



ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DRAMA

OVERCOMING A CONCEPT.

OR:

FINDING ANNA.

An essay on one person's artistic process of creating one film.

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ABSTRACT

I made a film. And after that I wrote an essay about the process. The process was about letting go. The film was supposed to be about truth. But in the end it wasn't. It was about humankind. Because humans are weird. (It is a dance film).

In the process of creating this film I listened to my intuition a lot. I learnt a lot. I read a few books. Took some courses. Talked to some people.

I had a lot of fun.

I discovered I am not lazy.

And I found my artistic voice.

KEYWORDS

Film, dance, photography, humankind, truth, concept, intuition, freedom, fun, finding.

My mother is a monkey and I wish she was not.
My sister is savage with a giant head.

It is not true.

I know nothing at all.

I have learnt how to cook and I have learnt how to speak.
I have learnt about the others and they have learnt about me.

But it is not true.

They know nothing at all.

See, the god in the sky really fancies me.
He knows I am more important than that really old tree.

It is true.

So don't spill on my grave.

Dear tree,
Please don't spill on my grave.



INTRODUCTION

My name is Jonne.

I come from the Netherlands, where I graduated in 2014 from the BA of Dance in Education, ArtEZ (Arnhem). During and after my studies, I had been working as a teacher, dancer and choreographer in the contemporary dance field. I worked with different levels and ages, from the recreational area up to BA level at ArtEZ and other institutions.

Amongst other inspiring projects, I created a short dance film that premiered in 2016. This was by far the most exciting project I did and the most fun work environment I experienced thus far. I knew I had found an area that had a lot for me to discover. With a somewhat pretentious (and definitely naive) film plan I applied to the MFA in Contemporary Performative Arts in 2018. I sold it well. I got in.

It is now two years later and soon my film '*Dear Tree, please don't spill on our grave.*' premieres. When I started reflecting on the process I realized that this work has become a lot more to me than simply being my next film around simply just another topic that interests me. I realized that with this work, I have -be it unconsciously- found a way to tap into my 'true' voice as a maker.

This voice answers two questions.

1

What do I want to say?

2

How can I say it?

These are not research questions. These are hindsight questions. Questions that I was only able to answer by not asking them from the beginning.

Or.

Questions that I actually did ask myself from the beginning, but that I had to let go of to be able to really answer them.

When I wrote the application for this master's programme, these questions led me into formulating a specific issue that I wanted to address. (And into writing that brilliant film plan).

These were all words. Not art. To me, art is not turning words into a work. Of course, words can be art. But to me, a direct translation from words into a work can never¹ be art. The words are the concept. The understanding. Art is what happens next. When I let go of these questions, I started creating from interest and intuition. I let the work speak back to me. I let the work show me what I wanted to say. The work became the voice.

In this essay I will attempt to unravel the process of creating *Dear Tree, please don't spill on our grave.* as an invitation into my brain right when it learnt to go beyond a concept into recognizing and listening to its artistic voice. I will do this by creating a timeline that is pushed forward by the inputs I consumed, the insights I gained, the directions I followed, the questions that came up, the concepts that evolved and the outputs I produced throughout the process.

I start with formulating the question that I did allow myself to ask from early on and along the way. The question that enabled me to find the answer to the other ones. The question that had been building up in me in the years of studying dance, teaching and creating in the very specific context I was in. The question, or, ironically, the framework:

¹ This is probably not true.

What happens when I am free?

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THE FIRST CONCEPT AND WHEN IT WAS WRITTEN

When I think back on the years I worked as a freelance dance artist in the Netherlands, I can clearly see how I evolved within (and entirely in relation to) that specific context. I was mainly active in the dance scene in the small town of Arnhem, where I studied and lived. And stayed. I had great jobs as a teacher, teaching the talented kids in the preparatory course of ArtEZ, the students of the BA of Dance and Education and other groups in the pre professional field. As a maker I worked under commission of those same institutions and I created independent projects on the side. I created mostly site specific work with both amateur dancers and professionals. Experimented with film, photography, music and text. Collaborated with artists within these fields. Work wise I had a luxurious position. Amazing groups, a lot of trust, a big network around me. Artistically I was a bit stuck. Partly because I was teaching so much. More importantly because this context functioned like some kind of a bubble for me. Keeping me safe on the one hand, shaping my artistic choices on the other. And me being entirely unaware of it.

With some ignorance towards the possibility of growing artistically, outside of this bubble, I depended merely on intuition in my decision of applying for this master's and moving to another country. Clearly my intuition knows a lot better where there is room for me to grow than my brain. And how to get there.

My intuition probably knew all along I was about to write a project proposal that I would leave behind as soon as I would start working with it. My intuition probably also understood that had I known that, the chances of me actually going would have been a lot smaller. Creating this concept provided me with a feeling of safety that was just strong enough to carry me to Sweden. Things tend to work out.

CONCEPT

In a non-verbal film I want to explore the idea of showing possible truths, following different people in different daily situations. I want to use dance and music to create both abstract and specific layers that when combined give meaning and invite the audience to see several perspectives of a story simultaneously. Musicians and dancers will be both the 'real' characters in the film as well as the performers of the abstract content.

The film will show four different situations, all short stories on their own, intertwined in the montage. The stories come from philosophical questions and insights that got me thinking about how we perceive the world and how we live our lives based on these perceptions. Important for me to mention, is that in writing these stories might sound a bit dry and fairly serious. Even though the subject is in fact quite serious, I aim to make this a rather absurdist film. What would happen if Wes Anderson and Wim Vandekeybus met?

STORIES

Let's start with death

On top of a large office-building a double-bass player let's himself drop, together with his instrument. The moment he falls, we cut to a dancer falling on the floor, starting a dynamic movement phrase in a clean, white space. Free in his body and intention, the dancer explores physical possibilities of using and fighting gravity. Then we start switching dancers, finding out they're all in the same movement phrase. We use movement rhyme to cut back and forward to the musician -who's at home- using dance to get him to start playing again. Music and dance influence each other through movement.

Supported by double-bass music, we see a large apartment building. 'Infinite' apartments, all looking similar. A day is starting and in choreographed synchronicity people open their curtains, do their routine and leave their homes to go to work.

The bass player goes up with an elevator.

Partytime

We're at a birthday party. A living room filled with people of different ages, colored flags on the wall and a table full of traditional party-snacks and cake. A girl leaves the room to go to the bathroom. She looks in the mirror and practices the face all the others see. Not too obvious a light ticking arises, synchronized with her watch. When she enters the room, some people notice her, some don't. More ticking starts, in relation to the watches people wear. Different sounds, played by a drummer and a bass player. After a moment of synchronicity -the birthday boy gives a speech- patterns in the sounds form a rhythm. The party-people continue what they're doing, whilst following the metronome of their watch. Creating a choreographed exposition of time. There's a clock on the wall. We never hear its pace.

When one hits the water

A drummer plays, we zoom in on him and hear his music. While the music continues, he and a dancer walk away. They fall, - cut- they fall into a lake. We follow them under water. The moment they hit the water, the music stops. Drummer and dancer are involved in a fluid movement sequence, slowed down by the water and literally breath-taking. Using movement-rhyme, we shift back to the drummer who stopped playing due to the dancer holding his hands. There's no visible struggle. Nor joy.

Later in the film, when the couple returns to the lake they find it to be frozen over. Clear, clean ice. Together they step on to the lake, slowly increasing their pace until they're running full speed. Due to their swiftness they slide, the slide transforms into a duet. The slipperiness of the ice both causes and amplifies their movement.

