II

CHAPTER

CREATING A FICTION

THE SCRIPT

A glimpse into our fiction

Considering the theme we have chosen to delve into, we are always exposed to the exaggerated way in which marginalized communities are represented.

So how can we honor marginalized groups and tell their story with an unbiased view of their identities, whilst simultaneously showing people just how normal these people are?

The answer is the previously mentioned haptic vision, that allows us to represent marginalized people in a more positive light. It's through haptic visuality that we can introduce someone to the world without having to speak for them, instead we are simply presenting to the public the various elements and feelings that make up that person's reality and personality.

Based on the teachings that Varda transmits through her film, we developed a fictional narrative where we introduce a character that is also fictional. **This character will slowly be unveiled by the viewer, through elements that build their identity**, allowing the spectator to create their own interpretation of this person's identity and further establishing a deeper connection, free of preconceived ideas.

X

Just like Varda, we will not introduce this person by describing them or letting them describe themselves, but through diversified sensorial components (visual, sonorous, tactile).

The person portrayed in our narrative is named Isabel. **Isabel is an ex-convict** that was sentenced to jail after committing a high damage offense by intentionally setting on fire the car of her former husband. As a result of this occurrence and others that simultaneously happened at the time - namely her drug addiction - she lost the custody of her children. Thanks to her good behavior she was allowed to reduce her sentence and was placed in a social reintegration program. The reintegration services provided her with a house and a professional internship. She has been working for a few months now and with the help of social workers, is starting the process to recover the custody of her kids.

Elements that take part in Isabel's day-to-day life are displayed throughout her house. Not only objects but also sounds that shape her identity and memories.

IDEALIZATION

The path to embodiment

Starting with the notion that the project's fiction
is based on real problems, and real people we
wanted to dive into the character building with
caution and respect.

**Deciding on representing the life of a former
convict and showing elements that represent
their life, without displaying only their
mistakes or problems.**

In fact, the goal is to show only enough of their
life through objects and other elements, giving
the spectator the opportunity to create their
own image of this person.

Before the incident that led Isabel into
getting arrested, there had been a plethora of
factors that led her into her drug addiction,
including pressure from her family, financial
problems, mental health conditions and a
particular decaying relationship with her
husband that only got worse once she found
out that he was cheating on her, becoming the
catalyst for the whole situation.

**To further enhance the purpose of our fiction,
we initially wanted to assemble a space in our
University, with all the elements we thought
were crucial to Isabel's character building.**

This space would include some scattered pieces of furniture - depersonalized, to convey the idea that the space is not Isabel's real home - and certain objects that could lead to an interpretation of the character's personality, state of mind and living situation.

The objects would include, drawings from her children (either previously given or given at their planned meetings), notes from her weekly therapy sessions, a picture of her after finishing the sentence, a basket with crochet yarns, old family picture albums, her lawyer's contact card and various more.

By choosing assorted objects that represent her likes, her personality and daily-life, we are no longer focusing on just what makes her a person from a marginalized group, but instead, on what simply makes her a person with a specific personality and identity.

Besides the objects, we wanted to incorporate sound into our project, including audios of possible conversations between Isabel, friends and family, her thoughts as her life progresses and as she tries to overcome her grief and past dependency, and also ambience sounds of her daily life - cooking, searching things on her laptop, meetings with her children.

However, we came to the realization that, because we wanted to evoke the feeling of a house (no matter how depersonalized it is), we could not put together the project room as we intended, because it simply wouldn't look like a real house, no matter how hard we tried to incorporate home-like elements in it.

STRUGGLES ALONG THE WAY

Dealing with adversity

With the complications that the chosen space brought, we had to work fast to come up with a solution that could convey the feeling of a home and that allowed us to translate that feeling into our project room.

The answer was actually a lot simpler than we first thought: a real house.

A real house where we could set up the same objects that we were going to display previously in our faculty, but now with it would be a real home space with a real bedroom, kitchen and living room.

By arranging the elements already collected throughout the house, Isabel's life and personality came to life, creating a closer bond with the viewer that can more easily relate to some of the aspects of our character's reality.

With this new approach, we decided to capture pictures of Isabel's personal space at her temporary house, focusing on small details that can aid the viewer into creating the image of this person, without other elements distracting them from the essential ones.
With the photos taken, we compiled them and created a slideshow effect that will be projected on one of the walls of the space we decided to use for our project room.

This allows the viewers to take their time, analyze each picture and try to put together the pieces of the puzzle, without having to interact with the objects.

Apart from the slideshow we also wanted to continue to **incorporate the sound elements throughout the space**, so we included four headphones scattered around the room - each with its individual importance - that will aid in the character building of Isabel. We chose headphones because they allow the visitors to listen to each sound individually, for however long they want (or even choose to listen to only certain audios).

