

# Major Project Stage One Portfolio: Cinematography

---

BENJAMIN-MARTYN WHEELER (P145451)

# Table of Contents

|                                        |    |
|----------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Stationary Bike</b> .....           | 2  |
| Introduction .....                     | 2  |
| Interpretation of Source Material..... | 3  |
| Visual Research .....                  | 5  |
| The Shining (1980) .....               | 6  |
| Misery (1990).....                     | 8  |
| Gerald's Game (2017).....              | 10 |
| David Fincher .....                    | 12 |
| Super 8mm.....                         | 17 |
| Test Footage .....                     | 20 |
| <b>Category Is</b> .....               | 56 |
| Introduction .....                     | 56 |
| Street Photography Research .....      | 57 |
| Magnus Hastings .....                  | 58 |
| Visual Research .....                  | 59 |
| Refinery29 (2015) .....                | 59 |
| Test Footage .....                     | 62 |
| The Makeup Artist.....                 | 62 |
| Free-flowing .....                     | 64 |
| Staged Session.....                    | 71 |
| <b>Critical Reflection</b> .....       | 75 |
| <b>References</b> .....                | 77 |

# Stationary Bike

## Introduction

Alex Jones intends to bring an adaptation of Stephen King's, *Stationary Bike* (2003), to the short film format. As part of the "One Dollar Babies" programme, the project is subject to outside factors such as core levels of creative control. Alex's version centralises itself around the theme of the Super 8mm film format; a tool for nostalgia-driven content. The genre, psychological thriller with elements of horror, subsequently means that the shooting requirements are finite and must be tested extensively. Considerations to location space must also be considered consequently to the use of space within framing of some scenes.

## Interpretation of Source Material

With regards to adaptations of the author's work, there seems to be heightened awareness of how much the creatives impose themselves upon the source material. From my study of the text, and recent consumption of *Gerald's Game* (2017), there was an evident need for the use of darkness. As Alex is bound by contractual agreement to deliver a like for like textually, one can alleviate certain issues through creatively shooting certain elements. The primary concern has been the portrayal of the mysterious figures from the original's mural. With *Gerald's Game* (2017), the narrative allows the Moonlight Man to be seen under atmospheric (The Cabin) and revealing (The Courthouse) conditions which provides depth to his character.





One intends to utilise the horror genre trait of allowing the precursor to an encounter to exist more often than an interaction occurs. This darkness subsequently occupies the residence as much as Richard as our story furthers, furthering the notion that his mental strength weakens and diminishes. It also evokes a sense of his belittlement.

## Visual Research

The following comparative films have been listed by the director to be of visual significance for the following reasons:

- *The Shining* (1980) and *Misery* (1990) – Use of space within frame and for conveying of power through angling of camera.
- *Gerald's Game* (2017) and *1922* (2017) – A bleak look that emanates from a distinct style of lighting.

In respect of the bleak look, research has been conducted through the collection of various photographers' work.



Sourced from Instagram, these photos manifest a cold, blue aesthetic in a soft-sweeping glow. Space is used to portray isolation and the stillness unnerves.

Other comparable productions include *Black Mirror* (2011), *11.22.63* (2016), *Memento* (2000), *The Machinist* (2004) and *Donnie Darko* (2001). These primarily target the style of an anthology production, as Alex seeks to establish, and therefore offer less to my role than those highlighted above.

## The Shining (1980)



Within the latter half of the film, Jack's spiral into madness is framed by Kubrick in unique angles. One such angle, pictured above, conveys an idea that Jack is pushing back against his entrapment. The claustrophobic environment crushes him as opposed to merely sealing him within a space – the story beat is intensified. We have worked to replicate this within *Stationary Bike*, pictured below.



Though not as claustrophobically framed as Kubrick's version, with respect to aspect ratio limitations of the former, our version integrates the surrounding darkness that I am keen to preserve. The primary connotation of this shot, within a properly dressed and acted scene, should be the absence of outside distraction between Richard and his map. This trance should be a developing theme within the first act.

**Misery (1990)**





The final scene of *Misery* (1990) utilises a fairly quick dolly in towards Annie, evolving a neutral mid-shot into a closeup. Coupled to this camera movement is an upwards tilt of the camera, subsequently denoting a shift in power. This power shift precedes the brutality that ensues, and solidifies Annie's control of the event.

Though not directly recreated within our production to instigate the same effect, the dolly movement has been integrated as a way of propelling the motion of montage when expositing further details about Richard's lifestyle.

## Gerald's Game (2017)



The use of colour temperature to reflect the emotional atmosphere of the scene is what's key here. The colder feel creates an unwelcoming and unnerving state. The light is still diffused, justified through shielded windows.