Fascia

A dancer wakes up in daily routine. Movements that come with ease with eyes closed, become challenging with open eyes. The most normal and basic actions appear completely new and unfamiliar. Being only one individual, the dancer has to invent every action herself. Seeing connectedness to others, can help to keep the movement flowing. Sometimes forcibly, sometimes voluntarily the dancer surrenders herself to be led through daily life by others. In a fast montage, we see well known activities - such as getting dressed, cooking a meal, transporting oneself to somewhere - performed by the dancer, guided physically by others. While she walks somewhere, we zoom out and see a bigger and bigger crowd with people influencing each other's direction in choreographed walking patterns.

ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Within the context of making this film, there's a few artistic questions I want to focus on.* At first, I seek to explore and investigate how the unique possibilities of the medium of film can expand choreographic methods. Especially within the idea of connecting abstract art to 'reality'. Without force I want movement and music to arise from specific situations. I believe film has the potential to make this connection quite natural. The question is "How?".

The second question I want to research addresses more the content of the film, rather than the methods. I am very curious to discover and explore ways of giving meaning using the ideas that arise from the first question. Abstraction versus reality. This starts with elaborating the different layers in the storylines and it runs all the way through to the final stage of the montage.

Being free from the physical laws that apply to live performance, there is a big difference between editing film and montaging a choreography. I want to fully utilize this as an advantage. Experiment with the order of shots to discover the effect of combining different images with one another. Open to find meaning within the montage of the stories. With this approach, the montaging is being acknowledged as an art making phase of the process.

At last, I think this process needs a reflective framework to make sure the content of the film, in the end, lines up with the philosophical core. I want to show different perspectives, different realities, therefore I want to avoid giving an ultimate outcome.

*

- 1. How can film connect abstract dance and music to the 'real' world? (methodic)*
- 2. How can meaning arise by connecting specific scenes with abstraction/symbolism? (content)*
- 3. How can the film show different truths without giving an ultimate truth? (reflective)*

A small assumption regarding these questions: possibilities probably are endless.

Answers to the first question will mostly arise from experimenting with filmmakers, creating time and space for ideas that come from all different perspectives. Within the program I hope to find in depth knowledge and independent coaching, to achieve the maximum potential of myself within this collaborative setting.

Giving and seeing meaning in abstract art is very personal and non-dualistic. Therefore the reflective peer sessions within the program can be of great importance to the exploration of the last two questions. I intend the meaning of the film to be largely dependent on the viewer. Having 'viewers eyes' available throughout the process can reveal early on if this intention is succeeding and what others might get from the film.



CONTEXT

In the beginning of the studies, we talked a lot about context. When is the work created, in what field, what is it inspired by, what does it connect to, what are the references, what is its social context, political, philosophical. What does it represent. What does a work mean in its time and place.

This was something. On many levels.

Here's two:

1

Even though being so similar in many ways and geographically so nearby, the political atmosphere in the Netherlands differs quite a bit from Sweden. Within zero seconds of living in Göteborg, words like feminism, colonialism, sexism, racism, capitalism, environmentalism became key words in many situations. Topics that I wasn't unaware of, but that had been a bit more on the background back home. Or addressed in a different way. Maybe out of privileged ignorance, or simply out of cultural difference, I wasn't used to relate to all of these issues to this extent and to be directed towards them in this way. I was not well read around these topics. I didn't reflect on my relation to them yet.

Without a clear stance I moved to Sweden. Entering a flock of intelligent and well informed people.

That was something.

(More on this later. Of course).

2

In my safe bubble, it would have been quite simple to define the context of my work. I had my go to list of inspiration, a well developed language around my concepts, a clear idea of what was going in the scene where I was active. Yet when I moved to Sweden and started thinking about the context around this new work, I was incredibly hesitant with referring to all this. Somehow having to relate to a new work field, made me relate to it in an entirely different way.

I wasn't ready to simply exchange my old bubble for a new bubble. So I didn't. But it took me a while before I realized that this hesitation towards taking a clear position in the cultural field, was actually enabling me to take the time to find a more friendly path. One that actually suited me.

Beautiful.

On the floor it looked more like this: ungratefulness towards people who gave me a lot of names to reach out to, no interest at all in the books that people recommended me to read, saying no to possibilities to perform or see performances, watching bad television instead of good cinema. At times I wondered if I should quit all together, because I didn't seem to be interested in the world of art at all.

I found myself in the miserable position of feeling dumb, maintained by an unstoppable motivation to not do anything about it.

Or.

By taking distance from my old ideas about society and staying on some distance towards the ideas I was suddenly surrounded with, I felt that I could see more clearly that these were actually rather beliefs than truths. Which was the exact point of the concept I applied with: maybe there are no truths.

I can not not be in a context.

But looking at the world through my eyes, the only one to define my context is you.

TRUTH

In my little imaginary Utopia people see the world as being a proposal. Never to be experienced objectively, but to find truth within their own interpretation. They are fully aware that these truths are interpretations, with smaller or bigger grey areas of uncertainty around them. The people see truths as interactions, rather than excluded facts that live no matter the context. They understand how one truth cannot exist without all the other truths that surround it, creating a fluid motion of truths that is by far way too complex for us to be able to grasp. The people in this little bubble understand how it would need abstraction for us to be able to cognitively understand the full complexity of the whole. The obvious problem with this is that abstraction would mean exclusion, which would undermine the complexity of it all: that in fact ALL truths are equally important in the whole.

Truths about truth are clearly not to be found in abstraction. Nor in trying to define the whole. This would, at first, be impossible. And if it were possible, it would simply lead to just another whole.

Everybody understands that this has two major consequences for how to perceive life:

1. Since everybody's so called truth is already an interpretation, there is no distinction between 'the' or 'my' truth.
2. 'Truth' is in general a silly thing to chase.



ANNA

So far, these experiences mostly reinforced the urge to create work around the concept 'truth'. Yet I hadn't started investigating the concept itself. And with a presentation coming up at the end of the first semester it was time to do so.

I started working on the floor with the very specific ideas I had in my concept. Brainstorming with drummer Thomas Jaspers on how we could work around the time story. And how we could use sounds to question the truthfulness of scenes by replacing sync sound with sounds he could create on his (expanded) drumset. I started to think about how to make a base player jump off a building. And how to create a sequence on ice. And under water. I invited bass player Boel Mogensen and dancer Eva Svaneblom into the studio to experiment with me on how to match movement of a body to movement of a body and a double bass.

To dive into the work and to learn more about film making I reached out to Ivo van Aart, a film maker from the Netherlands I collaborated with on my first film. We talked about my concept, about the technicalities around it and about the content. We talked about ways for me to learn about the medium, without being in a film school. Ivo told me about the endless amount of tutorial videos that were to be found online and gave me some channels to start with. He also told me that there are, of course, thousands of good and inspiring films out there. That a good way to learn about cinema is to watch a lot of it.

And then he told me something that stuck:

'But make sure you have fun while doing it, otherwise you'll stop.'



I didn't have fun.

I was aiming to find the images that matched my imagination. Attempting to execute the script, without even the knowledge or experience to examine the script on its real filmic potential. Forcing myself to work within the framework of the research questions I formulated, because 'I am an interdisciplinary artist, with a stance around truth that is worth communicating'.

I was working towards a set outcome. And even though the concept itself was challenging enough (again: I wanted a double bass player to jump off a building), the artistic situation was horribly boring.

Back to Ivo.

'Have fun.'

Ok.

Have fun.

I skipped school that day. The sun was shining and I had to have fun. I went out with my camera and my bike and no plan.