One thing we learned as we kept developing the project, is **just how hard it is to have an unbiased opinion over people**. As it is - mostly because there have always been barriers between communities - we have already created in our minds an image of what people are made of, what their behaviors and costumes are, and what makes them themselves.

Especially with marginalized communities, who are portrayed in very calculated ways, which allows room for descrimination and ostracization, permeating this image that continues to degrade people in various ways.

Coming to terms with the fact that, by doing what we decided to do with our fiction, could lead to making the same mistakes in regards to representation and lack of consideration, was sometimes frightening - as the purpose of our project is precisely to counter this idea of speaking over people, disregarding their true identity, and basing our opinion of them solely on stereotypes.

REFERENCES

Fictional References

Daughters Of the Dust
Julie Dash (1991)

Caught between the future and the past,
between casket and womb, *Daughters Of
the Dust* is **a meditation not just on black life,
but on life itself**, the passage of time, and
the search for home. **It is not a story so much
as a family photograph** – studied, and patient,
pure and unadorned. Through images of
arresting beauty – sand dunes so granular
they become ethereal, white dresses against
black skin swaying in a crepuscular apricot
evening sky – Dash, cinematographer Arthur
Jafa, and production designer Kerry Marshall
lay out a **visual theory of diasporic beauty
that is, in and of itself, a utopian escape from
the thuggish, broken, scarred and suffering
images we typically see of blackness**.

Reassemblage
Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982)

In the films, installations and books she has produced in the years since *Reassemblage*, Trinh has continued in this spirit, **deconstructing claims to identity, presence and authenticity, holding them to be the product of patriarchal and colonialist epistemologies**. Whether in the re-enactments of *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989) and the poetic theorizing of *Woman Native Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (1989), or Win her more recent turn to exploring digitization and climate change, Minh-ha insists on dislodging the illusory purity of inherited categories to make way for the hybrid and in- between. Crucially, this cross-disciplinary practice is not one of simple negation: Minh-ha **breaks down dominant languages in order to imagine other forms of relation and expression**."

Ulysse
Agnès Varda (1982)

Ulysse **tells the story of a photograph** that Varda took as a young woman, which is also presented here. The film acts as **an inquiry into the image**: its significance in her life, and the lives of the models. Revisiting this image almost thirty years later, Varda **interrogates the memories of the moment the photograph was taken**, revealing some discomfort and misremembering of the event. Alongside, she explores the wider context of that day in 1954: her own life, and her transition from filmmaking to photography; her experience before and after becoming a mother; and the wider context of current affairs, from France's V-Day (leading to eventual US involvement in Vietnam), to the introduction of television in France. Touching upon her own life, and the political situations of each time, **the film raises questions about the impact of images on our collective and individual memory**.

REFERENCES

Project References

A Terceira Margem
e As Ruínas Circulares
João Seguro

In the private domain, the living rooms and
bedrooms are the top places for the exhibition
and **preservation of family memory**. The pine,
mahogany or oak furniture receives pieces
from past generations that attest to a lineage,
a history - all the weight of a succeeding
existence. The photograph on the dresser
is a beloved living monument; the portrait on
the wall is a silent recounting of yesteryear;
the chinoiserie, a moment, a souvenir, a
personal and family achievement. Private time,
is indeed different from public time. *A Terceira
Margem e As Ruínas Circulares* is an exhibition
by João Seguro that does precisely this **work
of archaeology, of local investigation of the
memories and objects of a community**,
in this case, Vila Nova da Barquinha.

A Cidade Incompleta
Fernanda Fragateiro

The exhibition that Fernanda Fragateiro designs in *A Cidade Incompleta* is **a long *promenade* through a fragmented city that the visitor constructs critically in their imagination**: puts on the working uniform from the first room; inquires about a wall under construction or demolition; contemplates the literature on urbanism, sociology of architecture and feminism, which informs the exhibition itself; reflects on the structures and infrastructures of social neighbourhoods, of **the genesis of urban identities that turn into subcultures and then cultures**; auscultates the coexistence between the natural and the built.

Soundtracks for the Deaf
Tatiana Macedo

Mostly composed of videos without sound, in the words of the curator, the exhibition offers us "a balanced articulation between successive approaches to the real - reconfiguring spaces and places and **reflecting on the social and cultural conditions that define life in these places**". To do so, it triggers us with "micro-events", in which **the camera lingers, admiring apparently banal episodes**. This is the power of the fixation of the gaze that transforms a probable reality into another that is open to possibilities, and returns us to a **triviality that is no longer vulgar**, but rather elevated to an evocative and poetic work. Introspection. Sound and image merge and redefine themselves continuously, in a visit that **rises to a third dimension, more intimate and singular**.