Technical Exercise 1: Pre-Production

(alone)

By Kirsti Briggs

Birds

Urban Environments

Freedom

Intention

I intend to plan and design a short video sequence called ‘Alone’ using key media production elements such as shot selection, camera angle and movement selection, as well as timings for individual shots. It will focus on the use of camera techniques as well as conveying themes without dialogue, such as the themes of loneliness, delusion and disorientation, and emotions such as misery and innocence.

Firstly, I intend to do this through scripting to detail my short video sequence incredibly clearly in order to make production easier and then via storyboarding to visualize my production and plan visual composition in clear and cohesive detail.

I plan to use story boarding and proper script format in order to develop key skills in how to plan ahead in effective ways of creating key production elements to communicate vital story elements such as the character’s loneliness, misery and fear at being in the streets alone to my audience. This will also help me in communicating with my actors by using the script to help them act and perform my vision and using proper storyboard format to aid myself and my actor in positioning themselves on the screen.

I also intend to experiment with complicated camera angles and shots as conceptualized in my storyboard, such as bird’s eye view, canted angles and from-ground shots, in order to increase my experience with handling a camera and directing my actors.

I plan to use the pre-production process in order to present ideas such as the concept of wandering one’s mind and being lost within one’s self, as well as the ideas that adolescence is a time of upheaval, change and disillusionment and to the achieve the effect of explaining my film’s meaning beyond the implied one in the physical film, adding extra depth to the production.

I also want to experiment with utilising the environment around me, since the film will be shot in the streets behind the school which have many diverse and interesting elements to incorporate within the film.

synopsis

A teenage girl is wandering the streets, alone, and unclear of where she is or how to get home. She remembers what it was like to be happy and remembers running through a grassy field. She falls to her knees in sadness as the short film comes to a close.

Treatment

A girl slowly fades onto the street, wearing a dress and bare feet. She walks through one street into the next, reading the signs and fondling flowers. When she comes to the park, she sits down on the swing and reminisces about a time when she was happy, running through grassy fields. She begins to cry, and she collapses to her knees as the screen fades to black.

‘ALONE’

AN

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

BY

KIRSTI BRIGGS

FIRST DRAFT

APRIL, 2011

25 WILTSHIRE STREET GLADSTONE PARK

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, 3043

93243360

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BLACK SCREEN

FADE IN:

1. EXT. URBAN STREETS- NOON

A young girl wanders through the streets, as ‘Wonderland Woods’ (Chris Vrenna) plays. She is dressed in only a grey-blue dress and black boots. Her feet are seen first, before she can be seen, gently touching flowers, feeling confused. She is lost and lonely. She eventually wanders into a park.

CUT TO:

2. EXT. URBAN PARK- NOON

The girl sits down on the swing and swings miserably, back and forth.

She begins to reminisce. The girl remembers watching birds and spinning around in joy, and she is seen back on the swing crying. She wanders away from the swing onto a field, where she collapses.

BLACK SCREEN

THE END

specifications

In order to effectively construct a media production I had to construct each element of the technical exercise efficiently. In constructing my brainstorm, I made sure that each word related to some concept I had for the film, rather than just words that related to what was actually in it. As such, the concept of ‘birds’, although mentioned in some of the technical exercise drafts, is not in the final concept. As for my intention, I was careful to clearly state exactly what I wanted to do with my film in order to make the reasoning behind every other production element clear and cohesive to those who view my technical folio. Every idea I wanted to include in the film is listed in my intention so it is precise. As for the script, I used proper script format for careful formulation of my ideas and to make sure all who read it understand it and can relate it to my storyboards. In my storyboards, I used careful composition and framing in order to portray what I wanted in my film in still-frame, drawn form and give myself a reference to use when it comes to actually filming my production. My treatment and synopsis also contribute to this for they detail my story in precise detail and abbreviated form respectively.

As for my shots and my shot list, I am using these specific shots in order to convey my idea clearly and demonstrate what I want to express.   
In shot 1, I used a from ground shot of the girl walking forward. I used this in order to experiment with camera angles as well as expressing that the girl is walking. In shot 2, I had the girl walking past a house with a confused expression. I used this shot in order to build up the concept of the girl walking around in many different places, and this theme continuous through out the shots. In shot 3, the girl walks past some gardens, again emphasizing that she is lost, unsure of where she is and walking around in numerous places (though the actual location will be just across the road from shot 2). In shot 4, the girl walks past a different house for all of the reasons listed above. In shot 5, the girl is shown swinging on a swing in a park, feeling lonely. This pays homage to the films title as well as establishing how lost the girl has become while wandering the streets. In shot 5, there is a close up of her on the swing as she becomes sad about being so lost. In shot 6, the girl is running across a field in a memory of times she was happy, conveying the girls longing to be happy and free again rather than lost. In shot 7, the girl stumbles forward, confused and lost, portraying that she is at the end of her ropes, and in shot 8, she collapses to the ground, portraying the end of her journey.