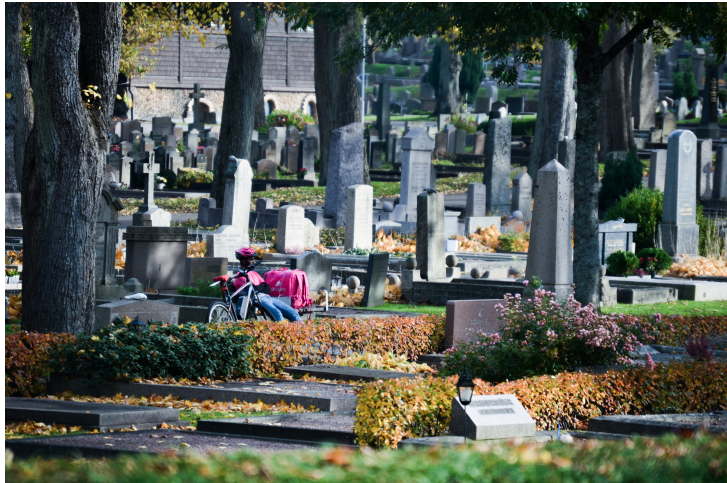




















Humans are weird.

Without noticing the time passing by, I spent days on the street. Laughing at the great absurdity we live in. Trying to capture it. Not thinking about any concept, any need or any wish. It felt like a side track to enjoy for a little while.

I was reading Yuval Noah Harari's *Sapiens, a brief history of humankind* at the time.

Of course, after some weeks of collecting situations, they slowly started to make their way into the stories of the film. I felt the body of the concept growing by enriching it with the daily absurdity of our real reality.² Eventually this led to a shift in the whole set up of the film. It made me realize that the first concept was built upon thin scatteredness. Maybe with more body I could narrow it down a little. Maybe it could be just one storyline that portrays it all. One person, living in an absurd world, where everything can be, but nothing is true.

The second this possibility entered my brain, I left behind the first concept. No hesitation. I instantly knew the name of the character of the new film. And I instantly knew who had to play this role.

Character: Anna.

Dancer: Anna Fransen.

I started writing a new storyline for my film, placing Anna in the truth-free Utopia I created.

I called Anna to ask her if she wanted to play the role of 'Anna' in my new film.

ANNA

Anna lives in this little bubble. She most likely doesn't know that. She lives in a small apartment, usually located across from the big graveyard. This graveyard is a strange bulge from the real world that reaches into the bubble. It is a place where they put the dead people, for their afterlife. They are honored there. Anna knows they are just rotting.

On top of the building stands a woman, holding a double bass. A man walks by on the side walk, he thinks he is walking his dog. He doesn't realize he entered the bubble. He will not notice when he leaves it. One window is open. Anna lies on her sofa, watching yellow. It matches the walls. She knows exactly what is the most comfortable position. And she knows yellow.

Anna is alone. A woman with magnetic hands pulls Anna to sit up straight. A man changes the channel to turquoise. He closes the window. Anna walks to the kitchen and opens the tap. Just a little bit, to make it drip. The drops sound like the plucking on double bass. Anna watches the dripping for a while and then stops the hand on the double bass.

Drops sound like water.

Anna walks to the window and closes it halfway. Workers are relocating leaves on the graveyard. They make a pile. Anna lifts her hands up and sort of dances backward, mumbling a little song.

To the toilet.

² One day I'll meet Roy Andersson.

Anna rolls the paper all the way out. Someone rolls it back in. Someone else washes Annas hands and looks in the mirror. She looks a bit like Anna. She looks quite a bit like Anna.

Anna get's dressed. Three or four or five people get Anna dressed. One makes tea. One reads a newspaper. Or a book.

Anna is alone.

Five monkeys fly around through the apartment, eating food, throwing food, testing the strength of, for example, the hanging lamp. Strong enough. One of them looks a bit like Anna. She drinks water from the tap. Someone gives Anna a glas of water. Anna drinks the tea. She stares out of the window and grabs the magpie that flies by. Real people are burying a real dead person. Anna puts the bird next to the other stuffed animals in the green cupboard.

Some kids are cooking a soup in the kitchen. A woman is cooking soup in the kitchen. Anna is lying down on the sofa and reads the newspaper. She yawns. Someone puts a finger in her mouth. Or her ear. Three people sit her down at the table, spooning her soup. Or spaghetti. Five people, six people relocate the mess. Ten people. Twenty people.

Balloons in the room. Balloon animals in the green cupboard. Dresses, suits. Thirty people, eating, drinken, singing like birds.

Thirty animals. Thirty balloons. Thirty people.

Or thirty-one. Thrity-ish. The bass player plucks. The drummer ticks. Anna talks to someone. Everybody talks to someone. Happy faces on melting bodies. The bass player falls from the roof. Anna catches the woman. Anna puts the woman in the dark green cupboard, next to the stuffed animals. Thirty-ish shadows on the white walls.

Melting bodies with happy faces in the white space.

Balloons in a white space.

SOMETHING THAT FELT LIKE A SIDE TRACK

When it was time to start creating the presentation at the end of the first semester, I gathered all the material I had been working on so far. I had a lot of different texts I wrote that were somehow related to truth, footage of some explorations in the studio and the story about Anna. And hours of wildlife material of random people doing their thing.

Oh, the fun I had layering the words and images of my observations.

I had no idea what I was creating. It didn't matter. 'What happens when I am free?'. And after all, I already had my new film plot ready to go.

The presentation became a fifteen minute long film. Lecturing about truth in different ways, showing images of our daily life. Some movement every now and then. Some explanation about the project. In the middle of the film the screen went black, to have Anna's story, the plot of the film, as a voice over to one's own imagination.

Never before had I created something like this. I was incredibly nervous to show it. (Also very eager). (And proud). With this I somehow finally found a way to make proper room for all the weird places my brain takes me sometimes. I didn't hold back. Within my own technical possibilities I created something that was just what I liked. A presentation that was rooted in freedom and fun.

BLUR

Did you know that all objects around you reflect light in all possible directions. If you see a cup, you can walk around the cup and still see it, no matter where you stand. Even if you make a real unexpected move, that the cup can never anticipate on, you will still be able to see the cup.

Most objects in the world behave like this, reflecting light in all possible directions. There are a few exceptions to this rule, but we will not get into that now. It has to do with color vibration in relation to air way vibration, they can even themselves out and disappear. Also some shades of grey and blue are unable to travel in exact northern direction under certain weather conditions. This creates that strange warp effect when it is really warm.

But in general objects reflect light in all possible directions.

So far this sounds quite logical. Yet think about it, if objects reflect light into all different directions, how come we still see a sharp image, whatever our perspective?

The answer to this lies in our eyes. In our eyes lives a lens and the function of this lens is to bend light in a way that creates a convergent light bundle that creates a sharp, yet inverted image. In our brain this image is flipped back to normal and interpreted as being the reality that surrounds us.

To us, bent and flipped light looks more real than the light as is.

If we would capture the light as is, we would perceive the world as being one big blur.

So even if we were able to perceive reality, we wouldn't be able to recognize it.

Happy and satisfied I went back home to celebrate the holidays with my family.

Happy and rested I came back.

Let's make this film.

Yay.

Nothing.

Photos then?

No.

Dancing?

No.

Stuck.

So far, one of the most important lessons was to make sure to have fun. Fun activates. The problem was that every time I went in the studio to actually create something it felt forced. My own ideas didn't inspire me at all, even though I was convinced they were good ideas. Whereas when I simply followed my intuition on the street, I got instantly inspired to take photos and film. Endlessly and without any effort I spent days with my camera. Conclusion: I was a collector, not a creator.

Since I had given myself absolute freedom, this in itself wasn't necessarily a problem. I could have chosen to follow this new found love into making work out of findings. Thinking about truth, documenting daily life, layering it into absurdity. I could have done that. But I couldn't. I was frozen in resistance.

Back to Anna. I liked the story.

Maybe it was simply a matter of working with her on the floor, building the scenes more specifically and together with the actual dancers who would be in the film. Maybe this was the moment where collaboration became crucial. Maybe this was the moment to just do it.

I went back to the Netherlands to work with Anna and a group of wonderful dancers I asked to be part of this film. We experimented around the story, creating little sequences from the different scenes, improvising around the different settings in the plot. I filmed. We had a great time. I came back to Sweden with a lot of material to work with. And new motivation.

