

NARRATOLIST:

ALTERATION IN MEANING
IN A SHORT FILM TEXT

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2008

EXEGESIS

Master of Art and Design



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Mardo El-Noor 26 August 2008



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INTRODUCTION



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This exegesis is divided into three sections.

Its first chapter will outline significant stylistic treatments used in the film.

The second chapter will examine pertinent concepts and structures underpinning the work.

The third chapter will discuss the research design developed for the project.

Chapter 1: Stylistic treatments

The first section of this chapter discusses the visual building components of the film, namely live-action footage, photo-assembled plates, and how the integration of the two was accomplished.

It then discusses perspective limitations in the visual construction of the film, and their relationship to its eventual aesthetic.

The second section considers two distinctive stylistic features used to create the film's diegesis. The first is the use of silhouettes, and the second is the design of stylised and highly detailed environments. This graphic approach is explained and contextualised.

The third section discusses the two locales of the short film: the white room, and the exterior world. The visual attributes of these two locales are examined by discussing comparisons and differences between their aesthetics.

The final section deals with aural considerations in the design of the two locales. It discusses these in relation to the film's visual demarcations.

Chapter 2: Concepts and structures

This chapter considers aspects of the structural framework inside which the film might be understood. It is divided into three sections and considers in its discourse theories about narrative structure (fabula and syuzhet),¹ twist² in fiction film, and the nature of the impersonal narrator³.

The first section is concerned with pre-twist⁴ considerations. It discusses how *In The Name of Art*'s syuzhet and fabula operate within a narrative designed to eventually deliver a 'twist'. In discussing this I employ certain narratological theories of Bordwell (1985) and Burgoyne (1990).

The second section discusses post-twist considerations, particularly strategies used in constructing the twist and its impact on the narrative structure of the film. The discussion is positioned in relation to writings on twist in film, specifically those by Lavik (2006) and Mitchell (2002).

Finally, the last section of this chapter is concerned with 'second viewing considerations'. It discusses issues related to narrative closure in *In The Name of Art*, and discusses what a subsequent viewing might add to accumulating meaning. This discussion draws on writing by Lavik (2006) and Church (2006).

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¹ Bordwell (1985) defines a fabula as the cues and perceptions the audience receives from a film, while a syuzhet refers to the actual arrangement and presentation of the fabula in a film. Therefore, fabula is constructed by the audience and based on what they interpret, while syuzhet is constructed by the director and based on what the audience perceives.

² Lavik (2006) defines twist films as ones where a piece of information in the film subverts the fabula and allocates a new meaning for the syuzhet.

³ The impersonal narrator is common in twist films. This form of narrator can restrict the access to fabula information, but cannot lie as a personal (subjective) narrator can.

⁴ In this exegesis I use the terms pre-twist and post-twist to describe readings of the short film before and after revealing the twist in the narrative. The twist is the revelation that the white room is actually a recorded, staged performance piece.

Chapter 3: Research Design

The third chapter of the exegesis discusses the 'research design' employed in the realisation of the project. The term research design is used because the method of inquiry is more protean than absolute. Its design is concerned with the opening up of the project to high levels of discovery, disruption and flexibility.

I have based my discussion on the tenets of heuristics. Within this, I explore approaches to processing and evaluating data that have been theorised by Kleining and Witt (2000) Douglass and Moustakas (1985) Polanyi (1967) Csikszentmihalyi (1997, 1990) and Wood (2004).



CHAPTER 1: STYLISTIC TREATMENTS

Footage and plates

The short film, *In the Name of Art* combined live action footage of characters and objects with photo-assembled plates of objects and environments. Chromakeying⁵ was employed as a method of shooting actors and artefacts and embedding them inside new environments created in the plates.

In filming characters and objects I sought to capture a wide range of movement, from almost motionless objects like indoor plants and bead curtains, to subtly moving objects like curtains, tree branches, and hanging chains. In contrast to these were the more distinctive movements of actors, the aquarium, and candle flames.

In a similar vein, the photo-assembled plates ranged from the motionless (walls, buildings, ornaments) to the subtly moving (flickering street lamps, clouds, lens flare effects) to the dramatically animated (machine parts, sliding doors, elevators.)

By developing this approach I was able to fuse demarcations between filmed elements and those that were photo-assembled, so their integration was seamless.

This approach was meticulously crafted for each of the 160 shots used in the film. The final outcome was a homogenous form of visual hybrid that resulted in a credible yet 'skewed reality'⁶ sitting between live action and

⁵ Chromakeying is a technique used to mix two images together, one of which is shot against a blank background (usually green or blue) while the second image provides an environment. The blank background is subtracted so the first image appears to be 'immersed' within the second. In *In The Name of Art*, I adapted this process. Instead of keying the green or blue palette I keyed the white. This was a specific requirement of using silhouettes because I was dealing with high levels of contrast.

⁶ Skewed reality is a term I use to describe a system of depiction where 'real' elements are combined in an environment of distortion and photo-assemblage to create a world that is theatrical and subtly distorted.

Elements within a skewed reality may be seen as building blocks that are direct recordings from 'lived' environment. Thus skewed reality may be understood as a form of hybrid where objects and sounds are 'troubled' by disproportions of perspective, surface and composition to create an alternative reality.

animation. The use of photographs of real objects as building blocks in the development of the photo-assembled plates⁷ has also contributed to this skewed reality.

While some movies have used chromakeying to create cohesive alternative, three-dimensional worlds,⁸ *In the Name of Art* did not seek to create high levels of perspective credibility evidenced in these movies. Instead, I developed a different approach to close the gap between the visual attributes of footage and plates. By using a pseudo-3D composition,⁹ live footage was able to lose much of its three-dimensionality when it was added to the 2D environment (the plates). This spatial treatment created a more visually compressed style that gave the film its distinctive, slightly artificial appearance.

Fine detail and silhouettes

Two major shortcomings of working in a pseudo-3D environment are the difficulty of creating a credible sense of depth, and the limitations of camera movement. Rather than seeing these as impediments, I sought to explore their potential in creating a unique treatment for the film. As a result, I created a heavily stylised and visually detailed environment that served to distract attention from the relative rigidity of the camera movements.

⁷ This approach was used by Dave McKean in his film *Mirrormask* (2005.) The technique enabled him to transfer collage aesthetics he had developed in earlier print media productions into film.

⁸ Another useful term is digital backlot (also known as virtual backlot). This is a technique where characters are shot against a blank background that will either be composited instantly with 'immersive' locations, or created in post-production. Examples of films utilising a digital backlot in their entirety are *Sky Captain and The World of Tomorrow* (2004) *Mirrormask* (2005) *Sin City* (2005) and *300* (2007).

⁹ Compositing is the process of creating new images by combining visual elements of different sources (film, video, animation, visual effects, etc). Pseudo-3D compositing (or 2.5D compositing) is a technique where 2D objects are assembled in a 3D space. It is usually used to lessen the 3D objects' rendering time. However, in this film it is used as a stylistic approach.

Another approach that proved effective in renegotiating these limitations was my decision to film characters and objects as silhouettes. The use of varying degrees of silhouetting within the composited shots also created a sense of depth.¹⁰ This approach may be comparable to the work of Anthony Lucas in the *Shadowlands*.¹¹ In his animated short, *The Mysterious Geographic Explorations of Jasper Morello* (2005) Lucas utilised a multi-layered and silhouetted world as a means of creating “fantastical environments” where he was able “to create mysteries” (2005) within the film’s diegesis.

In my film, I sought to extend the sense of the ‘fantastical and mysterious’ in Lucas’ animation of constructed characters and objects to the filming of real actors and objects. This was accomplished by treating the filmed elements in such low-relief that they almost became two-dimensional and animation-like. These filmed elements operated inside a visually compressed style in which the audience encountered flattened versions of real actors and objects. It was also through this process that I sought to enforce notions of the skewed in the film’s diegesis.

¹⁰ Silhouette layers are attenuated to lighter shades the further away they are. This is because we see them through a film of air or mist. This fall-off effect in brightness is created in a composited environment to suggest the illusion of depth.

¹¹ When Lucas uses the term *Shadowlands*, he refers to the world/culture depicted in his two short films *Holding Your Breath* (2001), and *The Mysterious Geographic Explorations of Jasper Morello* (2005). The term originated from his abstract student film, *Shadowlands* (1988).

