

Hummingbird



Peter Szewczyk

IDEA

We establish a cold, dead, industrial city. It's crumbling facades stained black with soot. A punky-looking woman, Audrey, stands in a queue to have some forms inspected. She looks completely incongruent from the rest of the faceless crowd with her bright tangerine hair, shaved on one side, revealing a tattoo of the ace of spades. Meanwhile an old woman, with a mean, pinched expression sits behind the counter pounding cryptic forms, with a heavy, metal stamp. When she gets to the head of the line, Audrey gets distracted by something. A colourful hummingbird outside the window hovers for a moment, temporarily gracing the bleak city with a daub of color, then darts off. Audrey is transfixed by this, not only because of its rarity, but also because among the many tattoos she has, her favourite is of a hummingbird. The impatient old woman notices Audrey's distraction. She surveys her assortment of piercings, tattoos, and candy-coloured clothes. A look of contempt and disgust clouds over her face. A sinister thought comes to mind. She slams down the stamp with frightening force, catching Audrey off guard, and crushing her finger tips. Audrey lets out a yelp and in shock/horror glares at the old woman. She takes her papers, while nursing her battered fingertips. The old woman chuckles to herself, while continuing her work.

When she gets home, Audrey notices that the fingertips are still sore, and a bruise is forming under the nails. As the day goes on, the nails get increasingly darker, and an ominous bruise is forming on all her finger tips. The blackness spreads up her fingers. The nails themselves look especially bad.



IDEA (CONTINUED)

The next morning, as she prepares to brush her teeth, she is shocked to see her hand has turned black. The nails that looked poorly yesterday, are today cracked and decayed. As she inspects the damaged cuticles, part of the nail flakes off. She gets an idea. No stranger to pain, she resolves to clean up the awful affliction. As she reaches for some clippers, she catches sight of pliers, and decides they would be more effective. She sits in a chair, in the middle of the kitchen and takes a deep breath before starting on the first nail. It's too gutwrenching to watch so we don't actually show the moment, rather the camera tilts down to show red "blood" dripping into a porcelain dish at her feet. 1 down, 9 to go. She pulls the second one off. But hold on! What is this? The second nail drips not red blood, but a vivid, cobalt blue liquid. She is dumbstruck by this new development. The next nail produces metallic green. The next a rich violet. She is bleeding paint. Pure pigment. She walks through the house in a daze/delirium, dripping paint everywhere.

She sets off for the hospital, and gets on a bus. Confused and embarrassed Audrey hides her bleeding hand in her pocket. After all, this is a city that is crushingly sterile and people already give her enough dirty looks. The bus lurches, she reaches out, grabbing the man next to her. The man's arm gets a multi-colored hand print. Frightened, she runs out of the bus, with the man yelling angrily at her. The man inspects his arm, and finds that the paint doesn't come off. The paint starts to darken before his eyes, and dries to a matte black. We cut back to the girl and she is running down the street, bumping into people and knocks a boy down to the ground. We cut back to the man on the bus. A circle of people have formed around him. The black handprint, has dried to a cracked earth texture. It continues to crack and now starts to bleed an assortment of colours. We cut back to the boy that was knocked down, sitting on the sidewalk. His nose starts to bleed. It's bubblegum pink.



IDEA (CONTINUED)

Audrey is frantic now, running down the street. People look on in amazement at the girl with the blackened hand, bleeding colour from her fingertips. Exhausted, she stumbles and falls. She coughs up paint before her head drops to the pavement. The light fades from her eyes, just as, strangely, the colour is draining from her hummingbird tattoo. A pool of multicolour dye forms around her. It starts to trickle across the sidewalk, and reaches a sewer grate. We cut back to a circle of people around her. The crowd are careful not to step in the pool of colour. We cut back to a close-up of the color dripping into the sewer. The colour is leaking into the bowels of the city. The sidewalk starts to shake. People try to keep their balance as the sidewalk splits. Larger and larger fissures form. Finally the blocks of cement forming the sidewalk separate and multi-colored paints bubbles up like technicolour oil. The massive blocks of a building facade rupture. Colour oozes out. Everyone inside the building across the street runs to the windows to see. We recognize that this is the same interior we saw earlier. As everyone peers out the windows, the camera pushes past them to reveal one person is decidedly not at the windows. She is completely unfazed. It's the mean old woman who crushed the girl's fingers. She is grinning fiendishly. We pan down to see she is refilling her stamp pad. To do so, she pulls her glove off, revealing a black hand. As she presses her thumb and finger together, a drop of blue ink seeps out from under her nail. Just as the drop is about to hit the pad, we cut. **THE END.**

After a few credits roll, a final shot appears on screen. A woman is tugging at her daughter, urging her to keep walking. Police are sectioning off the sidewalk where colorful stains mark Audrey's collapse earlier, in a pool of paint. But it's not the stains the little girl is looking at. Her eyes are fixed on the building facade, that we earlier saw paint seeping out of. A huge image of a hummingbird was left on its expanse. We end on the girl's fascinated expression.





EXECUTION

I am aiming to shoot the four days needed sometime in the next six months. Two of the days would be indoor, probably London, and the remaining two days would be in either Krakow or an industrial English city. I would prefer Krakow for its coal-stained buildings and vintage tram system. An English city could be used, but I would avoid London for its many filming complications. Casting the lead should be easy (virtually anyone in Camden). I also have local talent in mind for the roles of Producer, 1st AD, and DP. I will shoot digitally on either cinema-style DSLR's or Red. The post should be ready in 6 to 8 weeks after filming, and I have a robust league of VFX veterans to call on for help. I have "pre-vised" the entire film and it clocks in under 4 minutes.

I feel the project has the very real potential to be outstanding. It's a tightly focused story, with bold sequences and a compelling pace. It touches on some universal themes but leaves a bit of room for the audience to apply their own meaning. My music clip for Maccabees, "Young Lions" was very well received and done in 3 months, for £700 with virtually no help. This project plays on the strengths I honed with that effort, but will have the benefit of an able crew, more funding, and more time.