It didn't last.

I loved Anna. I loved the dancers. I loved editing and playing with text and music. But I didn't love what I was creating. The work was flat and conceptual in an accidental way. Conceptual out of lack of control. I could see so clearly how the real world offers complexity for free. I could see so clearly how I wasn't able to build this from scratch within this set up. I had been incredibly lucky before with unconsciously being sensitive enough to this complexity to capture it out of intuition. Becoming aware of this enabled me to recognize the linearity of the new material.

I don't think there was anything wrong with the story. It just seemed to work best as a story. Not as a film.

This was a moment.

Truth died in my presentation. That was all I had to say about it. And the story reached its limits. It felt like I was squeezed in the tiny tiny space in between my stupid concept and a method that didn't inspire me anymore, with a thick layer of Swedish winter on top.

What happens when I am free?

I become a tiny little cube every now and then.

■

I DESIRE

My desire is to explore storytelling within dance film.

My desire is to explore dance within fiction film.

My desire is for this to happen within one film.

My desire is for this film to line up with my view on things.

My desire is to explore absurdism and humor within dance film.

My desire is to have the soundtrack originate within the process.

I desire to allow the process to be an absolutely fun one.

I AM MAKING A FILM

For over a year, or maybe for over a few years, I had known I wanted to make film. And my brain had concluded several times already that for me to become somewhat of a film maker, I should learn about film making. It was what I moved to Sweden for. What I emptied out two whole years for.

But also for freedom.

And I don't like reading.

When I swim in inspiration and motivation, the question 'what happens when I am free?' leads me directly into creation of some sort. And to fun. It is the safest moment to ask myself this question. When I am paralyzed by a frozen brain and considering becoming an administrator or accountant, it is a lot more frightening. Because I might actually end up becoming an administrator or accountant. (My brain does not recognize this fear as being proof of the improbability of that ever happening).

Of course this is a perfect moment to ask this question anyway.

If I really want to be an accountant, let's have it.

I waited.

I started reading Syd Field's *Screenplay, the foundations of screenwriting*.

Out of intuition, not out of curiosity. With some arrogant intention of letting this knowledge run through my system just to push back from it. This book would show me how conventional film writing works. How to set up a conventional story, with a linear storyline. Causal storytelling. Hollywood fiction. About conventional human problems. I am not conventional, I am a daaancer.

The book hit me right in the face.

It was great.

The moment I started reading, it didn't feel like reading, it felt like opening up. Effortless. Just like that I realized that I was actually genuinely interested in making a film. This book made me tap into that intrinsic interest again, overcoming the state of 'just' trusting that I wanted to make film because the other time I did it it was just really cool. Overcoming the concept of making film, into starting making a film.

This is where the work started speaking back to me with me being there to consciously receive it.

When I started writing this chapter, I expected this to be the moment where I would finally start properly referencing the input I consumed during this process. I expected to reveal generalities in screenwriting that I have learnt by reading this book. Quoting Syd Field to illustrate how his brilliance improved me as a film maker. Now I am at that point, I realize I won't do that. It is not true. It wouldn't do this book justice if I would now claim that I have understood the principals of screenwriting. I didn't learn about film making. I learnt about making this one film.

I learnt what I was ready for to learn.

That I can portray.

I can point out what this book opened up in me and in my work. I can reconstruct the questions that came up while reading it, that shaped the origin of the new concept I was about to find. I can show how this book influenced me in my process.

Who is Anna?

What happens?

What does Anna do?

What is the film about?

What is the film about?

Who is Anna?

These are such simple questions. Blinded by my concept, I didn't ask them.

Who is Anna?

In the story, it doesn't matter who Anna is. The story is about her, but in a way it also isn't. Anna slowly disappears. Had she been a real character with a background and needs and a psyche, the story would have been communicating on a whole different level. Making her specific doesn't make sense in this story.

Film is specific.

You see what you see.

What happens?

I covered what happens. A lot happens.

But what did Anna do?

What does Anna do?

Nothing. And that is a key problem with this story for it to become a film script. Anna does nothing in this story, she is a victim of the things that happen around her. She doesn't need anything. She doesn't want anything. Anna is a passive character. She doesn't push the story forward. I wanted to make a film with a main character, yet in this set up the main character is not somebody. This book made me realize that in film it is hard to relate to a passive character. We stop caring. Or never start at all.

What is the film about?

My wish was to make a film about the concept 'truth'. A film that questions how separated each separate individual actually is. A film that portrays the complexity behind things that are commonly perceived in a more linear way. If I get dressed in the morning, is it really me who decides what to wear? Who is present with me in the decisions I make during a day? Do I actually make decisions at all? The influences that are working on me, are they limiting me in my freedom? Or are they pushing me forward? How can anything be separated? Am I an entity in a context? Or is everything together in one big mash? And just some locations in this mash happen to think that they are a thing? When I have my eyes on the mash, I disappear.

Yes.

But.

What is the film about?

Ehm.

Truth?

What about truth?

That everything is much more complex than we perceive.

Yes.

But.

Film is specific. What is the film about?

A film can absolutely, maybe preferably, communicate on multiple levels. Talking about a bigger issue, portraying it in a specific story. I started to realize that this story was somehow intended to do so, but failed to do so for several reasons.

To start with the bigger issue. I wanted to make a film about truth but I didn't want to go into explaining the idea of this ungraspable complexity. I wanted to make a film that lines up with it. And with removing the 'other' way of looking at truth, I removed the conflict. So my underlying topic wasn't really an issue. It was more a state of mind. There was no urgency in that.

Then the story itself. The story is abstract. The story is about Anna, but Anna is not someone. Different things happen. Poetic things, maybe. But the specifics of this story are not about anything. If you would see this story on a screen, it would not be about anything.

That is allowed.

I didn't want that.



FINDING THE TITLE

Happy with discovering where my resistance around the concept came from, sad for not having a concept at all anymore.

What did I want to make a film about?

The build up to this point was long, slow and frustrating. The release was instant.

I had been out on the street filming people, laughing at how weird we are. I had been reflecting on human concepts, laughing at how weird we are. I had been reading *Sapiens, a brief history of humankind*, fascinated about how inevitable everything this. Laughing at how weird we are for thinking otherwise.

Humans are weird.

Inevitably weird.

We all live an important life. Doing stuff, moving stuff around, moving ourselves around. Then we die. Here, we put ourselves in a box in the ground. May we never forget. To make it look nice, we plant trees. Back to nature. When autumn comes, we free our graves from the fallen leafs. That is how important we are. We prefer to rot clean.

The release was instant and came with the title of the film:

Dear Tree, please don't spill on our grave.

FINDING THE THEME

With the title came awareness of what my artistic voice wanted to speak about. It was for the first time that I felt this intrinsic connection to my work, even though it didn't exist yet. The borders between me and the work dissolved. I was on my way to create genuine art. Immediate urgency.

There are moments in my life where I think I am the laziest person alive.

It is just a matter of finding my artistic voice.

At this point it didn't take me long to realize that Anna couldn't be a character. Not one. I didn't care about one. She had to be all. Anna had to be the whole of mankind. The plot of the film would be the history of humankind, as described by Yuval Noah Harari.

The story was already there, I just needed to abstract it and turn it into a dance film.

1

Read the book again.

2

Summarize the book.

3

Turn the summary into a story about Anna.

1

Done.

2

Done.

Too long.

Summarize the summary.

Done.

3

First experiment with the dancers, to see how the different stages of our history can be portrayed.

Hmm. Difficult.

No more time.

Present your work in progress as an ending of the first year.

Leave the work alone for the summer.

