

Outcome Report

The Interpretation of Dream – film project

Yuchen Xie

4th year Miller Arts Scholar in Studio Art

Last year, after my first encounter with dreamscape video design and along with my increasing interest in surrealist film, I applied to the Miller Arts Scholar Rising Fourth-year grant to make my first short film. The idea was to interrogate layers of dreams and experiment visual methods to portray the absurdity in dreams. It turns out that my ideas evolved a lot and I developed many other interested in the process of making this film.

During the summer of 2017, in order to write up a story for the short film, I revisited Freud's masterpieces and watched many dreamscape experimental short films. I realized that I have developed an interest in otherness. However, I'm not simply trying to create an absurd, because my passion for otherness lies far beyond that. I wanted to explore otherness in the treatment of film, cinematography, plot, acting, post-production, etc.

As I suggested in my application proposal, I haven't tried any narrative videos nor films and all of my previous practice in video art had been extremely intuitive, as guided by my streams of consciousness. For this project, I wanted to challenge myself to construct an actual story. But to not fall into the trap of a traditional story and to gear towards otherness, I started to write a story that has the traditional structure of a plot but in fact doesn't make any sense. It turned out satisfying. The plot is simple yet absurd enough: A girl meets a man and follows him

wherever he goes. Suddenly, the man disappeared and she starts running around desperately trying to find him. She ultimately faints and wakes up finding the man right in front of her, yet she couldn't recognize him and forgets what she has been looking for. While the story is absurd enough, I see it as a metaphor of the search of many things in life. People sometimes look for something so badly that they forget their purpose.

To shoot the film, I found myself a crew from LabShorts, a student filmmaking organization. I reached out to them with my script and began the collaboration process. This experience is very important for me because as a studio artist, I had been mostly working with myself in the studio space. This is officially the first time I collaborate with a crew. As the director, I auditioned the actor and actress, assigned the roles, provided guidance, managed the crew and kept the pace of production process. It has been very challenging but I learned a lot.

Another significant collaboration is me working with Luc Cianfarani, another fellow Miller Arts Scholar in Music. I reached out to him and he composed some very interesting sound tracks that match my concept well. My piece wouldn't be finished and polished this much without him.

I used my grant on equipment. I bought a fisheye lens, a drone, and some other basic tools of production. The drone was very necessary to my concept, because it provided an angle that gears towards otherness and creates a sense of dreamscape where the viewers see the context from almost a god's point of view, so that it is up to them to judge whether any part of the plot is happening in dream or reality.

I'm very grateful for the Miler Arts Scholars program and all contributors that has given me this grant to make this project happen. My experience making this film has pushed me into deeper exploration in dream, absurdity, and otherness.