The use of a pre-production stage is helpful in creating a media production because it aids in construction of the production and allows for productive use of time rather than wasting time figuring out exactly what is to be put in the production. It means that the film has a clear direction rather than being made up on the spot in a way that may cause issues when the film is in production and post-production stages. It is this knowledge that I will use effectively and productively when it comes time for my major SAT- I need to make sure that all of my pre-production folio work is completed to the most comprehensive and easy to read format possible before any actual production begins.

This includes music.

realization

My intention was to create a video sequence involving a slightly surrealistic world where a girl gets lost using key media production elements such as shot selection, camera angle and movement selection, as well as timings for individual shots.

During planning I learnt to deal with the concept of not everything going to plan. For one, I did not schedule a clear enough date for my actor to be in my film, and as a result a misunderstanding ensued. She was unavailable to be in my film due to prior commitments, and with no one else to stand in, I had to be in the film. Being my own actor in my own film is sure to cause extreme issues regarding camera placement and development of ideas, however I am sure I will manage.

I have learned to be more mindful of the activities of those who are in my film and plan ahead in order to make sure they are free. It is incredibly irresponsible of me not to plan ahead in these issues and I have learnt my lesson. I will use this knowledge in the future when I plan and document my Media SAT- I will be getting in touch with each and everyone of my actors weeks or months before hand regarding dates to shoot.

However, there was a boon in being my own actor. I knew exactly what kind of mood and movement I wanted in my shots and because it was coming from my own head I knew how to portray it on camera. However, this may become an issue later done the line because I do not have the experience with working with actors and trying to give them directions. However, I plan to make sure both me and my actors are on the same page when it comes to shooting for my SAT production; I’m the boss, and what I say goes.

In my film, I believe I used the environment around me effectively, since every location within the film appears different, however each area is only a thirty second walk away from each other. Incidentally, I believe that my pre-production goal, which was portraying a girl who has become lost, was achieved through careful use of available locations depicted in the storyboards. This is similar to techniques used by major film makers in motion pictures such as *Lord of the Rings,* which was shot in New Zealand in order to utilize the immensely varied environment and decrease transportation costs. Since I am using the streets around my house, I have eliminated the concept of transformation costs with careful planning.

Whilst designing the film, I originally was going to have the girl looking genuinely bedraggled and lost as she wandered the streets. However, I figured that this method creating a character would be inconvenient regarding actor costume, and plus, it suited my original concept, which was outright being alone, (hence the title) and did not develop into a surreal, dream like world until much later in production.

shot List

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Shot.No | Scene No. | Shot Type | Shot Description | Sound Effects/Music |
| 1 | 1 | Flat close up shot | Girl walks forward on a concrete path, only her boots are visible. | Film Soundtrack ‘Wonderland Woods’ |
| 2 | 1 | Eye level mid shot | Girl walks past a set of bushes and a house, looking around confused. | Film Soundtrack ‘Wonderland Woods’ |
| 3 | 1 | Eye level mid shot | Girl walks past different house, still looking around confused and beginning to become disorientated. | Film Soundtrack ‘Wonderland Woods’ |
| 4 | 1 | Eye level mid shot | Girl walks past another house, and the screen splits, showing her upside down walking in another direction. | Film Soundtrack ‘Wonderland Woods’ |
| 5 | 2 | Eye level mid shot | The girl is swinging on a swing, and there is a mirrored image of her next to it. | Film Soundtrack ‘Wonderland Woods’ |
| 6 | 2 | Eye level close up | The girl is shown looking thoughtful, then sad, as she begins to reminisce about when she wasn’t lost. | Film Soundtrack ‘Wonderland Woods’ |
| 7 | 2 | Low angle mid shot | The girl is shown running through the park, but the shot is distorted, and there are two of her as she runs. | Film Soundtrack ‘Wonderland Woods’ |
| 8 | 2 | Eye level mid shot | The girl is shown stumbling forward down a path, looking depressed and miserable. | Film Soundtrack ‘Wonderland Woods’ |
| 9 | 2 | Eye level mid shot | The girl collapses to the ground, the image distorted as she gives up and the screen fades to black. | Film Soundtrack ‘Wonderland Woods’ |