A SUMMARY OF A SUMMARY OF A BOOK THAT SUMMARIZES THE HISTORY OF HUMANKIND

Two million years ago there were already humans on the planet. Some quite insignificant species of human though, somewhere in the middle of the food-chain.

Until, on the continent we now call Africa, our species evolved. Homo sapiens.

For thousands of years they shared the planet with at least six other human species. But then, about 70.000 years ago, something called the 'Cognitive Revolution' happened. They developed more complex language, which enabled them to collaborate better and maintain larger groups. They also developed the skill to talk about things that didn't exist.

The Homo sapiens spread out all over the planet. And all other humans mysteriously disappeared. As well as a lot of other animals and plants. Other than that, they were pretty good at adjusting to their new surroundings.

Again for thousands of years they lived of what nature provided them with. Hunting for meat, gathering fruits, vegetables and nuts. Until they discovered how to trick the system. They already had dogs as pets, but this was a mutual collaboration. Now they learnt how to domesticate plants and animals. They took over control. The 'Agricultural Revolution'. They needed to work a lot for it though. And it led to violence. They had more food. So there were more humans. But with poor diet and poor posture.

They permanently settled down close to fertile grounds, they built villages and cities. The farmers provided the food for the kings. The myths they believed in were the glue of the communities. And the foundation for the thriving hierarchies.

The brain is endless, but also limited. They needed a system to document taxes and payments. The humans started writing. They also needed a system to exchange stuff for stuff. Because what if you need stuff, but the person who has the stuff doesn't want your stuff. So there was money. Money can turn anything into anything. Money turned out to be quite a successful system.

Please don't stop believing in it though.

The separate villages dissolved in the empires that were on the rise. After money, this was the second tool for standardization of humanity. The emperors were given the task to civilize the world and protect the people. They did so with wars, slavery, deportations and genocide. And with philosophy, art, human rights and charity.

The third globalization party was religion. Animistic religions turned into polytheistic religions. Polytheistic religions turned into monotheistic religions. There was one true god and everybody needed to know this. Of course this is not the full truth. There were also religions without gods. Like buddhism. Or humanism.

In the year 1500 there were about 500 million humans on the planet. Now there are about 7 billion. Something must have happened. Yes. The 'Scientific Revolution'. In the past 500 years people started to realize that instead of everything, they knew basically nothing. So they got curious and now they know a lot more. Science was expensive though so it needed to be combined with military expeditions. Or get funded with private money. Colonialism and capitalism came hand in hand with the scientific revolution.

Science mobilized Homo sapiens.

And framed us with time.

And provided us with stuff.

Credit was invented to start up the economic engine. Machines were invented to kill us by thousands. Machines were invented to keep us alive. With nuclear weapons hanging over our heads, war is not the way to go. Never in history world peace has been so nearby. As well as eternal life.

Science made us into gods.

7 billion gods.



FINDING ANNA

The concept of leaving my work alone for the summer was really nice.

It didn't hold up.

I had no money. No home. No plans. No one around. And my partner left me at this point.

It was the most floaty summer I ever experienced.

What happens when I am free?

I still existed. That was good.

I took a freestanding course 'The Actor and Film', taught by film- and theater director Marcus Carlsson. I started watching an infinite amount of short films. I started reading about cinematography in *Cinematography, theory and practice for cinematographers and directors*, by Blain Brown. I discovered the work of Gunilla Heilborn. I started reading about directing in *Directing Actors, creating memorable performances for film and television*, by Judith Weston.

The Actor and Film

This course created a huge shift in my understanding of film making, acting and directing. As did the book *Directing Actors, creating memorable performances for film and television*. The most important realization was how big the role of the actor is in what a film becomes. A big part of what a film communicates lies in the actor. Up until this point, I had been mostly working on finding the plot of this film. For this I had been working with Anna, but not with Anna. I focused on physical content, not so much on character and communication. In the course I experienced how unforgiving film is. And I got inspired by how much there is to read into a face that does nothing.

If Anna does nothing, we will read into her anyway.

So far I had been working with text in every presentation and in every course. Yet I somehow didn't want to even consider the option of working with it in the actual film. Finally that cracked open. Text leveled up from being an escape tool in case everything is really unclear, or a guaranteed success if I'm brave enough with words, to a proper artistic means as a part of the whole. New potential.

In the most recent experiments I did with Anna and the dancers, I kept on stumbling on the notion of a missing urgency. It all felt forced and random. The material we created absolutely came from the core of my interest, but it didn't at all communicate where it came from. It was unnecessary material. A direct translation from a fiction story into movement. I was too aware of this to go through with that.

If Anna does nothing, we will read into her anyway.

Why translate the story?

Gunilla Heilborn

With a slight hesitation I write her name down.³ But despite reasons and my extreme carefulness around naming influences, she has to be mentioned. Her work really made a difference.

At some point I had to face the fact that my connection to dance had been slowly disappearing. I didn't dance anymore. And when I tried, there was nothing but resistance. I lost interest in others dancing. I didn't care about performances. Dance film annoyed me. There was no point in dance for me anymore.

³ Gunilla Heilborn is my opponent. She will read this.

The freedom!

But I wasn't interested in making danceless fiction either. So what then?

Of course when I feel resistance and annoyance, something is going on. And in hindsight it is quite easy to see that I needed to let go of all my presets around dance, before I could work with it again. I had to discover a new potential in dance, that I had trusted to exist, but didn't actively look for yet. I froze until I found it.

Gunilla Heilborn.

In her films I recognized that it is possible to relate to dance in a more free way. I recognized that it is possible for dance to be necessary, without the narrative being choreographically pushed forward move by move. I recognized that an intersection of dance and fiction is possible. I recognized an overcoming of a one on one translation from concept into film. I recognized the acknowledgement of the craft of editing. I recognized work that had to be film.

I don't know what she aimed for. Or how she did it. I recognized what I was aiming for. And it enabled me to find a way to get there.

Fragmentation and text. And a weird Anna.

We will read into her anyway.

An infinite amount of short films

There is an incredible amount of short films available, to be found anywhere around the web. I watched many. I didn't find mine. That was nice.

Cinematography: theory & practice

Oh, this beautiful book! Such incredible images and explanations of how motion picture functions.

Immediate modesty.

This part of the work needed to be done by someone else.

Floris Verweij.

Yet not yet.



FINDING THE PLOT

Humans are weird and we are fully committed to it. We have our very true understanding of who we are as a species and how we got here. Every individual has access to this understanding and the capability of creating opinions out of that understanding. Every tiny little dot in the whole of humankind understands and oversees the whole. Humankind is one blob. And of course the blob is broken.

I came to realize that in the background of it all, my mind had been sitting on figuring out its stance towards current socio-ecological issues. I recognized it in my slow revealing voice.

I have doubts when it comes to a profound and rigid knowing of how things went down, or how they should progress. And in the current situation I was in, for the larger part that happened to express itself in activist opinions. Well informed. Well articulated. Well thought through. But not me.

It took me almost a year to dare myself to write about it.

SLEEP DEPRIVATION

One day I woke up.

One day I woke up again.

And again.

Until I finally stopped falling asleep.

When I am awake, I see. I see as much as I can see and I see it clearly and as one. This is what defines me as an artist. The ability to see.

This expresses itself in different ways within my work, within my methods and within me as a person. Because I am also just a person. And when I am awake, there is nothing special about me.

