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May 8, 2024

Final reflection

The last couple of months cannot be put into words, but I will try. As I've said this film has been a thought a mere idea locked up in my mind for four years now. For it now to be out there and not only that but something I can see with my own eyes the feeling is overwhelming. Both in a good and a bad way. I've been making films ever since I learned what stop motion was, back then it was just a Lego set and the Lego stop motion app. Today it's a short film about my first breakup and all the emotional turmoil that came from it.

It hasn't been easy, not for a second and right now as I write this I'm asking myself if it's been fun and the answer is : I do not know. I've been too busy freaking out and being anxious about every single detail and aspect of this film. However I would be lying to you if I said there weren't moments where I had to stop myself and think about how special this is. In particular I keep thinking to myself: "when will I ever be this 21 again, filming a film like this with some of my closest friends". I won't be for much longer, I am drained, I am exhausted but it'll all be worth it, what's a couple days of not sleeping for a project like this. I understand how that must sound worrying, but I need you to remember that I am making this for the girl I was a couple years back. I am not going to fail her or my co-partner or every single person that has given a second of their life for this film. I can't and I won't.

I've seen how excited people are to watch this film, and that brings me so much joy in this quite stressful time. It also reminds me that there's a certain amount of pressure placed upon me not only from others but myself. My mother has been telling me for weeks now, numerous times actually, that for how often I'm out shooting it must be worth it. I hope it is. I also hope that when you watch this, it makes you wonder and feel the grief of love.

We did have reshoot days, I wouldn't call myself a perfectionist however I can't just see something that's just "okay" and not do anything about it. Even with my performance, there were moments where I was just so overwhelmed that I couldn't get myself to not seem anxious. I would think my face was doing what I wanted it to do and then we'd playback the footage and I was just left disappointed with myself. I've been on camera almost 7 days a week for two months. I am tired of that camera. At least being in front of it, behind it I'm always down for that. After this project is done, I do want to take time away from film-making at least for a little bit, it would just be a small break. Bryan and myself have more ideas to come, that's something to look forward to. I couldn't have asked for a better co-everything, from the beginning he made it clear to me that this was my story to tell and I adore how careful he has treated this film. When those moments happened I always told him that I want his input on everything this is his film as well. I could not have done this without him, so a huge thank you to him. We're great partners I could not have done on my own.

Are there things I would do differently? Of course in an alternative universe where we chose another girl to be Jane, I could have prevented a lot of anxiousness and unwanted stress. In all honesty, I did want to be Jane because as I've said Jane is me and I am Jane, or at least I was at one point in my life. Acting and being co-everything got me thinking about my film teacher from highschool, in his first feature film he played himself. I remember him telling us about how so many people advise him not to do it. But he did and so did I. I can't speak for him but for me, I just couldn't imagine another person being Jane. Reflecting on that now, would it have been easier? Yes but would I have been happy with the choice? It wouldn't have felt right. I feel as though my own creativeness held me back at points throughout this journey. It led to so much frustration, when I couldn't get the shot exactly how I pictured or the perspective simply did not work it just pained me. In moments like this I should have taken a second and stepped back and breathed but I didn't, I was just angry with myself. I wish I could have been kinder to myself when I felt that overwhelmed. It got easier as we continued production but wow, there were bad moments.

I wanted to share something from one of our last shoots, in our big climax moment with the swings where Jane is finally faced with everything she's been avoiding. In that scene I really wanted to commit to crying and I can tell you that I believe I did so. When we cut, I rewatched the footage back and I knew right then and there that it worked, we got it, we got the shot. Out of pure happiness and perhaps exhaustion I began running in the park we were shooting at. It was 2 in the morning and 21 year old Julia was reminded how 14 year old Julia felt, all those years back. On the train ride back home, I really understood in my core why we made this film. We shot the scenes where I spent all my teen years around, and even that filled me with appreciation for who I was then. A lot of people were worried that going back to these locations and writing this film would leave me with that pain. However it's the complete opposite, I can write and make a film about this because I am so far removed from that 17 year old girl I was when all of this did go down. Our story ended a long time ago. I've also been asked if she would be upset with the film, and trust me when I say she knows on some level she always knew I would make a film about this. But more importantly the film isn't about her, it's about my relationship with myself.

Our film is not a love story, it is so far from one. It's a story about the different types of love around you, and how the most important relationship you have is with yourself. I loved my ex-girlfriend but the way I loved her came from my vulnerability. To know I was able to love someone like I loved her and at such a young age, is powerful, remembering that healed my 20 year old heart then. I remember how I woke up that first day after the break up and that pain I felt, that continued for months after. I had never experienced anything like it, I remember thinking to myself then I want to remember this feeling. The idea that I had 4 years ago is now a film, a beautiful film that could not have been made if my heart was never broken. I've thanked everyone, but I haven't thanked her. I thank her for breaking my heart. It's made me the person I am today.