From our various tests, an aesthetic has been created to similarly reflect a bleak and unhealthy environment. Throughout the story, Richard will be exposed to differing environments that reflect the wellbeing of his character, but it is here upon the bike that the trance of the ride takes hold hardest.

## David Fincher

After numerous tests, I began to study the motivation behind the camera movements within the films of David Fincher. Beginning with *Zodiac* (2007), expanded research into video essays produced quotes such as,

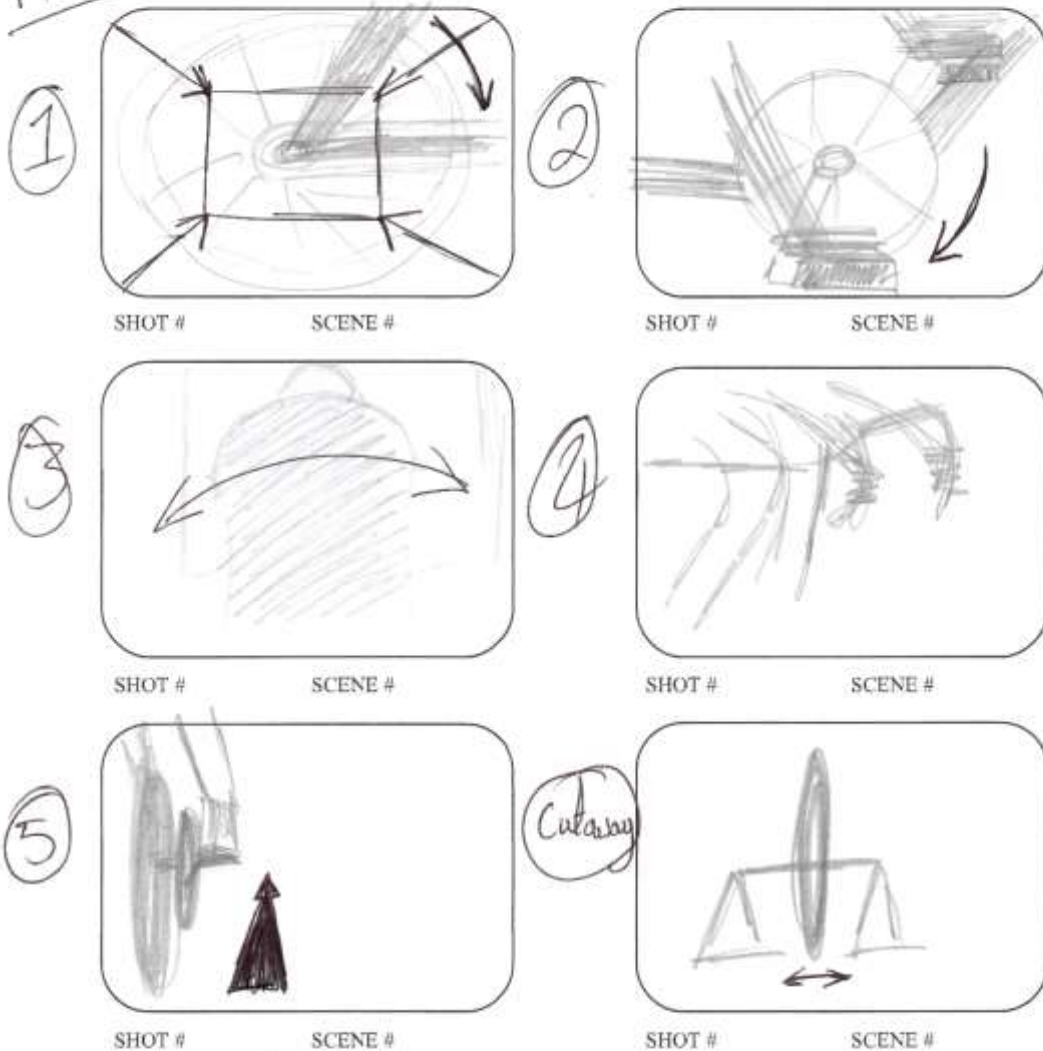
“Behaviour over time. It’s a fraction. So behaviour is the most important thing, of every piece of material that you read, that you perform in, and you direct. Look at the behaviour” (Wright, 2017).

This is where the cinematography behind this film began to evolve. A copy of the trial storyboard can be found below:

|                      |                                   |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| DATE: 25/10/17       |                                   |
| PROD. #:             | PRODUCTION TITLE: Stationary Bike |
| DIRECTOR: Alex Jones | PRODUCER: Katie Lloyd             |

## STORYBOARD

Finchers



1. Dolly in + rotate
  2. Camera pace in time with struggling pedals
  3. Left + right ~~track~~ \* with cycling motion
  - 4.
  5. Dolly past Richard, sudden stop with brake of cycle
  1. Slight left + right crab on back wheel
- \* crab

The translation to testing sessions can be found below:







Ultimately, this new way of exploring the character's behaviour has resulted in more impacting shots, better conveying of energy, and further expansion on scene atmosphere.