A few rules that seem to apply:

1. The full story can never be told by one person. There is always a context, a surrounding, endless other angles. My work can therefore not be about one single subject or one single person. One can not contain it all. Claiming so is exceptionally arrogant. In conversation, this is something to become aware of and the day I stopped falling asleep, I did. Conversations to me are not about the person. Especially not about a bunch of individuals. To me, conversations are about what has been said and what needs to be said. The total. To me it is important to acknowledge complexity, by listening and adding what has been left out. Sometimes I agree. But only if an agreement is needed. In general I don't see any point in agreeing. Agreeing is about the person. And there is nothing special about me. Or about you.
2. All force is force. All pushing is pushing. I experience potential for a force free world. I wish for that. So I can't push for it. My work is not meant to provoke. It is not meant to create movement or action. My work is meant to line up with my ideology, not to shove it down the throat of this society. My future work doesn't exist yet, so it should. Because of rule 1. Not because I am cool.
Humans have a need to improve. We did so up until today's luxury, then we figured out today's luxury is not sustainable (both environmentally and socially). Sustainability is the new improvement. It can always be better. I think that comes mainly from our basic state: what should be improved? Where is the suffering? Yet to me, suffering (which general) is not an absolute truth. It is something we do. It made us incredibly successful. I think that if we are truly special enough that we are entitled to a sustainable paradise, we should maybe consider to stop improving. In every direction. To rule this need out of our DNA, until we're content as beings. But we are not entitled to anything (please, think about this sentence for a brief while). And we are not gods. We are not special. When I woke up, I felt the forces that were working on me. I decided to live my life outside of these forces. This results in behavior. Not activism. All force is force.
3. When I feel frustration, I need to eat.
4. I will always be honest.
Note: I consider honesty as something different from 'telling the truth'.
5. I lied about always being awake. I am not. Sometimes I sleep.
6. Whatever I think when I am asleep, I can not take seriously.
My first priority will always be: wake the fuck up.



In my film I wanted to both question humankind as well as our way of questioning it.

Layers!

Text: a human's comment on humankind. A linear portrait of the history of humankind, in the form of the life story of some 'Anna'.

Image: humankind. Fragments of the life of Anna. Linked to, yet not necessarily following, the story. Floating around it. Radiating unimportance. Weird.

The story would be told by a Swedish Latte Pappa, who tells it to his Latte Pappa friend, while sitting at a snowy graveyard on a beautiful day in the middle of their paternity leave with their babies and their dogs, while someone is shoveling snow from the graves.

They have humankind all figured out.

And I wrote my first film script.

DEAR TREE, PLEASE DON'T SPILL ON OUR GRAVE

Written by

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October 19th 2019
Version 1

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Part I - dear tree, please don't spill on our grave

1 EXT. AUTUMN GRAVEYARD - DAY 1
A WORKINGMAN is wearing ear protection.
Brutal sound.

Leaves fly.

WORKINGMAN is cleaning the graveyard with a leave blower.

ANNA sits on a bench, her face in her hands. A plant next to her. Annoyingly happy jazzmusic starts when the title shows.

ANNA manipulates the skin of her face with her hands. Her eyes don't focus. She looks up and she smiles.

ANNA (fast) puts a hand on the ground. Foot on the ground.

2 INT. THE ROOM - DAY 2
A door closes.

Black out.

Silence.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

Anna Anna Anna. Goddess Anna. Today she is in the middle of the biggest chaos she has ever caused and I am not sure she even realizes it.

But let's start at the beginning.

Part II - a day in the life of Anna

3 INT. THE ROOM - DAY 3
ANNA lies on the floor, flat on her belly.

She tries to reach the apple that is just a little too far away. She is surrounded with cardboard boxes, some food, a camping stove, the plant, some other plants, a bucket and few small cups and glasses filled with water and a bunch of stuffed animals. A bunny hops around in the room. Her dog sits by the door. On the wall there is some paper hanging that suggests either the beginning of the design of a house, or an abstract art piece. A pencil and a piece of chalk on the floor. On the other wall there's a framed photo of a monkey.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

Anna was born too early and Anna is an only child. Well. No. Anna has all the treats of an only child. When Anna was young, she had at least five older sisters, but somehow she managed to make the sisters move out only just after she learned how to speak.

ANNA does seemingly random things, but she does it with dedication and without hesitation.

While the voice over continues to a fragmentary montage of the different things she does, mixed with abstract contemporary choreography.

4 INT. THE ROOM: WALL - DAY 4
Designing the perfect house

There are already a few lines on the paper, without being anything specific. ANNA walks to the 'work' and looks at it for a while. She takes the pencil that lies on the floor en before she even looks at the drawing again, she already draws a line. And a few more.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

Anna is an amateur architect, with quite little talent. It is incredible how she manages to ruin every centimeter she finds, then acknowledges that that cm is ruined, then just goes to bed to ruin the next cm tomorrow. Of course she is very successful. She is working on the ultimate project now: designing the perfect house. It will be a disaster. And she already sent out the invites to the house

warming. And forgot about it. It is today. I can't wait.

She takes a few steps back and looks at what she made. She bites the pencil and comes closer. Her left eye is only a few centimeters away from the drawing.

ANNA starts working on a very detailed part of the design. Completely in to it, she doesn't realize she is slowly tilting sideways. When she takes a little more distance again, she tries to fix whatever went wrong. Only to zoom in and tilt again. It leads to the lines needing to be thicker and thicker.

Every now and then, ANNA makes a 'zoom lens' of her hand to look through.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

But first a little more about the mysterious disappearance of the sisters.

ANNA eats a carrot.

ANNA looks at a glass of water on one of the boxes. She pushes it over. Water drips down.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

If you ask Anna how she made this happen, she might tell you the story of how she lured them into having a picknick with her and how she chased them down until they vanished. Or how she taught herself how to eat so quickly that she could finish all the food before the sisters even got a chance to look at it. Slowly starving them to death.

Or she might tell you she had nothing to do with it. With her cute face.

5 INT. THE ROOM: FLOOR - DAY
Hunting down a bunny

5

ANNA sits in primitive sit amongst the stuffed animals in the corner. She scans for the bunny until she finds it. She makes a zoom lens of her hand and follows the bunny. Keeping up the lens while staying low, she slowly starts to move towards the bunny. She tries to be stealthy. When she almost reached the bunny, she dives and misses. The bunny hops away, but doesn't seem to care so much. After a few attempts, she starts to use the stuff that's in the room to build a trap. Eventually she catches the bunny by placing a box over it.

ANNA lights up a fire and lifts the box to get the bunny. It escapes.

ANNA places a box over it again and eats an apple. She sits down next to her dog, they both look at the box.

ANNA throws a carrot in the pot on the fire.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

The truth is, she doesn't know.

Sometimes Anna finds small objects that belonged to one of her sisters. She collects them to try to reconstruct an image of them. Depending on her mood, the image looks like a savage clown or an innocent hero.

But all still better than their monkey mother. Yes. Anna's mother is a monkey.

6 INT. THE ROOM: BOXES - DAY
Stekkie

6

ANNA looks around and sees the plant in the corner. She comes closer and looks at it for a while before she starts playing with it. A leave comes off. ANNA takes some soil out of the pot and puts it on the floor. She plants the leave and looks around.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

Anna is quite clever. And quite arrogant for it. But it wasn't always like that. When Anna was little, she had an imaginary friend. Her best friend in the whole world. Maybe a bit more than that.

At first she mostly saw him hiding in the forest. He seemed sweet. And everywhere. As she grew older, he did too. He moved into the house with her and joined her in her 'no' phase. Anna had several of those. He was pushing a bit for monogamy. She agreed to it, under the condition that she could change his name whenever she wanted. Brilliant move.

He got a bit grim sometimes.

Sometimes Anna still forgets that he isn't real.

Anna is somewhat of a slow learner. With a funny learning curve. It's not really a curve. The graph looks more like stairs: it flats out for a while, and then takes a sudden next step. Anna just levels up and waits.

ANNA collects all the plants and brings them to the corner, together with some small pots and cups. She starts to remove leaves and branches and plants them in soil. There are some stones as well. She takes a stone and puts it in her pocket.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

She refused to walk until she was two. And then one day, she just stood up and walked away. Same with learning how to speak. She didn't. She didn't learn. She didn't speak. Maybe some sounds.