Demarcation of two locales

Within the homogeneity of the film's visual treatment, there is a subtle stylistic demarcation between two locales. These are the white room and the exterior world. While the exterior world demonstrates a wide range of colours, floating textures and varying degrees of silhouetted elements, the white room is monochromatic, non-textured, and shows only two shades of silhouette. This discrepancy between treatments of silhouette establishes the white room as a more shallow space. Conversely, the exterior world profiles a more three-dimensional treatment.

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Figure 1.1 shows a movie still from *In The Name of Art*. In the exterior world locale, we see various shades of silhouetted objects and a wide range of colours. It also demonstrates a sense of three-dimensionality.



Figure 1.2 shows another movie still from *In The Name of Art*. In the white room locale, we find only two shades of silhouette in a monochromatic environment. Space representation is more flattened and two-dimensional than the exterior world locale.

Since we realise in post-twist that the white room is actually a performance piece, the idea behind its shallow treatment of space alludes to the theatricality of proscenium arches. In the world of the white room, we encounter two silhouetted characters facing each other in a framed space. Their gestures and dialogue are slightly stilted and the style of composition is staged.

In support of the differentiation between the two locales in the film, alternative colour palettes were employed to separate the white room from the outside world. While traditionally a monochrome treatment may be used to suggest flashbacks in film (Bordwell, 2006) or to present two levels of reality (*Avalon*, 2001) the audience watching *In The Name of Art* is not expected to read the white room as an anomaly in the pre-twist due to *inter-locale integration* (to be discussed next chapter).

This demarcation between locales is subtle, yet it has to work in retrospect as a clear division between the theatrical performance and the lived experience of the protagonists. This is significant in terms of the film's narration; in the pre-twist, the white room is read as part of the exterior world. It may be understood as an art space where the protagonists contemplate their art and reflect upon ideas. However, in the post-twist, we see them as performers and the white room as a stage, situated as something manufactured and separate from the environment of the rest of the film.

Sound Design

Sound Design

In general, the sound design for *In the Name of Art* was created in a manner that echoes the visual demarcations between the white room and the exterior world.

The exterior world:

The high level of visual complexity experienced in the exterior world necessitated the construction of a complex aural environment. In addition to dialogue, the sound design displayed multi-layers of foley,¹² atmos,¹³ and score.¹⁴ This approach was taken to augment the complexity of the film's physical and emotional environment and to draw attention to specific elements within it.

The sound design for *In The Name of Art* used pre-recorded, commercially available sound effects to create the aural texture of the exterior world. This brought a sense of reality to an environment that functions like ours, but differs aesthetically.¹⁵

The white room:

The visually less complex white room was accompanied by a more restrained sound design. Not only did the audio mix lack foley and atmos, but the score was constructed entirely from a piano composition I created.

¹² Foley design describes the recreated sounds produced by characters interacting with an environment. Examples in the film include footsteps and opening doors.

¹³ Atmos is the artificial creation of a background soundscape in a particular shot. This is the texture over which foley is layered.

¹⁴ Score is any music used in a film. It can be either an original soundtrack or pre-recorded music. It can also be either intra or extra-diegetic.

¹⁵ A similar approach was employed by Anthony Lucas in *The Mysterious Geographic Explorations of Jasper Morello* (2005). In an interview on his work he says, "With an artificial world in a parallel universe... you need great sound (design) to make it real". The only way he could bring a parallel universe closer to our reality was to employ a sound design of real sources, which included recordings of aeroplanes, steam engines, and machinery.

The sound design for the white room presented an isolated and meditative space, where every gesture and piece of dialogue was complimented by a melodic development. The aim of this approach was to subtly hint at the contrived and theatricised nature of the white room. For the white room I was seeking to establish an aural identity that was clearly demarcated from the exterior world (while still containing some resonances of it). This was important because eventually the film's twist would establish the white room as both belonging to, and artificially separated from, the exterior world.

Conclusion

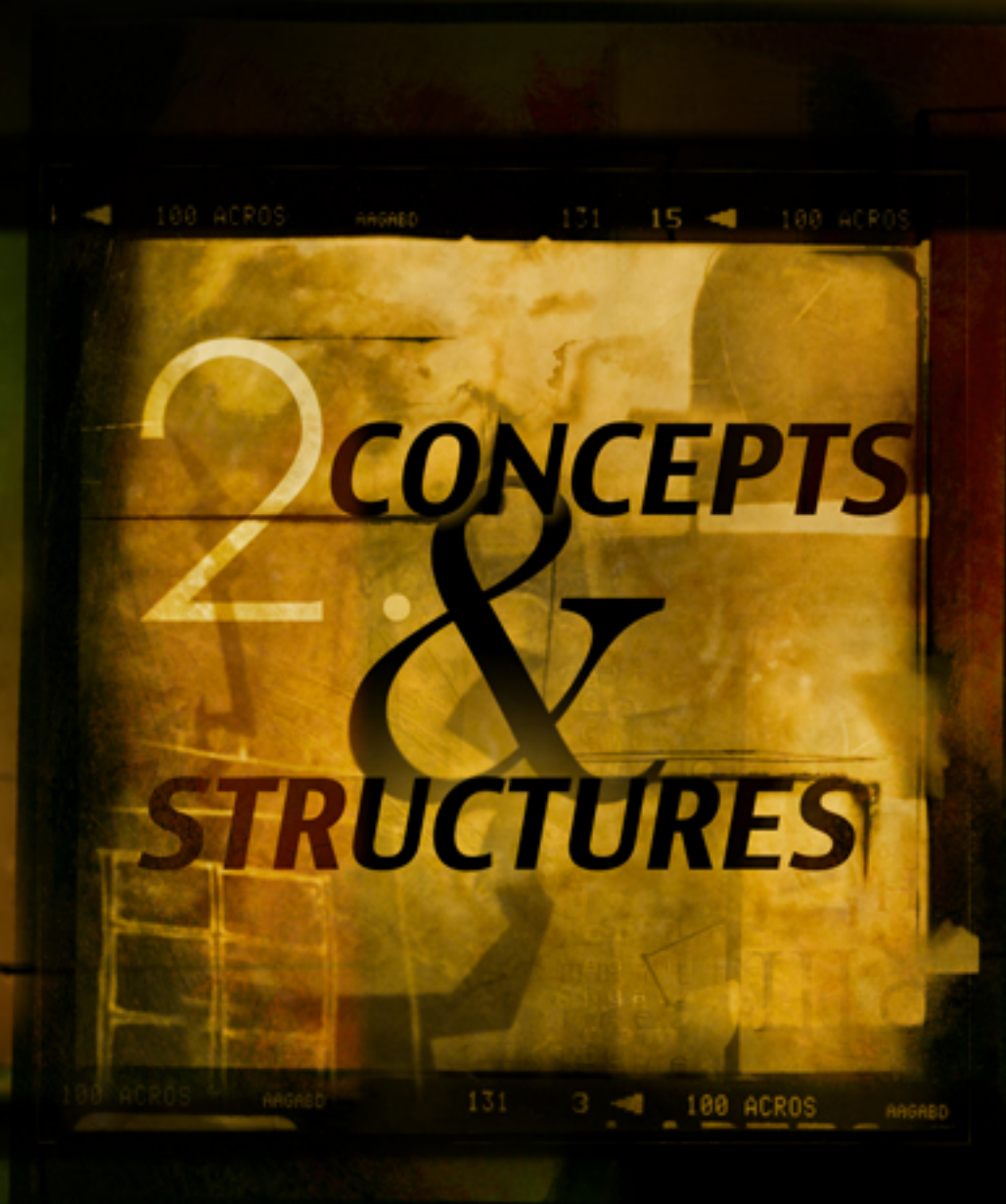
The visual and aural design of *In the Name of Art* is a complex orchestration of space, image and sound. While there are many elements that comprise the final diegesis of the text, this section has outlined four of the most salient:

A combination of live action footage and photo-assembled plates were used to create a sense of skewed reality.

The contrast of silhouettes and fine attention to environmental detail was developed to distract from the rigidity of the limited spectrum of available camera movements.

The use of specific colour palettes was employed to differentiate between the theatrical and the lived worlds of the film but in such a manner as to suggest that both worlds were part of an integrated whole.

Finally, soundscapes were designed for the work to underpin differentiation between the theatricised and the lived environments of the film. These engaged with certain resonances within the film's dramatic development and details the viewer encountered in the visual text.



CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTS AND STRUCTURES

Having discussed significant aesthetic and stylistic features of the film *In the Name of Art*, this chapter considers the narratological framework inside which the film might be understood. It concerns itself primarily with discussions related to the embedding and actualising of 'twist' in narrative and in so doing divides its discussion of the film into three sections.

