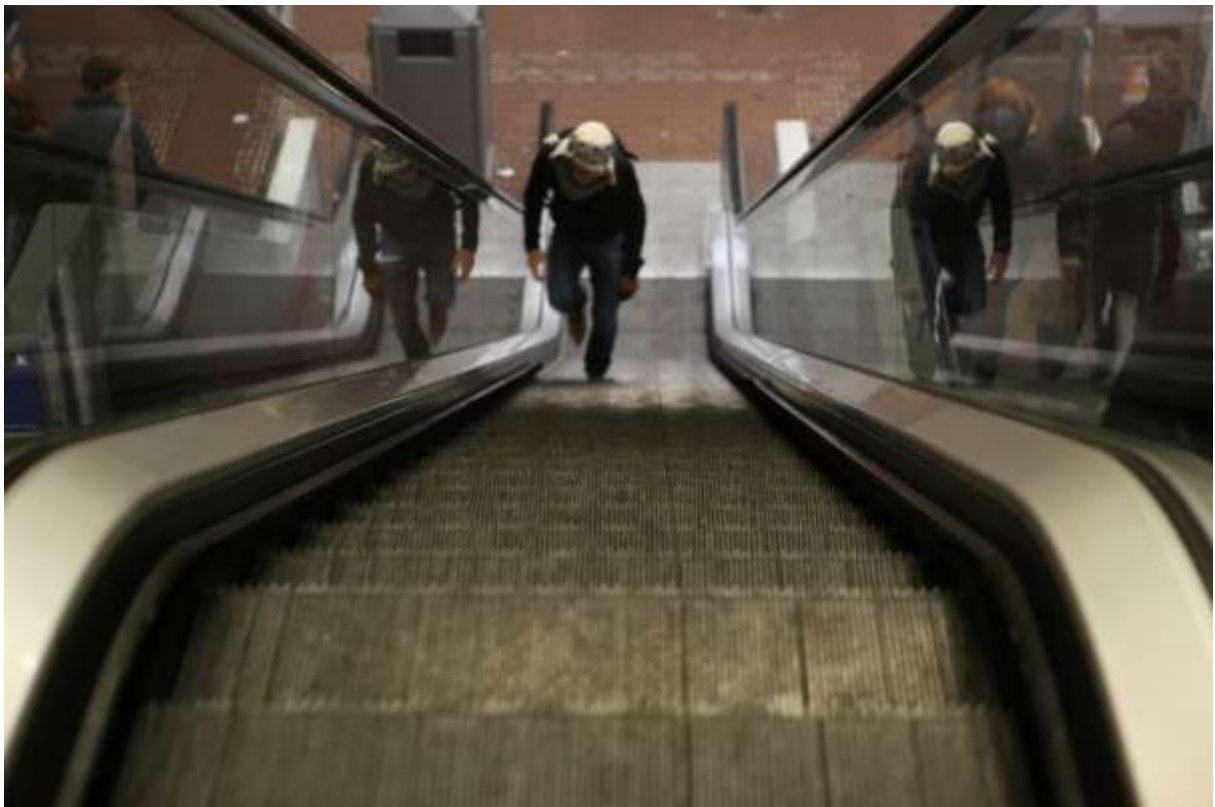
5



6



7 NY



8 Utrecht



9



10



11



12





## **Bibliography**

### Literature

#### Read:

- Bukowski C. *Ham on Rye*
- McInerney, J. *Bright Lights, Big City*, 1984.
- Noordenbos, J. *Het Plot van Aristoteles (The Plot of Aristotle)*, 2011.
- Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*, 1951.

#### Reading:

- Beukenkamp, G. *Schrijven voor film, toneel en televisie (Writing for film, theatre and television)*, 2009.
- Bordwell, D; K. Thompson. *Film Art. An introduction*, 1979.
- Field, S. *The Screenwriter's Workbook*, 1984.
- Pisters, P. *Lessen van Hitchcock (Lessons from Hitchcock)*, 2002.

#### To read:

- Berger, J; J. Mohr. *A Fortunate Man*, 1967.
- Berger, J; J. Mohr. *Another way of telling*, 1982.
- Salinger, J.D. *Franny and Zooey*, 1961.

## Films

### Seen:

- *Wilde Mossels* (Erik de Bruyn, 2000).
- *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, 2003).
- *Somewhere* (Sofia Coppola, 2010).
- *Control* (Anton Corbijn, 2007).
- *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962).
- *Elephant* (Gus van Sant, 2003).
- *Schultze Gets the Blues* (Michael Schorr, 2003).
- *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976).

### To see:

- *3 Women* (Robert Altman, 1977).
- *Sans Soleil* (Chris Marker, 1983).
- *Safe* (Todd Haynes, 1995).
- *Woyzeck* (Werner Herzog, 1979).
- *The Tree of Life* (Terence Malick, 2011)
- *Drive* (Nicolas Refn, 2011)
- *After Hours* (Martin Scorsese, 1985)
- *Parade* (Jacques Tati, 1974).