

The Unmade Film

In isolation I miss the thinking space that art can give.

I invent an experiment.

I ask filmmakers and writers, people who work with image and voice, to gift me a single shot for an imaginary and evolving film script.

I ask each to describe in one shot a vision from the world at large.

Here is the result.

A film made from the vision of others.

A film where the image is left to the imagination.

EXTERIOR. DAY.

A loch, with a small grey pebbled beach.

Behind you is a forest. In front of you is the loch. To your right is a large smooth rock formation that forms a natural jetty. Some plants and bushes are growing on top of the rock.

As you walk towards the end of the rock its bare steeply curved rockface joins with the water's edge. The height of the rock is perfect for making a shallow dive into the dark cold water below.

On the shore a family sits on a checked blanket, a fire is quietly smouldering. They are surrounded by several towels and an old fashioned orange tent.

EXTERIOR. DAY.

Their wings were as big as my hands, kaleidoscopes of migrating papilio antimachus, butterflies of red, yellow and white, leaving their summer breeding ground - his homeland the Congo.

And there she sits calm and silent, a scarf wrapped around her head, the dry arid desert landscape beneath her - the city far from view.

And in a parallel universe, the dense dark forest, moss green floor, moulds her sleepy form.

Solitary baobab (Adansonia digitata) heavy bark trees, majestic, leaves furling, insects crawling, sounds from the undergrowth, tree roots talking.

The haze of a dewy light in the morning and the call of the song-bird, Spender of tree canopies, shade from the sun, and there on

the other side of the river an
elephant basks in the mud.

A Kudu jumps three metres as the
slender Impala leaps from behind.

The Limpopo River, the border of
three countries, Zimbabwe, South
Africa and Mozambique.

EXTERIOR. DAY.

It's midday in eastern England and it's midsummer. We're looking at a triangular scrap of land on the verge of a road at the edge of a city - at exactly the place where the houses end and the fields begin. It's a small island where, we remember, travellers, from time to time, used to park a couple of caravans.

Two sides of the space are framed by hedgerows, the other side open to the road. The site is covered with tall grasses, poppies, meadowsweet. Behind the hedgerows, populated now by small darting birds, gold-coloured fields roll away as far as the eye can see. Only the blades of a windmill are visible beyond the horizon, making the view seem timeless.

Look closely, though, and between the flowers and grasses we can still make out the lumps of dumped concrete someone put there a few

years ago, banking the site,
turning it into a small, buried
rampart against the road. Nature
has worked hard to disguise it.
But once you notice the blockade
its message is clear: not here.

INTERIOR. DAY.

Here I am lying on my bed in my flat in South London on an unusually hot July day. I close my eyes and find myself on a Trenitalia train travelling from Pisa in the direction of Rome and stopping at

LIVORNO CENTRALE
QUERCIANELLA
SONNINO
CASTIGLIONCELLO
ROSIGNANO
CECINA

There it is mid-afternoon and I am sitting in the train carriage on a worn blue plastic seat with the small sliding top window open. I can feel the hot air from outside on my face as we slowly move through the outskirts of Pisa.

Picking up speed I see the landscape shift, from tall wooden shuttered apartments to small

industrial buildings and yellow stubble fields. Then the brightness switches to darkness and as my eyes are adjusting to the swift optical change, short flashes of bright sunlit blue appear through the tunnel portals and I smile at my first glimpses of the sea.

EXTERIOR. DAY.

Exterior shot, midway through a long afternoon, the Scottish borders, late summer, the day all the thistledown takes off.

It's this millennium, but only just. The big house is away to the right and as we cut through the wood we can hear the sound of people playing tennis, the plop and thwack of a ball. On the other side of the wood there's open land, roughly broken by a clear shallow stream. It's fringed with reeds and meadowsweet.

Everything is very lively, very fluent. Even the air feels sweet and boisterous, whirling up the down and winging it away. You lived here as a child. We were trespassing on your past, and now I'm trespassing on both of us, not even thirty, bottled up in a gleaming day.

EXTERIOR. DAY.

Landscapes can be deceptive. Sometimes a landscape seems to be less a setting for the life of its inhabitants than a curtain behind which their struggles, achievements and accidents take place.

- John Berger
A Fortunate Man

Exterior. Mid-Afternoon.