The first section, *pre-twist considerations*, outlines issues related to the film's design for reading *prior to* the revelation of the twist. In this section I discuss the impersonal narrator and relationships between the fabula and syuzhet. I also outline significant design considerations in the film and conclude with a brief indication of narrative features used in its design.

The second section offers a commentary on *post-twist considerations*. It begins by discussing the film design's manifestations of false credibility.

The chapter then moves to a discussion of *second viewing considerations* and differences in emotional response to events within the text.

Pre-twist Considerations

In *In The Name of Art* the syuzhet and fabula operate in relationship to each other in the creation of a twist.

The film may be described as an impersonal narrative.¹⁶ Such narratives may cause the viewer to interpret events incorrectly by withholding information and/or selectively exposing only certain parts of the story world (Burgoyne, 1990). It is in this capacity that the impersonal narrative in my film carefully leads the viewer along the wrong path, through a syuzhet that tells the truth, but not the whole truth.

Bordwell (1985) suggests there are three ways to relate fabula to syuzhet, and all of these are instrumented in embedding the twist in the short film.

First is narrative logic. Here the viewer constructs cause-and-effect relationships between events. This is achieved through the syuzhet's systematic encouragement of the viewer to "*make linear causal inferences*" (ibid. p.51).

¹⁶ Twist narrative films can either utilise an 'impersonal narrator', or a 'personal narrator'. Impersonal twist narrative involves the construction of a fictional world within which characters interact with what is taken as the 'real' world. The impersonal narrator may withhold information but cannot lie. Burgoyne (1990) says

Any kind of false report or lie on the part of the impersonal narrator ... would simply be taken as incoherence in the fictional world itself, leading the spectator to question the very existence of a diegetic universe (p.7).

Moving image narratives that operate in this category include Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* (1999) Amenabar's *The Others* (2001) and Dick's music clip *Someday* (2003). Conversely, personal (or subjective) twist narrative is filtered through a character's experience of the story world. In this instance, the character might intentionally or unintentionally provide a false view of it. Examples in film where we understand the narrative through a character's account include Singer's *The Usual Suspects* (1995) and the depiction of a character's hallucinations in Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999).

In The Name of Art presents a syuzhet that constructs viable causal relations among events throughout the pre-twist. This approach creates a coherent, yet false, *pre-twist fabula*.¹⁷

Bordwell's second way to relate fabula to syuzhet is through time. Here the syuzhet cues the viewer to construct a fabula through order, duration, and frequency of events. In my work, this is evident in the film's syuzhet which presents a linear, yet false, temporal narrative flow.

Finally, Bordwell believes we can relate fabula to syuzhet through treatments of space. Here the syuzhet cues the viewer to construct a fabula by providing information about surroundings, positions, and paths taken by characters. We see this relation manipulated in my film in the way the film's syuzhet causes the viewer to incorrectly assume the location and nature of the white room.

To fully understand how fabula and syuzhet operate in *In The Name of Art*, we must closely examine its narrative structure (see appendix 1).

The short film consists of two locales represented in twelve sequences. The odd-numbered sequences show the protagonists' conversations in the white room, while the even-numbered ones depict events occurring in the exterior world.

To cause the viewer to mistakenly infer that the act of sacrifice was real, (s)he must misread the fictional world (the white room locale) and assume it to be part of the protagonists' lived world (the exterior world locale). To achieve this, it was necessary to implement a process of inter-locale integration in the pre-twist fabula, which involved specific design and narrative features.

¹⁷ From this point forward in the exegesis, I shall call the cues and perceptions the viewer receives from the short film *before the twist pre-twist fabula* (see appendix 1). The actual fabula, the one that is perceived after the twist, I shall call *post-twist fabula*.

Design features:

These may be broadly understood in three approaches.

- a Aesthetics: As discussed in the previous chapter, the visual demarcation in this film was critically positioned so the two locales shared sufficient visual attributes to be initially read as a whole. However, they differed in subtle ways so they were able to be physically and temporally disentangled in the post-twist fabula.
- b Soundscape: As also outlined in the preceding chapter, even though the sound design in the white room had an aural identity, it still contained some resonances of the exterior world. This approach critically positioned it in a manner similar to that of the visual demarcation.
- c Stitches: Although the twelve sequences in the film were individually separated by fades to and from black, the overlapping score operated as extra-diegetic 'stitches' designed to tie all the sequences together. This approach gave the short film much of its sense of stylistic and structural cohesion.

Although these three design approaches were integral to achieving a balance between integration and demarcation between sequences in the film, it is also useful to consider specific narrative features of the work.

Narrative features:

There are four features that warranted integration in relation to this work.

- a The impersonal narrator in this film created a unique syuzhet with a narrative flow that oscillated uniformly between the two locales. Recurring shifts led the viewer to follow a single story through fictional and lived worlds that (s)he 'misread' as a unified and consistent whole (see appendix 1).
- b Such shifts were facilitated by designing unique interrelationships between the beginnings and ends of the twelve sequences.¹⁸
- c The syuzhet temporally rearranged the post-twist fabula.¹⁹ According to appendix 1, it simply replaced elided episodes (of lived world) in the post-twist fabula with the corresponding ones of the fictional world (white room conversations).²⁰

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¹⁸ The narrative was seamlessly delivered by interchanging the diegetic voices between the two locales. As a result, at any junction between the sequences, the narrative was finishing from one and being taken over by the other in what was a linear, causal relationship. This was due to the fact that conversations and acts in the white room *re-acted* and *predicted* what happened in the exterior world.

¹⁹ In *In The Name of Art*, the impersonal narrator rearranged parts of the story through selective editing. It is by such action "that the temporal flow of the film can be restructured according to a specific logic and intent" (Burgoyne, 1990, p. 13). The intent in the short film is to create a twist which is fundamentally constructed on concealing the non-linear nature of the narrative.

²⁰ Bordwell (1985) suggests that informational gaps in the fabula can be plugged quickly, eventually, or never (p.55). In *In The Name of Art*, such gaps are not perceivable at the pre-twist (see appendix 1). In the post-twist, the viewer realises the presence of elided gaps only when the white room sequences are 'unplugged'.

- d Finally, the impersonal narrator misrepresented certain aspects of the story world by carefully selecting shots that provided only partial views of the action.²¹ Some of these parts were revisited at the twist or during the post-twist. After being fully exposed, these parts acquired different meanings. (These will be discussed later in the chapter.)

Post-twist Considerations

Having considered features of the pre-twist design of the short film, let us now look at significant aspects of its post-twist design.

In this film, the process of inter-locale integration, combined with the impersonal narrator's visual and aural manipulation, became integral to creating a false credibility to the protagonists' actions and motivations. Be it a staged performance mistaken as lived experience, or a partially exposed and misread act of filming a protagonist in a bathtub, many aspects of the syuzhet were interdependent and worked in relation to each other to deceive the viewer and to create a twist in a seemingly linear narrative.

²¹ Examples include, (1) Hiding the constructed nature of the white room (the curtains, the crew) and showing the performance only. (2) In sequence six, we only see Girl processing the footage of the second artwork. When the processing room was revisited in sequence eleven, we saw Guy sitting close by and editing the film himself. (3) In sequence ten, we only saw Girl in the interrogation room. Later, in sequence twelve we saw Guy next to her.

These approaches were facilitated by the impersonal narrator's ability to edit, withhold information, and selectively expose the story world.

To achieve the maximum effect out of a twist revelation, the pre-twist fabula, constructed by a more-or-less coherent syuzhet, should raise no suspicions about its pending subversion. Lavik (2006) argues that in a twist film, the viewer does not attempt to solve a mystery, (s)he is simply unaware of its very existence (p. 56). By restricting access to fabula information in my film, the viewer is left with no option but to choose the more probable and tragic explanation, to construct the pre-twist fabula. This is the supposition that 'Girl' killed 'Guy' in the name of art.

When the narrative of *In the Name of Art* reached its twist revelation in sequence eleven, it exposed the artificiality of the white room as a performance piece taking place in the exterior world.

Girl's account of events (in her voice over) accompanied a replay of partially-exposed aspects of the syuzhet in a new context. First, we saw the white room as a set on a stage. In this space the protagonists were reciting earlier lines from the narrative, but now they were presented in a different context.²² Second, shots from the processing room were revisited. This exposed a different part of the room that showed Guy *alive* and working on the editing machine next to Girl.²³ These revelations served to visually and narratively indicate parts of the syuzhet that were initially concealed from the viewer.

²² The lines "*The truest ultimate work of art*" and "*calls for the ultimate sacrifice*" were spoken in sequence five by the protagonists in their guise as characters. In sequence eleven, they were spoken by the protagonists as performers on the stage, interrupted by the director and the crew.