And then, when she was three, she went to the bakery with her mother and her sisters and out of the blue she suggested to the mother to leave the sisters with the baker. They had such an enormous head, she said. In even better language than the mother or the sisters could ever produce. Just like that.

ANNA stares out of the window, there are trees outside. She plays with the skin of her face. She breaths in to start speaking. She breaths out, creating a cloudy spot on the window. She repeats this a few times and then tries to look through the cloud. She draws a figure.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

Soon after that, the sisters were gone. Anna never spoke again. The rumour goes that if Anna would speak again, everything would disappear. People kind of keep calm now.

ANNA washes her hands in the bucket.

7 INT. THE ROOM - DAY
Organizing / reorganizing

7

ANNA looks around in the room. She sees the drawing on the wall. The plants in the corner. She sees the dog. The bunny. The boxes.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

Anna conquered the world. With nothing she traveled all around, absorbing as much as she could. She went to the hottest deserts and to the coldest mountains. Anna didn't care, she was on top of the world. Adventurous. Walking for miles and miles. Eating anything she could find. Learning how to cook. Making her own clothes. She was a great hunter. Quite crafty as well. And then she settled down.

ANNA starts to move the boxes around. Some are heavy, some are light. She arranges the boxes in different ways. One line. A wall. A tower.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

She figured if the sun does the same every day, why shouldn't she? So she does.

ANNA's back hurts. She sits down.

ANNA looks into a box and closes it right away. She looks into another box and takes out a book. She reads the book and looks around. She sees the drawing on the wall. The plants in the corner. She sees the dog. The bunny. The boxes.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

Getting up in the morning. Getting dressed accordingly to the weather. Eating a pig and a

potato. Organizing her house. Working. Anna is a doctor and an undertaker. And she married a dog.

With the piece of chalk she found on the floor, she marks a territory for all the different things in the room.

The stuffed animals in the corner look at ANNA.

8 INT. THE ROOM: WINDOW & FLOOR - DAY
Discovering gravity

8

ANNA looks at the figure she drew on the window. She plays a little with her skin, tilts slightly sideways and wipes away the figure with her sleeve.

TOBIAS (V.O)

Years later Anna traveled around the world again. This time she wasn't as adventurous, she had clear goals and knew where she was going. She messed up a few times though, and she refuses to admit these mistakes. Or learn from them. Out of ignorance, not because it is difficult. Just because she can.

ANNA melts sideways. Her hair reaches the floor.

TOBIAS (V.O)

The goals of these travels were to make sure everybody knew about her. And to learn stuff about stuff.

ANNA brings her hair to her ear. It drops back down. She tries again, but it drops down. She sways a bit.

In one move she comes all the way up to standing straight, throwing her hair backwards. She continues the movement, using momentum, flipping over to the other side. She falls, catches herself with one arm and she rolls to the floor.

TOBIAS (V.O)

Later on she realized that she didn't really learn anything. She mostly went around teaching others about all her skills and ideas. Because she was ahead. Way ahead. So far ahead, everybody must have been so grateful.

ANNA falls to the floor in different ways.

TOBIAS (V.O)

She punched a lot of people in the face during these times.

ANNA jumps, while looking down.

TOBIAS (V.O)

Anna also took some home. People. She did a lot of things. Just because she could.

It was during these years that she discovered that her mother was actually her mother and not a pet. Or a fun au pair. Or a weird coincidence.

She thought a lot about this since. She even started visiting her mother again, after she

had locked her up somewhere. Anna brings her a banana every now and then. And thinks that she is fitter.

One day Anna sliced her leg open.
Just to see what is there.

ANNA sits down and reaches for the apple, that is just nearby enough for her to grab it without falling. She looks at the apple. She drops the apple.

TOBIAS (V.O)

Ever since Anna stopped hunting, she has no enemies anymore. Maybe also because she lives in a house now. Or. House. She lives in an indoors.

9 INT. THE ROOM - DAY
Random actions and choreography

9

ANNA performs an absurdist choreography. The choreography consists of actions such as looking around, stalling, explaining abstract concepts with her body, connecting different spots in the room, taking different positions, using the props to lean on.

TOBIAS (V.O)

And Anna keeps score. Always. At first just of the small things. With stones. Now she includes everything and everyone. She came up with a system for this. Something with balloons. It's rubbish.

But it seems to be important to her. And she made it sound like it all makes a lot of sense. She sold it well. People forgot they don't understand. They die for it. Anna feels safe.

Her fingers walk across a box. Her feet slide backwards. Her head flies up.

ANNA throws the stone from her pocket in a jar. She is whole again and looks at the photograph on the wall. She shrinks and takes a leap to the box with the books. She takes another book from the box. It makes her stand up straight.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

Anna doesn't have so many friends.

ANNA stands straight at different places, choreographed in a game with the camera.

ANNA stands straight next to the dog.

Someone knocks on the door.

Part III - look nice, pitch in and join the party

10 INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT
Decoration chaos

10

ANNA reaches out with her foot, stretching her leg all the way, so that she doesn't have to get up and manages to open the door slowly and slightly with her foot. She stays where she is and looks at the door when the PARTY GUESTS come in. The dog by her side.

They all carry a lot of stuff and they are dressed colorful and festive.

ANNA looks at them. She does nothing. They don't seem to notice her.

In a subtle, yet chaotic choreography the PARTY GUESTS decorate the room in to a festive situation.

The people that come in drop a balloon in the jar. One person doesn't and get's thrown out brutally. Three people stand in a corner, making someone who came underdressed change into a more festive outfit. They hide the old clothes in one of the boxes. Every now and then someone draws a figure on the window.

Two people are decorating a tower of boxes with ugly party lamps. As soon as they are done, someone else takes the lamps and places it elsewhere by climbing on top of someone and handing them on the ceiling. Someone is put in a box. Several people take balloons from the jar, blow them up and attach them to the ceiling. Someone is putting all the plants in a box. Someone is pouring drinks and handing them out.

The people eat leaves from the plants. Someone puts a party hat on the dogs head. Someone puts a party hat on the stuffed bird in the corner. The bunny escapes, when someone is moving boxes around. Two people are scanning the books in the corner. Others are opening different boxes to see what's in there. One of the books makes you stand up straight and barely able to move for about ten seconds. The book is passed on amongst the people. Someone is getting drunk. Several people make adjustments to the drawing on the wall. Someone drops a glass.

11 INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT
When Anna steps in

11

ANNA dives and catches the glass.

It is the start of a sequence where ANNA prevents smaller and bigger disasters from happening. Such as people punching each other in the face. Or ruining the books. She releases the person from the box. She separates people that are wrestling over a piece of candy. She catches someone who falls. People are taking risks. Testing their limits. Throughout this scene the dancers will build up a suggestion towards a set rhythm, created with small actions.

As the chaos get's bigger, ANNA is starting to place everybody in one of the territories she marked earlier on, on the floor. She makes sure everybody has a

glass of wine and something to eat. Without paying much attention to make sure the wine is divided equally. The people respect their place, but they still try to take stuff from their neighbors. Or they make trades across the room by throwing objects to each other. When ANNA is done organizing, she raises her glass and rings it with her nail. Everybody pretty much shuts up and looks at ANNA. ANNA looks at them. Some of the people look afraid. Others smile. Others take a sip of their wine. For a second all the faces are hidden behind a balloon.

ANNA smiles. Opens her mouth.

ANNA

...

12 INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT 12
Dance, damn it

ANNA breaths and empties her wine. Everybody drinks their wine and throws their glass in the air. The glasses disappear.

Together with ANNA, all the people fall into a synchronized sequence of movement through the space, connected by rhythm. The musicians play the music.

