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Professor Terao
Culmination
Project Reflection

Before I reflect on the process of my culmination film, *La Dispute*, there are some much needed acknowledgements-and it would be unjust to leave that at the end. My colleague Joel Bruce, my technical advisor Professor Ryoya Terao, the cast and crew, and our friends and loved ones; this film is for you.

Reflecting on it all, I'd do it all over again. I don't mean I'm not proud of how I made the movie, I mean that I have critiques, notes, improvements for every step in the process. This is the outcome I had hoped for. I hoped to look *back* after making it in order to know what I need to change so that I could look *forward*. Every project has its problems, often ones out of our control. That's essentially why I made *La Dispute*. I wanted to show the inevitability of suffering, but also the unrelenting will that we are capable of.

On a technical level, with what little we had, we exceeded my expectations. I wasn't cynical, but necessity proved to be the mother of invention. We knew that a static, unmotivated camera wouldn't engage the audience. Armed with a tripod, monopod, and flexible tripod, we found ourselves on set with neurons ablaze. While filming the Trader Joe's sequence, my brain made the connection. Dollys use wheels, shopping carts use wheels, a flexible tripod could be mounted to a shopping cart very easily. I screwed the camera on the tripod, trying to see where among the four wheeled cage would give us an interesting shot. I mount it on the front, then below, shooting low angles, long shots, dollying out. Unfortunately, one of my favorite shots, a tracking shot of Kevin from behind, was blurry from the cart violently shaking.

In addition to the shopping cart dolly, there was another technical achievement I am proud of. The rooftop sequence was filmed by me holding the monopod close to my center and walking very meticulously. I wanted to create the look of a steadicam during this scene, without using a steadicam. On set for that scene was just Kevin and myself, which meant I had to use movie magic to enter the door while keeping my hands on the monopod. After a couple of walkthroughs, Kevin had the idea of holding the door open for me until I entered the door. His hands aren't in frame so if he held it open for a moment, nobody would notice. A very simple solution. In the future, I would like to be more thorough in my pre-production paperwork, in order to solidify what I would need to achieve each shot, on a technical level. Including equipment lists with the shot sheets.

In terms of splitting control of the movie with my colleague Joel, that was an excellent lesson in collaboration. Both of us having creative control meant we'd have different ideas, sometimes we would have the same idea, but this was really a lesson in compromise. I am grateful to have worked with Joel and this movie would've been a lot of weight without someone else to help carry some. In addition to being supportive and passionate about the work, Joel was also an expert in syncing his contributions with the wavelength of the film. When we had ideas

for scenes, we had to ask, “is this what the film needs, or is this what *I* need?” The key to collaborating successfully, was to remove our egos and contribute for the betterment of the film.

Before I knew what this film would eventually become, when I just had an idea to make a film regarding Kevin’s culmination (genre unknown), I knew what the thesis was gonna be. I wanted to sort of bring attention to the very idea of *culmination*. I transferred to City Tech and heard the word echo through the halls. I had heard of so-and-so making a lighting installation or blah-blah-blah did a film. The idea felt so abstract, like it had endless potential. I think I always knew I was going to make a film. Although more of my experience is in lighting, most of my classes at Queensborough Community College were online due to the pandemic. Of those classes, the film and media production courses had us make multiple films. As you can imagine, making a film during lockdown wasn’t easy. Equipment was my phone and the cast and crew were my Mom and Dad. I am grateful for their help and the experience did help my mind escape from the lockdown, but I was working with limitations, many out of my control. As I compare the limitations I experienced then versus now, I am pleased. Although both experiences had limitations, I had less with this film. Moving forward in my creative career, I hope the downward slope of limitations continues. I don’t expect 0 limitations, but as I evolve and my skills improve, I hope to become more and more adept at dealing with these limitations.

One aspect I reflect upon the most, is the directing of the film. When you’re filming after class and students/actors are tired/unpaid, it is difficult asking for a couple more takes. Finding the balance of asking for it to happen and making it happen, was something I’d like to practice as I lead, in any field. In the case of directing a film, I had to make sure we were productive and getting the most out of each scene. This wasn’t too difficult, given only one scene has a large cast. But even that one scene was difficult to organize. Joel and I envisioned it as a one take. We knew it would be difficult, but we knew if we nailed it that it would be visually interesting and let the audience sink into the world of the film more. Filming a scene in one take took a lot of planning, most of which was during filming. As I move forward and hopefully make more films with more complex shot types, I would like to rehearse the scenes before filming. Practice the blocking, mark where the camera will travel throughout the scene.

In conclusion, *La Dispute* was a journey. They say if you wanna go fast, go alone, if you wanna go far, go together. I couldn’t have made it as far if I didn’t work with a great group of people. That is what stands out to me the most when I reflect on the process. Collaboration was a key player in the making of this film. Additionally, all the moments I made mistakes. Every mistake in the process is now a moment I am able to look back on and think to myself, “huh, how can I fix that in the future?” Those moments were essential for me, and I can only correct my mistakes if I make them.