²³ Bordwell (2006) and Church (2006) state that it is almost a convention in twist films to replay shots at the moment of revelation. These often occur as flashbacks from earlier parts in the syuzhet. However retrospection causes us to understand them in a new light. Examples of this in cinema include Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* (1999) and Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999).

At the point of revelation, the viewer is forced to relocate the white room into new causal, temporal and spatial relations to the exterior world. The viewer might also realise that whatever syuzhet information was received from the white room conversations and acts might now have a suspect level of credibility.²⁴ This is because the white room has now been revealed as a fictional part of the story world.

However, the design and narrative-related aspects of inter-locale integration of the short film might not allow a smooth and instantaneous disentanglement between the two locales. Consequently, an immediate alternative fabula might not be available to the viewer.

Lavik (2006) argues that it is possible in a short text, like a 'twist' joke for instance, to hold in our minds the syuzhet and the two fabulas simultaneously. On the other hand, it is far more difficult to do so in a feature length text like, for example, Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* (1999). This is because "*the double syuzhet scheme is extended throughout most of the film's 107 minutes*" (Lavik, 2006, p.56). Even though *In The Name of Art's* running time is only eleven minutes, the viewer might still need a second viewing to *fully* verify whether the syuzhet information was coherent and enough to construct a logical fabula due to the film's complex narrative structure.

²⁴ Referred to by Lavik (2006) as *doubling of the syuzhet*, we are led to construct a fabula that becomes decentred and obsolete because "... a new piece of information is introduced that subverts the fictional world we have created" (p. 56).

Second Viewing Considerations

In addition to narrative complexity, upon the first viewing of *In The Name of Art*, the richness and complexity of the visual and aural experience might tip the balance slightly away from the narrative. This, in turn, could compromise the position of the logical twist to a level where it is merely an unforeseen surprise that does not provide a full closure. Due to this misreading, the viewer might miscategorise the short film's narrative under the category of 'art' or 'experimental' film.²⁵

However, a subsequent viewing should provide the missing links in the viewer's post-twist fabula. According to appendix 1, the post-twist fabula is theoretically capable of delivering such closure, but I believe it can only be reached with a double exposure.²⁶ Otherwise, I may be counting too much on the viewer's ability to multi-task, absorbing a visually unusual short film and simultaneously following an unusual plotline.

But, if we assume there is an opportunity to have a second viewing of the film, the reading of the text may reveal increasing levels of understanding.

Lavik (2006) argues that a second viewing of a twist film can attach different meanings to certain events. Indeed, this is evident in my short film, where, retrospectively, certain acts can be looked at in a completely different light.²⁷

²⁵ Within the tradition of such films there is a reduced need to resolve contradictions or provide a logical fabula. Church (2006) argues that twist films in art cinema tend to have open and ambiguous endings that offer complicated syuzhet and semi-closure. He sites examples as Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001) and Cronenberg's *Spider* (2002).

²⁶ Given that the primary audience of *In The Name of Art* will be film festival goers, a full closure might never be reached. The case is different for a short film or a feature on a videocassette or a DVD release. Bordwell (2006) explains that the home-video revolution allows filmmakers to drop clues "apparent only in repeat viewing and freeze-framing" (p.74).

²⁷ An example would be Girl's whispered line to an apparently empty lounge "I'll be back soon" in sequence six.

Lavik (2006) also argues that subsequent viewings may provide a different emotional experience. In the first viewing of the protagonists' dialogue in the white room, the viewer might be more emotionally engaged with the protagonists' contemplation about art and sacrifice. Whereas a second viewing renders their acts and dialogue contrived and unnatural. This causes the viewer to be far less sympathetic with the protagonists since their act of sacrifice is fictitious.²⁸

This discrepancy in the emotional experience might demonstrate how disproportionate the atmospheric and thematic staging of the short film's narrative is, both visually and aurally. This is because although it is congruent with the pre-twist fabula, it is not entirely so with the post-twist.

Moreover, there is an important shift related to the viewer's interaction and engagement with the short film's narrative. The first viewing might simply direct attention towards causal relations in syuzhet information. On the other hand, in the second viewing, the viewer is aware of the deceptive nature of the narrative. Therefore, the attention might shift more towards:

- 1 How the overall structure of the syuzhet achieved the twist.
- 2 The design within individual shots which only told half the truth about the story world.
- 3 Whether the twist is valid.

²⁸ Indeed, the viewer's perception of the protagonists' motivations and acts will change dramatically, from sacrificing one's life in the name of art, to deception in pursuit of success and reward. This is comparable to the viewer's altered perception of characters in many twist films. Well known examples would be the shift from the rebellious to the delusional Tyler Durden, in Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999) and the altered reading of the psychiatrist and estranged husband, to the 'dead' psychiatrist and 'missed' husband, in Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* (1999).

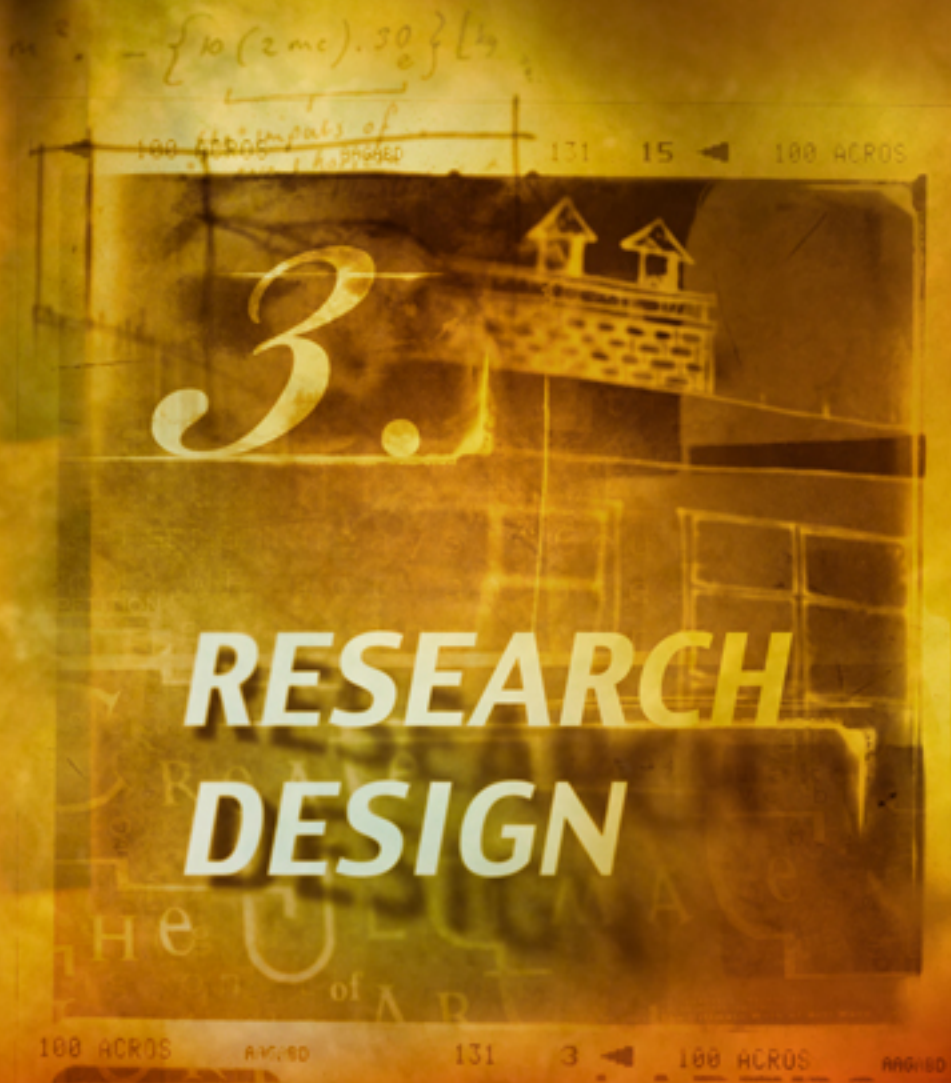
It is common in twist films to have some aspects of the syuzhet that might have seemed irrelevant, mysterious or decorative in the first viewing to be viewed as unpicked clues in the second.²⁹ *In The Name of Art* is no exception. From the visual and aural demarcation of the two locales, to the smallest details in the bathroom sequence, almost every sequence is embedded with details that change their significance on a second reading. However, the amount of effort invested in picking up these clues largely depends on viewer's attentiveness and whether (s)he knows beforehand that there is an upcoming twist.