Technical Exercise 2: Production and Post Production

(alone)

By Kirsti Briggs

Intention

I intend to shoot and edit a short video sequence detailing a girl’s gradual deterioration as she is hopeless lost through out urban streets, experimenting and utilising key media production elements such as shot selection, camera angle and movement selection as well as manipulate and use music to communicate to my audience the ideas of despair, fear, and loneliness as the girl continues her short journey. This will be done via camera operation, sound recording and editing software. Examples of this include experimenting with tripod positioning, camera location and manipulation of light (such as shooting in a dark area to convey a certain mood, or shooting in light areas to simulate a different time of day). This will include using and utilizing weather patterns to my advantage (or disadvantage) when it comes to shooting and editing my film. Since I am unable to control the weather (yet), I must work with what I have and this exercise will be how I learn to do so. I also want to experiment with complicated camera angles such as bird’s eye view and sky shots due to their difficulty and my intention of using them in my SAT production later in the year. It is my intention to create a film production that allows me, as a director, to develop the skills, techniques and experiences in order to create a well-shot and edited short film later in the year along with all the required writing and ideas.

I also intend to do this in order to develop how to experiment with different technical means of communicating information to an audience (emotion, character development, motivations, etc.) such as using a low camera angle to give the character a sense of strength and power, or a high angle shot to make the character seem small and insignificant in comparison to its surroundings. These camera techniques are essential in communicating my ideas to an audience and thus I wish to experiment with them and utilize them to portray my original concept.

I intend to do this through basic camera operation (sound and vision) and then importing footage via the use of Firewire cables into the MAC editing program Final Cut Pro. And through post-production effects on Final Cut Pro, including video filters, colour corrections, sound manipulation and sound editing, such as using appropriate tracks to convey moods and emotions present within my production.

I intend to use Panasonic MiniDV cameras to capture my footage. I then plan to use Firewire cables in order import footage from the camera into the Final Cut Pro editing program. I then plan to use Final Cut Pro to edit my footage, add effects, video transitions and filters to give my video production a more finished and professional look. This equipment will be used in order to communicate the information developed in the pre-production process in Technical Exercise 1 as a finished media product.

I plan to use the production and post-production processes in order to produce effects from already established ideas such as loneliness, sadness and the feeling of being lost in the pre-production stage to achieve particular effects such as disorientation and surrealistic moods.

During production, I intend to discover the best method in approaching my actor(s) with new ideas, concepts or suggestions that I feel will better my production in a civil and concise manner, as well as communicate to the actors what exactly I am aiming for regarding mood, body language and movement.

specifications

I will utilize the program Final Cut Pro whilst editing my film, using tools such as Cross Fade and Razor in order to cut the film into its right order and have it fade out. I will use soundtrack and non-diegetic sound added during the editing process in order to convey the feeling of depression and despair.

During filming, I used equipment such as a camera, cassette tape and tripod. I used the camera and cassette to record and save my film into an editable format (.mov file). I used the tripod in order to make my footage steady and professional. I utilized proper script and storyboard format in order to give my actor(s) clear, coherent instructions to my actors while transporting and effectively using the equipment.

I shot in the streets surrounding my house due to the broad variety of locations it offers, allowing me to portray the girl’s lack of direction through use of differing spaces. I used my tripod during these shots and positioned it in various steady angles due to me being my own actor. I used the playback function of the cameras in order to check that all of my footage had been written onto the cassette before I finished shooting, packing up my equipment and shutting down the camera.

Once I returned to school I used the Macintosh computers to upload my footage and used Final Cut Pro to begin editing. I mainly employed the use of the Razorblade tool as well as the Lock tool in order to delete all of my redundant audio. Once the film was in a clearly viewable form, I began adding effects by searching through the effects tab in Final Cut Pro, which provides many effects for use in films. I began looking for ways to reduce the intensity of the footage for I had shot on a sunny day. First I experimented with Desaturate and Contrast, as I would for an image that I wanted to darken. However, the footage did not turn out as I would have liked, so I began searching for an alternate method of editing my footage to make it darker and more surreal. I eventually came across Colour Corrector, which allowed me to adjust the RBG levels as well as the Light and Dark tones within the image. After experimenting with it for a little while, I came to the conclusion that this effect was the best one in regards to my film being dark and surreal and proceeded to use it on almost every clip in my film.