It is a play of movement and camera. The dancers respond effortlessly to the suggestions the camera creates, playing with the laws of physics. Whatever happens with the room, the people anticipate to and find their way around it. It is a game between camera and movement, supported by chaotic but rhythmical music by the musicians.

Building up to no climax.

Freeze frame.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

And here we are. Yes. That is pretty much Anna.

Fucking Anna.

Sometimes I feel the need to punch her in the face.

ANTON (V.O.)

I kind of think you would get in trouble for that.

TOBIAS (V.O.)

Do you think it is better to just let her suffocate in her own party?

Part III - dear sky, shut up

13 EXT. WINTER GRAVEYARD - DAY 13
TOBIAS and ANTON are sitting on a bench at the graveyard with their babies and their dogs. And some chocolate. It is a beautiful white scenery, covered in snow. Someone is shoveling snow.

TOBIAS plays with the skin of his face.

TOBIAS

I mean, why didn't she just lock the door?

ANTON

Hm. Or make it more exclusive somehow. She should have thrown all the food out of the window. Or she should just say something, wouldn't that be the easiest?

Here, do you want some?

TOBIAS

Greedy and a pushover. Lazy and a perfectionist. Dumb and naive. And way too fucking nice.

ANTON

She is god and her mother is a monkey. What ya gonna do..

TOBIAS (to his dog)

Nature, sit!

TOBIAS throws a ball.

A cat walks by.



Of course I was yet to discover that a film script is nothing but a concept to overcome as well.

FINDING THE WORLD

There was a day where I thought it was a really good idea for me to write this film and produce it and direct it.

So I did.

For many reasons this was fun.

For many reasons this was tough.

I summarize:

It is hard to produce a film from a distance. It was fun to work with a group of great dancers, who all get along very well. It is hard to schedule rehearsals with a great group of dancers who volunteer for this. It is hard to feel artistic freedom when working with a great group of voluntary dancers who all get along very well. It is fun to work with musicians Thomas Jaspers and Jort Terwijn, both live and in preproduction. It is hard to realize that working with live music on set is incredibly difficult when not carefully planned out. It is fun to solve problems. It is hard to find a location from a distance. It is hard to know what kind of location to want. It is hard to not have any money. It is fun to write a script. It was tough to not have a location the day before we started rehearsing. It was fun to find a location in the middle of the night, the day before we started rehearsing. It was fun to turn a small storage space into a world in two days. It was tough to suddenly be a set designer. It was hard to skip two full days of rehearsing. It was fun to rehearse. It was amazing to work with Anna. It was amazing to work with Floris. It was tough to cook for 15 people, while also choreographing on the spot, while also communicating with Floris about how to shoot the scenes. It was fun to work with Luc van Baaren, our sound designer. It was fun to shoot at a graveyard. It was hard to shoot with animals. It was fun to shoot with animals. It was fun to do it all. To be there. To make all the decisions in the moment. To float on energy. It was so much fun to shoot this film.











With two weeks worth of cortisol and an irreplaceable external hard drive I returned to Göteborg.

FINDING THE FILM

For some reason I didn't crash. I spent a month in Stockholm instead, taking a freestanding course 'Physical Cinema: focus on editing' at Stockholms Konstnärliga Högskola. Taught by Kersti Grunditz Brennan, a film maker and editor with a background in dance.

I had calmed down my creative thunderstorm by spending a week synchronizing audio and video and organizing the footage.

(1

Ok, first I had slept for a week.

2

I will never work without a clapper again).

I had postponed looking at the material until I was in the safe arms of this course. The moment presented itself inevitably and without mercy. I was challenged into working with the material right away.

The sudden squeezing grip around my stomach from insecurity I saw coming.

The questioning of the whole concept I didn't.

The course was absolutely amazing. We emphasized on editing in relation to our own bodily experience. We emphasized on rhythm. We emphasized on working with and breaking continuity. We emphasized on working with tension and release. We emphasized on building a beginning and an end. Setting up a story.

I have learnt an incredible lot.

Most of all: how little I know.

And: the film is created in the edit. But I wasn't there yet.

While being in a constant awareness of my growth as an editor, I went through all kinds of frustration towards the material I was working with. I realized that everything I was learning would have been very helpful on set. I realized it is hard to know if faults lie in the script, the directing, or the edit, when all of those are done without much experience. So I just bashed on everything.

Why did I paint the wall yellow? Why didn't we shoot proper close ups of Anna? Why didn't I make the scenes more simple? Why didn't I pay more attention to directing the dancers? Why did I have to shoot with animals? Why did we shoot in daylight while the days were so short? Why didn't we go more bold with angles? Why did we take such a big risk with photography style? And with the location? Why did I forget that dance on camera looks stupid?

I called Ivo.

'Yeah, that's normal.'

With a decent level of frustration as my new standard I continued. It sounded like I was becoming a film maker.

I edited.

And that is an understatement.

I started to recognize new potential in the material. A very very welcome feeling.

Of course this one second of feeling happy and creative opened up the part of my brain that stored the most painful question that needed to be asked. I had touched upon this question before. Within the course in Stockholm. I wasn't ready then, my rigid brain needed my rigid concept. Luckily Kersti managed to plant something anyway.

Is the concept really in the material?

When I wrote the script I didn't think much about what Anna's home would look like, apart from that she had just moved in there. However, all the images I saw in my head didn't include any situation as particular as the toilet we shot in. In my head the whole situation of Anna looked a lot more normal. And relatable.

It was only in the edit phase that I started to realized that the concept didn't play out so well in this toilet. Or maybe at all. The weirdness of the images created a distance towards Anna that made it difficult to connect to her and to read the text into her. The plot twist at the end wouldn't make sense if there was no relation between Anna and the text. And the concept was built upon this plot twist.

Crisis.

I edited.

I edited.

I edited.

And then it hit me.

All this time I spent thinking about truth.

All these words I wrote about it.

I was in the assumption that I created a neutral portrait of the history of humankind. Be it a bit absurd and very low key, but I simply followed our history as we know it. I didn't create anything. This story needed to be told by Latte Pappa's to become something.

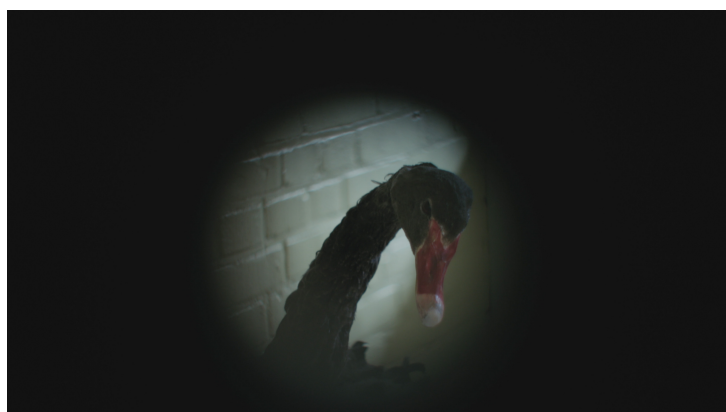
Again. I was in the assumption that I created a neutral portrait of the history of humankind.

Her name is Anna.

She lives in a toilet.

Right this. Exactly this. This was my voice. I am the Latte Pappa's.













TO CONCLUDE AT LEAST SOMETHING

A concept for me turns out to be something to stand on. An understanding of what I am doing and will do. A framework. Something that keeps me from flying away. Something that activates me. Something rigid to fight with. Something understandable. Something that filters input. Something that nurses my brain with the illusion that everything is in control. Something that creates a wall around me that protects me from questions like 'what is it that you are doing?' and 'what is your work about?'.

My concepts have all the answers.

I don't.

I am sitting behind that wall. Having fun. Finding my voice.

What happens when I am free?

Stuff.

Words. Photos. Music. Dance. Film.

That is not the question.

The question is:

How do I free myself today?

Maybe I'll have a double bass player jump off a building.

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