The most significant of these altered meanings occurs in the film's first spoken lines, "*When you hide behind art*" and "*You mistake art for life.*" These lines declare the central idea behind the film's twist. They embody the notion of deception on two reading levels.

First, intra-diegetically, the competition coordinator mistakes the second artwork for a real life event, which was the murder of Guy. Second, extra-diegetically, the viewer mistakes the first artwork (the white room) for Girl and Guy's real life. While this clue might be hard to grasp by the viewer, it is the core of the short film's deception. By designing the narrative in this manner, I attempted to align the viewer with the competition coordinator. The viewer did not perceive the white room as an artwork, and neither did the competition coordinator see *In The Name of Art – Session 2* as an artwork.

In conclusion, *In the Name of Art* has a distinctive structure concerned primarily with disguising, then revealing a twist. The text leading up to the revelation is carefully designed to appear seamless and coherent. It uses withholding and manipulation of information by the impersonal narrator as a means of orchestrating alteration in meaning. This approach is achieved through manipulations of the fabula and syuzhet, such that they are in disagreement, but for most of the film, this disagreement is not evident.

²⁹ Mitchell (2002) mentions how the film *The Sixth Sense* is full of clues that point to the twist. However, the viewer can only see these when twist is revealed.



Chapter 3: Research design

This chapter discusses the 'research design' employed in the project. The term research design is used to describe a system of inquiry developed for this thesis because the project required multiple, protean approaches that might work to enhance the chances of creative discovery and effective artistic composition. In unpacking this method of inquiry, I have based my discussion on the tenets of heuristics. Within this, I consider approaches to processing and evaluating data that have been theorised by Kleining and Witt (2000) Douglass and Moustakas (1985) Polanyi (1967) Csikszentmihalyi (1997, 1990) and Wood (2004).

The nature of heuristic inquiry

Heuristics may be described as a qualitative, informal method of problem solving that may be employed where no formula exists for the resolution of a research question. It is a system of inquiry that is concerned with discovery and involves the search for meaning and patterns through reflection and the use of knowledge gained by experience. As a form of inquiry, it utilises sophisticated levels of intuition and tacit knowledge³⁰ to solve highly complex creative problems. It is characterised by its flexibility because of its openness to changes in the focus of the research question (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985; Kleining & Witt, 2000; Lohmann, 1960; Moustakas, 1990; Wood, 2004).

³⁰ Tacit knowledge may be understood as knowledge we do not consciously know we possess, but may draw upon as we encounter problems. It is often deeply embedded knowledge that is difficult to substantiate or communicate. The idea of tacit knowledge is most commonly associated with the work of Michael Polanyi (1967). Central to Polanyi's thinking was the belief that creative acts (especially acts of discovery) are charged with strong personal feelings and commitments. Polanyi sought to articulate relationships between reasoned, critical interrogation and other, more tacit, forms of knowing. He argued that informed guesses, hunches and imaginings are part of 'exploratory acts' and are motivated by 'passions'. These passions he suggested might be used for discovering 'truth', but they might not necessarily be in a form that can be stated in propositional or formal terms.

Early stages

At the outset of the project my concern was to maintain a high level of flexibility in my practice. This demanded a research design that would enhance the organic, synthetic and non-linear nature of my approach to creative inquiry. The research design needed to activate (and validate) both the tacit and the passionate so they might be employed in considering and processing highly complex and multi-faceted bodies of information. I also needed an approach that would work in other than the written and spoken word.³¹

In the beginning, I could not assign or name a methodology. I knew the principles that would be likely to enhance chances of creative discovery in my work, but not the actual methodological relationships within this. While I could have 'posed' a methodological approach, I sought a high level of integrity in my research. I believed that by reflecting carefully on what I was doing and analysing why I was doing it, I might be able to articulate at the conclusion of the project the nature and workings of a tailor-made system of inquiry.

It was helpful for me to know that the idea that research design might develop out of the nature of an inquiry (rather than be projected on to it) was understood by a number of writers on methodology.

Mills (1959) cited in Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) says, "*methods must not prescribe problems; rather, problems must prescribe methods*" (p.14).

³¹ I tend to think at sophisticated levels in sound and image. The complexity of many ideas involved in my work is slowed down through forced translation into the written or spoken word. By avoiding this translation, I can process complex bodies of knowledge inside image or sound-based environments. By doing this, I can make connections between bodies of information that may be distorted through 'linguaging' into words. I am also able to find concordances and patterns by intuitive consideration of concepts inside the environment in which they were conceived (as images). In many cases these are ideas for which no translation into words exists.

Richardson (1994) discussing writing as a method of thinking says, *"I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it"* (p. 517).

Although Gibbs (2006) does not argue that method might surface out of process, he does suggest that *"Methodological appropriateness is more important than whether the research methods selected can be classified within one paradigm or another"* (p. 233).

In concord with these ideas, I believed I was able to construct a research design that transcended the limits of specific, prescribed methodologies. However, it might orchestrate certain approaches inside a paradigm of values exemplified by a heuristic inquiry, and develop in relation to the emerging requirements and unpredictable developments within the research.

The project commenced with a solid idea but a little vision.³² The proposal was to create a narrative with a twist, without preconceived stylistic design or fixed critical positioning. This approach sits in concord with Douglass and Moustakas (1985) suggestion that early involvement in heuristic inquiry is characterised by *"vague and formless wonderings... but a growing sense of meaning emerges... and the parameters of the problem are recognised"* (p. 47).

The emergence of a growing sense of meaning somewhere along the journey was not unexpected. Based on my previous experience in graphic design and music, I knew that I tended to find my path while practicing. In the process of this practice I might not be fully aware of the nature of the final outcome, or even the possibility of realising one. In this regard my previous experience was in concord with the tenets of heuristics. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) argue that this form of research *"pushes beyond the known, the expected, or the merely possible"* (p.44).

Despite limited vision and an unrealised sense of meaning, the early stages of the project were far from passive. What characterised these stages was the degree of passion and disciplined commitment to the project.

³² By this I mean that when I started working on *In The Name of Art*, there was no clear idea of what the visual style, soundscape, or the narrative might be.

Self dialogue

Since I made almost all creative decisions myself, self-dialogue was essential throughout the project. As the writer, director, editor, and visual and aural designer of my short film,³³ an open and active channel of self-dialogue facilitated and maintained the process of role-switching, which enabled me to:

- Carry out different tasks in the project successively and/or simultaneously.
- Preserve consistency and homogeneity in the project when working with varied aspects of the film (visual, aural and narrative).
- Constantly cross-examine, from various technical or creative viewpoints, the validity of decisions taken in any task.

Because of these, I needed to employ a method of inquiry that allowed for high levels of reflection on, and in, the development of the work. In addition to this I needed to have facilities embedded in the research design through which I could critically appraise initiatives.³⁴

³³ Although I worked with a crew of thirteen people in different aspects of the project (camera and lighting, styling and make up, compositing, illustration), their contribution was largely in the areas of technical (rather than creative) support.

³⁴ Heuristics is sometimes criticised because it is misunderstood as being entirely reliant on the subjective reflection of the researcher. However, when we consider the work of writers like Kleining and Witt (2000), Polya (1980) Müller (1967) Lohmann (1957, 1960) Steuer (1963) Hubka & Eder (1996) and Douglass and Moustakas (1985) we see them all suggesting steps of rules for activating criticality in this form of inquiry. While these writers differ significantly from each other (and the disciplines from which they are discussing heuristics), they show that heuristic inquiry does not discount the objective and the reasoned. Although the objective and the reasoned as methods of seeking and critically assessing knowledge do not hold traditional levels of dominance in the inquiry, they surface when they are needed to enrich the chances for discovery, association or understanding in the work.

In this project, critical and reasoned decision-making worked in harmony with intuitive thinking. Reasoned thinking is evidenced explicitly in the attainment of inter-subject validity. In other words we may see it activated in decisions concerning the orchestration and correlation of aesthetic elements, so they operate in concord with the narrative requirements of the film. This requires what Douglass and Moustakas (1985) call *focused attentiveness* (p.49). Reasoned judgement is also implicit in decisions to manoeuvre around technical and budgetary constraints in creative, innovative but strategic ways. This aspect of the research is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Becoming 'one' with the work

Heuristics encourages the researcher to become 'one' with the research in an effort to achieve full understanding of it. On this, Salk (1983) cited in Moustakas (1990) talks about how he would imagine himself as in the position of the object of interest in order to fully understand it. He says *"when I became a scientist, I would picture myself as a virus, or as a cancer, for example, and try to sense what it would be like to be either"* (p.16).