There is a large marina but not one boat is moored in it. Geese have made nests on the empty walkways. A rusted iron footbridge crosses the mouth of the marina where it joins the larger water. Its steps are boarded off and it is covered in barbed wire. It is covered in wild growth.

Across the open expanse there is a cluster of very high towers, skyscrapers of chrome and glass. The towers are much, much higher than the old wharf cranes in the foreground, which stand in front of brick warehouses, themselves

framed by the towers as high mountains contain a village on the slopes of a valley. The towers glisten in the bright afternoon sun like snowy peaks.

Closer to the marina, as if cut adrift, out of its own time, an industrial brick chimney rises alone from a copse of trees at the rise of a grass bank bordering the water, looked over by a large willow.

Along the waterfront, a row of plane trees with all their branches cut to stumps are aligned, each apart, like wartime amputees. A cat crosses the path, close to a dead rat, dessicated. Its tail is very long. A raised railway runs between the blocks, away from the water and visible only at moments. Many architectural timeframes exist at once.

A man is walking towards the camera, with two small children and a cream pedigree French Bulldog. As he notices a much

larger mongrel approaching with its walker, he stoops in haste to pick up his pet.

He is smartly dressed in up-market casuals. His daughter asks him, Daddy, why are you doing that? He smiles, slightly embarrassed or nervous, and mutters something, as the owner of the mongrel, who has displayed no interest of any kind in the bulldog, passes him.

The viewer might consider two things at this point: that a bulldog like that costs about £3000, and that he did not attempt to pick up his children.

The light hangs in the sky like a gauze over a wound. The pathway is soon empty.

EXTERIOR. DAY.

It's mid afternoon, 4 o'clock. We're in the big open square with the fountain, outside a small supermarket and next to some grand municipal buildings. It's sunny beyond belief; the stone everywhere is yellow gold with light. Even the shadow is a kind of light.

We're leaning on the metal thing round the fountain; it's there to keep people off, but we're using it to lean against and watch the street. The fountain above us with the lions' heads carved in its stone is playing its cooling music, and a small church somewhere behind us is also emanating music, choral voices, first on tape, then real people copying the tape slightly less perfectly, doing their best in a kind of call and response.

We've bought some water and some cherries and chocolate. It came to

almost no money because the supermarket isn't a tourist supermarket, so we're also feeling like we're part of a city that more truthfully we're visitors in.

We're just standing in light and shade doing nothing, and it feels like everything. The sun, the fall of water, the human voices doing their best to meet the tune. There's nowhere we need to be going, nothing we need to be doing. Beyond us, that way, down the road, the trees and the traffic and the river. The other way, the city with all its wandering and commerce.

But for now, we're in this golden space.

The Unmade Film

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If you'd like to take part in this art experiment then please read the information over the page and take a few minutes to follow the instructions.

If you'd like to share your vision with the project then send it in an email to:

hereiselsewhere@kettlesyard.co.uk

Instructions

Thank you for deciding to participate in this experiment in collective imagining.

I've been thinking about the social isolation brought about by global lockdown. Stillness and fixity in an age of speed and motion proved quite a shock. New phenomena surprised us.

Here's one of the surprises: in a sudden and involuntary response to stillness, people are travelling without moving, voyaging in their minds to places remote from the ones they inhabit. Our minds were/are supplying what the world cannot: waking visions, nighttime dreams, compensating for our circumscribed existence. Overnight we've become nomads of the imagination, our minds reaching out to others across the world.

Your task now is to simply let your mind travel.

Either take this time to think back over your lockdown experience to recreate a moment when you were momentarily transported in the waking world or in dream to a location remote from the one you inhabit.

Or take this time now to close your eyes, open your mind and simply see what landscape surfaces from your unconscious in the moment.

When you're ready to return from your imagined-location, your task is to translate this vision of place into words and describe what you saw as though describing an image for a film script.

1. Is it an interior or an exterior?

2. What time of day/night is it?

3. What did you see?

Write this as a simple script instruction so someone other than you can recreate the place that you are visualising.

4. Where are you in the world when you wrote this? Where is the site you envisaged?

That's it. Thank you so much for taking part. I hope this short interlude of journeying was liberating and I hope we can all meet safely together in the world very soon.

- Sarah Wood, October 2020