I used blur on some clips effectively in order to convey movement and disorientation. I also liberally used the effect of overlaying footage over another piece on order to create distorted and phantasmagorical effects on my footage. I also used a specific effect that creates the effect of a mirror. By changing the pivot point in the footage, I create highly interesting and slightly mind-boggling effects.

camera technique specification

Shot 1

Shot Type: Close up

Camera Angle: Flat

Duration: 5 seconds

Movement: None

Setting: Street

Reason: I used this shot to establish the girl’s location in the film as well as the concept of wandering around.

Shot 2

Shot Type: Midshot

Camera Angle: Flat

Duration: 5 seconds

Movement: None

Setting: Street, house exterior

Reason: This shot, like the next two, was used to develop the idea that the girl is wandering around confused, disorientated and alone.

Shot 3

Shot Type: Midshot

Camera Angle: Flat

Duration: 3seconds

Movement: None

Setting: Street, house exterior with pretty bushes

Reason: See shot 2

Shot 4

Shot Type: Long shot

Camera Angle: Flat

Duration: 6 seconds

Movement: None

Setting: Street, house exterior

Reason: See shot 2

Shot 5

Shot Type: Midshot

Camera Angle: Flat

Duration: 8 seconds

Movement: None

Setting: Swingset

Reason: I wanted to have a lead up to the girl’s reminiscence, this and shot 6 are what accomplish that.

Shot 6

Shot Type: Closeup

Camera Angle: Flat

Duration: 4 seconds

Movement: None

Setting: Swingset

Reason: This is a close up just before the girl begins to reminisce, showing how miserable she is (meant to be).

Shot 7

Shot Type: Midshot

Camera Angle: Flat from ground

Duration: 12 seconds

Movement: None

Setting: Park

Reason: This is the girl remembering when she was cheerful, as she runs across the screen. It is very distorted because it’s a memory from the past that is no longer relevant to her current situation.

Shot 8

Shot Type: Eye level

Camera Angle: Flat shot

Duration: 4 seconds

Movement: None

Setting: Street

Reason: This is the girl stumbling forward. It is meant to symbolise how she has begun to give up on ever returning home, and no longer walks with the determination she did previously.

Shot 9

Shot Type: Close up

Camera Angle: High angle

Duration: 4 seconds

Movement: None

Setting: Street

Reason: This is the girl collapsing. It symbolises both the end of the film and the end of the girl’s journey. It is meant to leave the viewer wandering what happens next and also meant to let me experiment with a fadeout.

realization

My intention was to create a video sequence involving a slightly surrealistic world where a girl gets lost using key media production elements such as shot selection, camera angle and movement selection, as well as timings for individual shots. I also intended to experiment with editing techniques such as blur and cross fade in Final Cut Pro.

I accomplished this by using proper equipment such as a camera and a tripod, however, not everything went to plan. On the day of filming, my actor, my sister, was caught up in other plans. Feeling pressured, I ended up being my own actor. This, of course, led to other issues. A few of my camera angles as detailed in my storyboard required me to film them, I had to alter the shots so they could be filmed using a tripod or a flat camera. However, this gave me experience in positioning the camera correctly in order to get the shots I intend to get and to know when something is impossible (such as a bird’s eye view shot when you are the actor).

Once my filming was completed, I returned to school to begin editing. I ran into a number of complications starting off, for I was mostly unfamiliar with the program (having only worked with Windows Movie Maker in the past and nothing more advanced) and had to learn from scratch. A number of effects I originally had no idea how to accomplish, such as overlays and cross fades. Although I know this now, it was a hurdle I had to step over on my route to finishing my Technical Exercise.

My lack of knowledge regarding the program led to other issues. For example, initially I experimented with effects such as blur and bloom, however, these made the footage look even worse than it was and overly brightened it (an effect I did not want). Thus, it became obvious that I had to find other methods of altering my footage, and eventually stumbled across the Colour Corrector, which I almost believe to be my greatest discovery regarding using Final Cut Pro whilst shooting this exercise. It allows me to alter my footages highlights and darkness as well as the colour within one effect, which means less rendering time (long rendering time is caused by having many effects such as overlays and mirror). One of the clips within my exercise was fairly long as well as using many effects, so it took several minutes just to render that one piece of footage.

Time was of course of the essence. I am disappointed in myself that I did not hand the exercise in on the due date as I had intended. If I had not fluffed around as much, I would have had the exercise finished before the due date, leaving much more time for me to complete my major folio. However, there were many things in the exercise that I did not understand initially- I had difficulty writing the Intention, Realization and Specifications for both exercises and coming up with enough content for both to elaborate clearly on the processes I used regarding the creation of my technical exercise.