The immersion of the self in the research typified my approach to this project. I worked an average of twelve hours a day over a year and a half, shifting between writing, directing, and designing every detail of the film. Throughout most of the project, I spent more time within the film's diegesis than in the real world. In doing this, I was trying to imagine (and feel) how this world might look and sound. I lived inside it to understand how its textures and light might interact, how its characters might move, how buildings and signage might operate in discursive ways, and how colour might demarcate and connect the environments.

Such a deep level of engagement with the research was aimed at growing knowledge and an understanding of all aspects of it by 'heart'³⁵, so that both the critical and the reflective became implicit in decision making as the research progressed. Moustakas (1990) describes this intimacy with research as 'immersion'. He states that *"once the question is discovered and its terms defined and clarified, the researcher lives the question in waking, sleeping, and even in dream states"* (p.28).



Figure 3:1 Studio wall in WM201 (May 2008). Immersion occurred both inside the computer and in the environments surrounding it. These worlds bled in and out of each other and between them I existed in a physical and imagined state. By removing images from the linear world of the digitised film, I could evaluate their concordances and potentials by regrouping them on the walls of my studio.

³⁵ I use the term 'by heart' in contrast to the conventional appreciation of knowledge as something shaped cognitively (by the head).

Disruptions and illuminations

This research did not flow smoothly. Its heightened levels of originality and innovation occurred less through planned design and more through an attitude I adopted to the unstable nature of the project. The creation of the work rapidly became a multi-layered orchestration of possibilities and dead-ends, and these were not always predictable. Kleining and Witt (2000) in discussing heuristics, say that *"the topic (of research) may be overlapped by another one, or turn out as part of a different problem or just disappear"* (para. 9). Such instability of the question was manifest in different phases of my project as *disruptions* and *illuminations*.³⁶

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For example, in making the short film, I taught myself how to use tools for compositing. Later, I realised I had knowledge in advanced aspects of this skill, yet limited knowledge of some of its fundamentals.

As I learned to use advanced applications of compositing, traditionally understood (and normally prerequisite) fundamentals became irrelevant. Instead, what I encountered was the emergence of more promising and innovative potentials. Questions that might normally have emerged from the research did not, because I was inadvertently working in 'disobedient' ways. Expected priorities changed dramatically, as did research questions.

During the development of the project, I attempted to solve problems not encountered before. This necessitated the use of a flexible research design that encouraged *'openness to new concepts and changes in preconception'* (Kleining and Witt, 2000, para. 9).

³⁶ I use these terms as way of describing an attitude to the unpredictable. Rather than framing unpredictable change as negative, I sought to conceive it as offering potential. I saw disruptions as something that might enhance the direction of my inquiry, and I saw illuminations often as the result of these disruptions.

Creative manoeuvring

In heuristic research, this openness permits shifts in questioning and framing.

Because of technical obstacles encountered near the beginning of the project, I adopted an approach where, instead of removing an obstacle, I manoeuvred around it. This approach to disruption may be best illustrated with two examples.

The first of these was the design of silhouettes in the film.

Initially, it was my intention to shoot lit objects and subjects against a green screen. Using chromakeying, I could later remove the green background, and insert isolated objects and subjects in digitally constructed environments. This is a conventional practice in film. However, because the cameras I had available would not produce levels of definition where I could chromakey out sharply, shot objects were furry and ill-defined. After several weeks of experimentation, I realised it might be more feasible and practical to use silhouette objects and subjects. In other words, rather than seeking out newer technologies I sought to '*manoeuvre around the obstacle*'. I could have '*removed the obstacle*' by paying for professional equipment and facilities, but I chose instead to invest time and experimentation in exploring the perceived limitations (and potentials) of what I had available. Therefore, instead of employing a derivative technique with a conventional integration of chromakeyed moving elements and digitally constructed environments, I chose to apply an innovative approach that made use of the limitations and spontaneities that had arisen in the project. In terms of understanding this as an aspect of heuristic inquiry, Douglass and Moustakas (1985) say heuristics "*permits and even encourages spontaneous creation of methods that will evoke or disclose experiential meanings... it is the focused attentiveness and internal alertness, rather than predetermined methods and procedures, that guides the researcher into revelations of meaning*" (p.49).



Figure 3:2 shows an early experiment where a mannequin was shot against a green screen and placed in a digital environment. The results were unsatisfactory due to the ill-defined edges. This technical setback led to the search for a creative alternative, that might enable me to manoeuvre around the problem.

A second example of manoeuvring as an approach to disruption can be seen in the creation of the Pseudo-3D composition aesthetic.

I realised early in the development of the film that the construction of conventional 3D environments would not only be extremely time consuming, but would also create an identifiable aesthetic to the work. This is the highly polished software-driven aesthetic we often associate with contemporary commercial animation. Instead, rather than *remove the obstacle* of my lack of technical knowledge, and learn months' worth of new software applications, I chose to *manoeuvre around the obstacle* by designing a new kind of pseudo-3D environment. My aim in doing this was to develop an approach that might exploit the limitations by which I was 'constrained', producing from this, an innovative and distinctive aesthetic.



Figure 3:3 is a still from *In The Name of Art*. In this sequence there is a tracking movement from right to left. The various objects in the shot move at different speeds to give a sense of depth. Since objects are two-dimensional, they do not change in perspective. The pseudo-3D composition therefore creates a sense of 'skewed reality' because it enables me to distort the perception of spatial information.

Specific features of the research

In the Name of Art was a complex inquiry. It had various stages operating successively and simultaneously. These stages, requiring variable degrees of creative and technical investigation, were embedded within a larger planned framework.³⁷

Within each stage of the project, different concerns surface. However, it is simplistic to frame these concerns as highly demarcatable. Similarly, applications of method used to address concerns are also rarely demarcatable. In describing creative inquiry, one often reads analyses that emphasise the fluidity and highly connective nature of thinking (Ings, 2002; Moustakas, 1990; Polanyi, 1967; Richardson, 1994; Schön, 1991; and Scrivener, 2002, 2004). In closing this discussion of research design, it is therefore helpful to briefly discuss three distinctive examples of connective thinking within the research. These demonstrate how processes of inquiry bleed across areas of concern within the work.

The three connective approaches may be broadly framed as *transference*, *flow* and *immersion*.

³⁷ Like most film projects, *In The Name of Art* was realised inside a framework that started with a storyline, then a story board, shooting, post-production, editing, and final production (see appendix 2).

Transference

In my past practice as a music producer and remixer, when I worked on a musical piece, I normally began by importing an abundance of music samples, looped instruments, and beats into a 'multi-tracker'.³⁸ Next, I shifted these building blocks in time to find patterns, harmonies, and synergies. The final stage involved removing sound layers that were not essential to the overall composition. The end result was designed to embody the best combination with the least number of layers.

We might see this process as one of accumulation followed by strategic subtraction. I recently noticed that this technique for composing music had been unwittingly transferred to my approach for digital photo-assembling and video compositing. Thus, when I created the plates in Adobe Photoshop for this project, I unintentionally employed this same process of accumulation, location of harmonies, followed by strategic subtractions from layers of information.³⁹

Thus, the approaches adopted in the field of audio design bled into the field of image construction. This meant that when I was designing relationships between image and sound, I was employing related methodologies. What is interesting was that this was not a conscious decision. The result however, was that concordances were easier to find because the methodologies employed were in harmony with each other.

³⁸ A multi-tracker is a virtual sound studio that displays a platform where instruments and sounds are mixed together to construct a soundscape or a song. It's the aural canvas on which small elements are assembled to create a whole.

³⁹ This inter-disciplinary transfer might hint at the involvement of a tacit dimension. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) suggest, "*tacit knowing operates behind the scenes, giving birth to the hunches and vague, formless insights that characterise heuristic discovery*" (p.49).

Creativity as 'flow'

When creating a photo-assembled plate, I normally began by referring to my story board. Then, I located or created suitable photographs that might provide the elements of the composite image. After an initial, rough assemblage of elements, I noticed that I tended to slip into a mental state where I was fully absorbed in the creative process. I lost awareness of time and surroundings, and the work became the centre of my full attention.⁴⁰ During this process, my reflective and critical processing of information merged into one.

In psychology, this mental state is known as 'flow'. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) flow is operating when one is fully immersed in what (s)he is doing by feeling focused, involved, and successful in the process of activity. Flow is characterised by loss of self-consciousness, loss of sense of time, and control over, and effortlessness in, action.

It is essential that in order to reach this mental state, the given task must be both stimulating and enjoyable.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) states that "*one learns to experience flow by getting involved in activities that are more suited to provide... mental work and active leisure*" (p.120).

It is also important that the given tasks are neither too easy not too hard.

⁴⁰ On average, a moderately complex shot from *In The Name of Art* took two full days to complete, with a few re-visits and final touch-ups at a later stage.

In terms of the development of the project 'flow' may be seen as describing areas of creative inquiry (like the creation of soundscapes, and photo-assembled plates)⁴¹ where the designer is in a state of harmony with the rhythms, processes and emerging meanings of the work. It is a pleasantly euphoric state where hours can pass unnoticed, but work develops because subtle, yet critical decisions are being orchestrated and trialled in an environment of uninterrupted success. Progress in this state is normally substantial, and harmonies, analogies and patterns surface as part of a smooth and often unnoticed stream of development and refinement. Flow surfaces out of, and moves across, areas of creative processing, often allowing me, in the momentum of success to engage with new strands of thought in the fabric of what is already established.

Immersion and the role of imagery

During the visual research phase of the project, I created an image database from movie stills and various photography and photo-manipulation work that suggested resonances with my intended project. Then, I categorised these images into main themes of the diegesis (the white room, the exterior world, interior spaces, the art council, the prison, silhouetted characters).

This database was not a visual reference, but rather a method of absorbing and digesting visual attributes that might 'speak' like these environments. Once these disparate voices had been absorbed into a broader consideration of the possible ethos of my work, I did not look at them again.

⁴¹ I did not experience flow when I was compositing shots since compositing was more challenging and less intuitive.

They were subsumed and became part of a broader experience of immersion. From this point onwards, I began developing my own original vision of the diegesis in the storyboard.

This said, what has been absorbed, is not lost. It contributes subtly to the accumulation of influences that may feed experiments in other modes. An image may influence the selection of texture for a costume, it may suggest the rate of a flicker of an animated light, or the tone of a note of music. Thus, what is fed into the consideration of the spirit of the project, may become inter-modal in its influence and expression.

Conclusion

This complex and multi-faceted project necessitated a flexible research design that could accommodate the disruptive and non-linear nature of the undertaking. Such disruptiveness was characteristic of a project that embraced openness to chances of discovery in order to move beyond a simple synthesis of obvious solutions.

Technical difficulties and lack of knowledge and skills were used, not as impediments, but as opportunities to explore innovative solutions.

In much writing about research design employed in postgraduate theses, an emphasis is placed on establishing appropriateness. Where one is undertaking objective, quantitative projects, one can generally assess the validity of the selected methodology against the aims and description of the project. However, because creative practice projects are often intrinsically subjective, the delineation and appropriateness of the research design is harder to assess. Kleining and Witt (2000) offer an interesting argument when they suggest that the success of a heuristic inquiry may be measured by the richness of the result, its cohesive patterns and inter-subject validity. Thus, one might evaluate the success of this research design by the way the created text synthesises complex elements into a rich, cohesive, elegant, and original body of work.

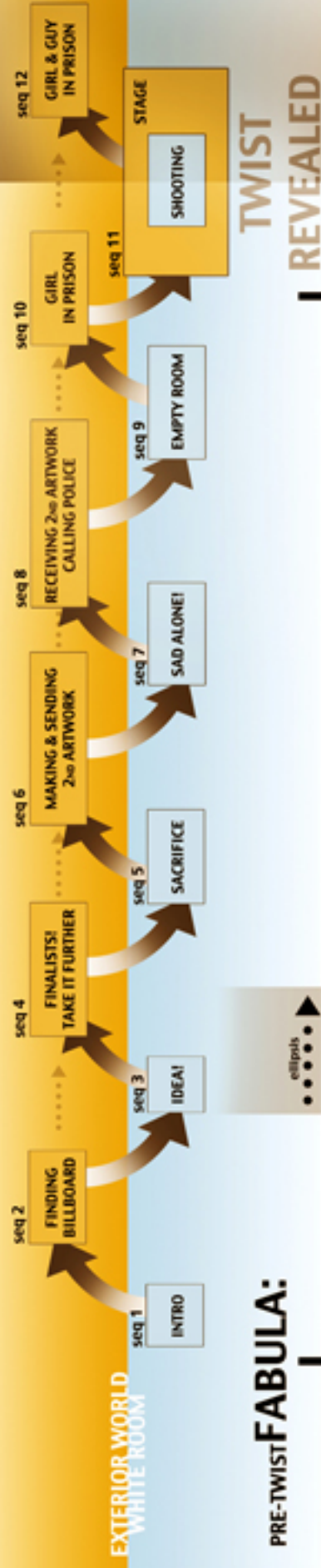
This project did not seek out a pre-existing methodology and fit it to the inquiry. Instead I consciously considered what I was doing and was able to describe my methods for achieving connection, discovery and critical resolve. This process was complex and one cannot describe every individual element of its journey. Instead what I have attempted is to stand back from the process and articulate the research design in terms of principles one finds implicit in a heuristic inquiry. I have used heuristics as a method of discussing what I have done because it offers a set of principles that resonate with what surfaced and was shaped by this research.

While a description of the research design may not be clean and linear, it is honest. It does reflect the nature of the study, and it did serve to achieve the ends evidenced by the short film that forms the practical component of this thesis.

APPENDICES

SYUZHET:

PRE-TWIST POST-TWIST



SUBVERSION

POST-TWIST FABULA:

PRE-TWIST POST-TWIST



ONLY PARTIAL EXPOSURE
BY IMPERSONAL NARRATOR

Appendix 1 shows two diagrams representing the syuzhet (with an embedded pre-twist fabula) and the post-twist fabula. The blue colour represents the white room locale sequences, relocated after subversion of the fabula to occupy less space in the lower diagram, and expose elided episodes that connect the exterior world sequences. The orange colour represents the exterior world locale. It moved from alternating with the white room locale in the upper diagram to engulfing it in the lower one. It also shows the sequences where partial exposure occurs.

	6/08									
	5/08									
	4/08									
	3/08									
	2/08									
	1/08									
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	4/07									
	3/07									
	2/07									
	1/07									
	12/06									
	11/06									
Story										
Visual research										
Story board										
Plates										
Shooting										
Compositing										
Editing										
Audio design										
Final production										

Appendix 2 illustrates the process of the project's structure and development. Months are listed across the top of the diagram and stages undertaken in the resolution of the film are indicated in grey. While we can see certain periods when only one aspect of the project was being considered, most of the research involved more multi-modal concerns, with this aspect of the research reaching its apotheosis in March of 2008.

Fabula

1. Girl finds a billboard advertising for an art competition called "Create The Ultimate Work of Art".
2. Girl tells Guy about it. Then, they decide to make a performance piece called "In The Name of Art" consisting of four acts, and it is set in a white room, with two lovers sitting opposite to each other:
 - a. They hear about an art competition, which they come up with a concept for.
 - b. The concept is: The truest ultimate work of art calls for the ultimate sacrifice. Guy gives Girl full creative control. Then, Guy surrenders to Girl by kneeling against her. Girl walks towards him, hugs him and says goodbye.
 - c. Girl is by herself in the white room, holding Guy's mask in her hand.
 - d. The white room is empty, with a scale in the middle of it, to imply Girl's incarceration.
3. Girl and Guy perform their piece on a stage and film it with a crew and a director. Later, they submit it as a filmed recording.
4. Girl is at home. The art competition coordinator leaves her a message informing her that their performance piece is a finalist and it was extremely well-received. Then, she hesitantly gives her personal opinion. She suggests that the artwork can win if she/they go further, make another piece, and push the boundaries.
5. Girl and Guy decide to make another piece called "In The Name of Art 2". They decide to pretend that it's the real account of Guy's death. Girl films Guy wrapped with a white cloth, covered with fake blood, and submerged in water in a bathtub.
6. Guy edits the film in a room that shows storyboards and props from the white room performance.
7. Girl puts the final cut of the film in a package and sends it to the art council.
8. The art competition coordinator watches "In The Name of Art 2" alone in her office at the art council. She panics, and calls the police.
9. Girl is arrested for murder of Guy, but the authorities are surprised to find Guy alive. So Girl and Guy are arrested for deception offense.
10. In the prison, the officer interrogates Girl and Guy, but in the beginning Girl does most of the talking. The officer is unaware of the first artwork. Girl tells him that it is the competition coordinator's suggestion to make another artwork and push the boundaries.
11. The officer is informed by a guard that the art council dropped all charges against Girl and Guy because they won the art competition. The officer reluctantly informs them.

Syuzhet

1. Two people sitting opposite to each other in a white room.
2. Girl finds a billboard advertising for an art competition called "Create The Ultimate Work of Art".
3. Girl and Guy talk about the art competition in the white room, which they come up with a concept for.
4. Girl is at home. The art competition coordinator leaves her a message informing her that their performance piece is a finalist and it was extremely well-received. Then, she hesitantly gives her personal opinion. She suggests that the artwork can win if she/they go further, make another piece, and push the boundaries.
5. Girl and Guy talks about their new idea: The truest ultimate work of art calls for the ultimate sacrifice. Guy gives Girl full creative control. Then, Guy surrenders to Girl by kneeling against her. Girl walks towards him, hugs him and says goodbye.
6. Girl films Guy wrapped with a white cloth, covered with blood, and submerged in water in a bathtub.
7. Girl puts the final cut of the film in a package and sends it to the art council.
8. Girl is by herself in the white room, holding Guy's mask in her hand.
9. The art competition coordinator watches "In The Name of Art 2" alone in her office at the art council. She panics, and calls the police.
10. The white room is empty, with a scale in the middle of it.
11. In the prison, the officer interrogates Girl. The officer is unaware of the first artwork. Girl tells him that it is the competition coordinator's suggestion to make another artwork and push the boundaries.
12. Flashback: Girl and Guy perform their piece on a stage and film it with a crew and a director.
12. Flashback: Guy edits the film in a room that shows storyboards and props from the white room performance.
13. The officer is informed by a guard that the art council dropped all charges against Girl and Guy because they won the art competition. The officer reluctantly informs them.

Appendix 3: Comparison between In The Name of Art's fabula and syuzhet.

"IN THE NAME OF ART" by Mardo El-Noor (January, 2008)

SEQUENCE 1: WHITE ROOM

We're in a bare white room with drapes for walls. We can only see silhouettes of two armchairs facing each other with Girl and Guy sitting on them. Girl is holding a white mask, moving it slowly towards her face, so is Guy.

GIRL: When you hide behind art...
GUY: You mistake art for life.

SEQUENCE 2: URBAN WORLD

A sequence of shots of different parts of the city. We see Girl passing by an art shop, then reading through a notice board for art-related advertisements. She turns around, and she finds a billboard advertising for an art competition called "the ultimate work of art". She stands there for a second, then reaches for her cell phone.

GIRL: Are you home?

SEQUENCE 3: WHITE ROOM

Girl and Guy are again in the white room, sitting and wearing masks. Both are deep in thought.

GUY: The ultimate work of art...?
GIRL (nodding): The ultimate work of art.

They think a while. Until they come up with an idea.

GUY: How about...
GIRL: Ha! Yes! Of course, my love!
GUY: The truest ultimate work of art...

SEQUENCE 4: GIRL'S HOUSE

We see Girl's house at night. From a window, we see her closing the curtains. The phone rings in the distance, we're inside, she has no intention to pick it up but still walks slowly towards it. It switches to voice mail.

GIRL (recorded): Hi! You've reached me. Leave a message if you want.
ART COMPETITION COORDINATOR: Err... Hello? Sorry to call at this time. This is Jasper from the art competition? You've made the finals; they loved your performance piece... Err.. Personally? I really think you could win if you go further! Make another piece and... And push the boundaries!

SEQUENCE 5: INT. WHITE ROOM

GIRL and GUY are still in white room, still thinking deeply.

GUY: The truest ultimate work of art...

GIRL: Calls for the ultimate sacrifice!

GUY: Destroy your life while you enjoy it most!

GIRL: And while your love is strongest!

GUY (nods then takes off his mask): I give you full creative control.

GIRL: Ultimate artists?

GUY: Ultimate artists and immortal lovers!

Now, they're in the centre of the room, GUY is on his knees with his hands tied behind him. GIRL approaches him, then holds his head to her chest.

GIRL (whispering): goodbye, my love!

SEQUENCE 6: GIRL'S BATHROOM

We are in a dark bathroom with a bathtub in the centre surrounded by lighting equipment. Girl is filming the bathtub with a camera, walking around it, appearing and disappearing. We see what appears to be a dead body in the bathtub. Then, she goes towards the mirror, holding a cup. She dips her fingers in it and starts smearing her face with what looks like blood. Later, Girl is in bedroom, writing on a large envelope after putting a tape in it. Then, Girl is in the lounge and about to go out. She's holding the envelope in her hand. She turns around.

GIRL (softly): I'll be back soon.

SEQUENCE 7: WHITE ROOM

It's only Girl in the white room, sitting on her chair, facing Guy's empty chair. She holds his mask against hers, then puts it down.

SEQUENCE 8: THE ART COUNCIL

We see the art council. Inside is a large gallery space with unusual painting, sculptures etc. We go inside the art competition coordinator's office. In front of her, the TV screen shows a paused shot from the tape that Girl had sent. It shows what looks like a shrouded body inside a bathtub. The open envelope is in front of the competition coordinator. She's deeply shaken and disgusted.

ART COMPETITION COORDINATOR (to herself): go further? Push the boundaries? What have I done??

She picks up the phone and dials 911.

ART COMPETITION COORDINATOR: Yes. (Pause) I... I have seen a murder

SEQUENCE 9: WHITE ROOM

There are only two empty chairs now.

SEQUENCE 10: THE COURT

This is an eerie building of unusual exterior and architecture. An officer, saluted by two guards, is in the elevator, going down. We follow him to the interrogation room. He's sitting on a chair surrounded by rusty gadgets. Girl is inside a prison cell in front of him.

OFFICER: So... why did you do it?

GIRL (looking around, then decides to speak): It was as much *his* artwork as mine!

OFFICER: Do you know the hell everyone went through because of your art?

GIRL: They loved our art! The original work was a finalist! *They* wanted us to go further.

OFFICER (interrupting): What original work?

GIRL: The performance piece!

SEQUENCE 11: WHITE ROOM

These are flashbacks of Girl and Guy's piece: It's the white room as we know it, but we see it from a longer distance, and we discover that it's actually a performance piece. Both actors are on stage, sitting on their armchairs. Then, crew members start to appear around them, on and off the stage, carrying equipment, operating cameras, fixing Girl's make-up. Girl is still talking to officer.

GIRL (V.O.) (CONT'D): Our performance piece. About art... About sacrifice... We filmed it, submitted it, and they loved it! But they wanted more...

Art Competition Coordinator (distant, echoic): Make another piece! Push the boundaries!

GIRL (V.O.): So, we gave them more!

SEQUENCE 12: POLICE STATION / COURT (CONT'D)

GIRL (CONT'D): And they mistook art for life! They thought I killed him!

We see there are actually two prison cells, and Guy is on the other one. Officer is clearly annoyed. One gadget starts beeping, Officer pushes buttons and a guard appears on a monitor.

Guard: Sir, the art council had dropped all charges, it seems that... *(inaudible)* to be processed

without any further delay.

Now, we see Officer is irritated and contemptuous. Girl and Guy are confused and apprehensive.

OFFICER: Tonight, they will come and pick you up.

GUY: Who are they?

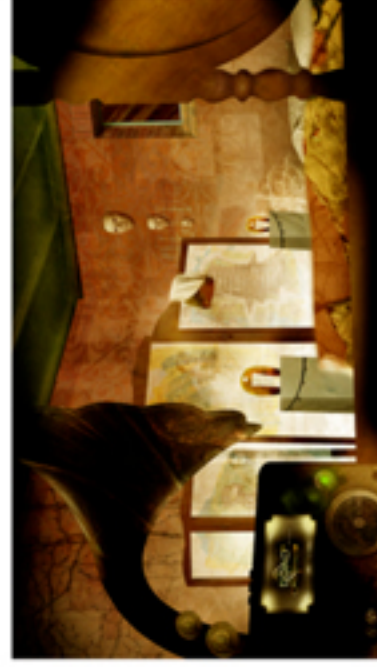
OFFICER (takes a deep breath): The competition people.

A moment of silence, Girl and Guy are trying to figure out what that means.

GUY: We won! Didn't we?

OFFICER (under his breath): Disgusting!

THE END



Appendix 5: Examples of visual constructions used in the development of the film. As a part of the immersion process, the filmic world expanded beyond the digital environment to cover the studio walls, which was necessary to holistically evaluate concordances and potentials between the film's sequences. These visual constructions cover different stages of development. Some of which were even 'rejected', yet served as a breeding ground for immersion.

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