## Super 8mm

In our efforts to recreate the integrity of Super 8mm imagery, various tests were completed with relatives. With personal attachment, the focus becomes more subject-driven and the imperfections can flourish. As seen from the screenshots below, a new way of shooting is expected so that there can be distinctions between Richard's past and present. The digital reproduction of the format allows for the editor to further dial in desired framing, but it is the aesthetic and motion that I control.

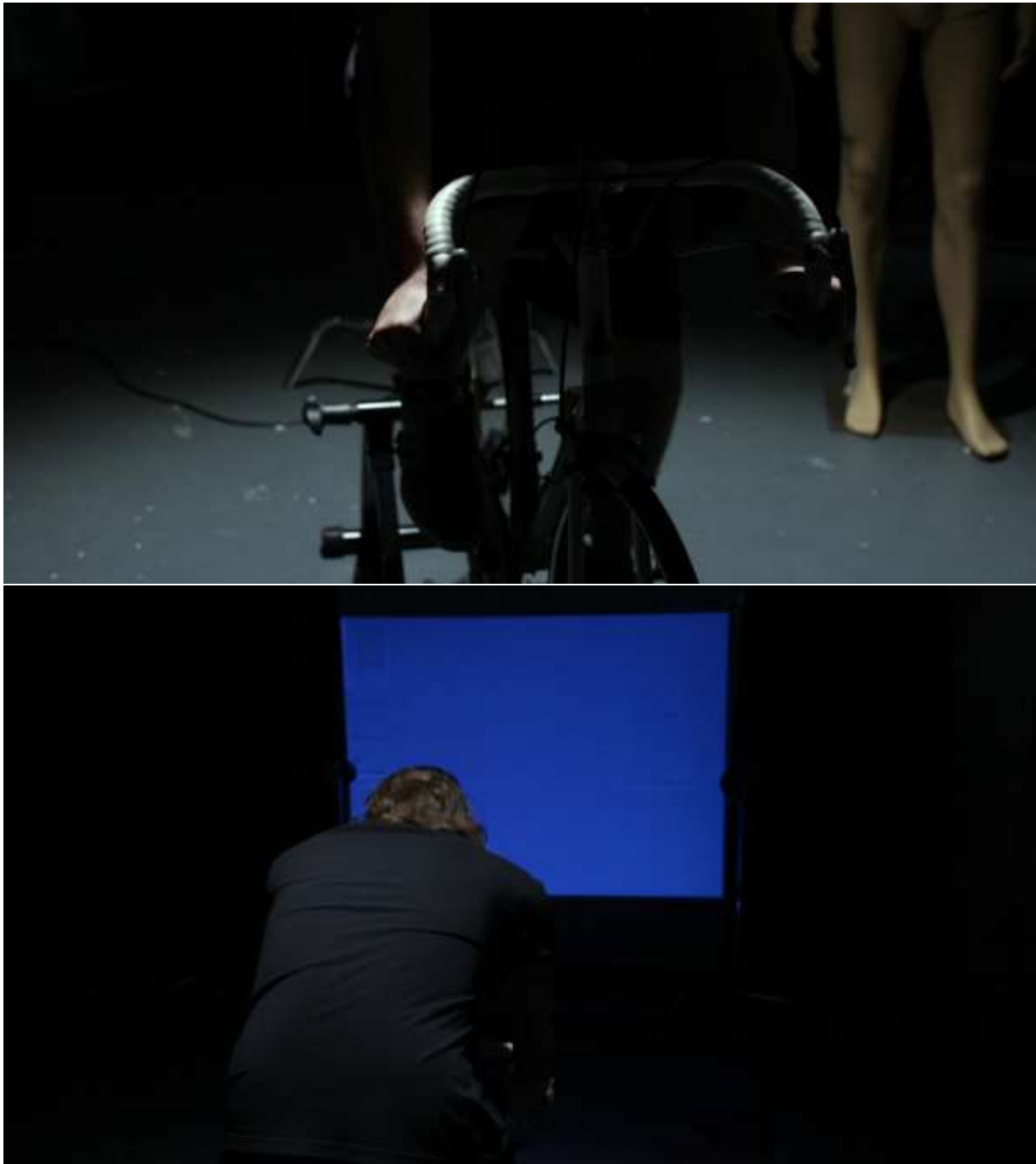






## Test Footage

Following on from the visual research in preparation to principal photography, the numerous testing sessions have helped in the refinement of Richard's portrayal upon the bike. Beginning with shots of the character in a simulated version of his room, our test footage transitions to the barren roads that the stationary bike finds itself venturing along, as its owner slips into a trance.































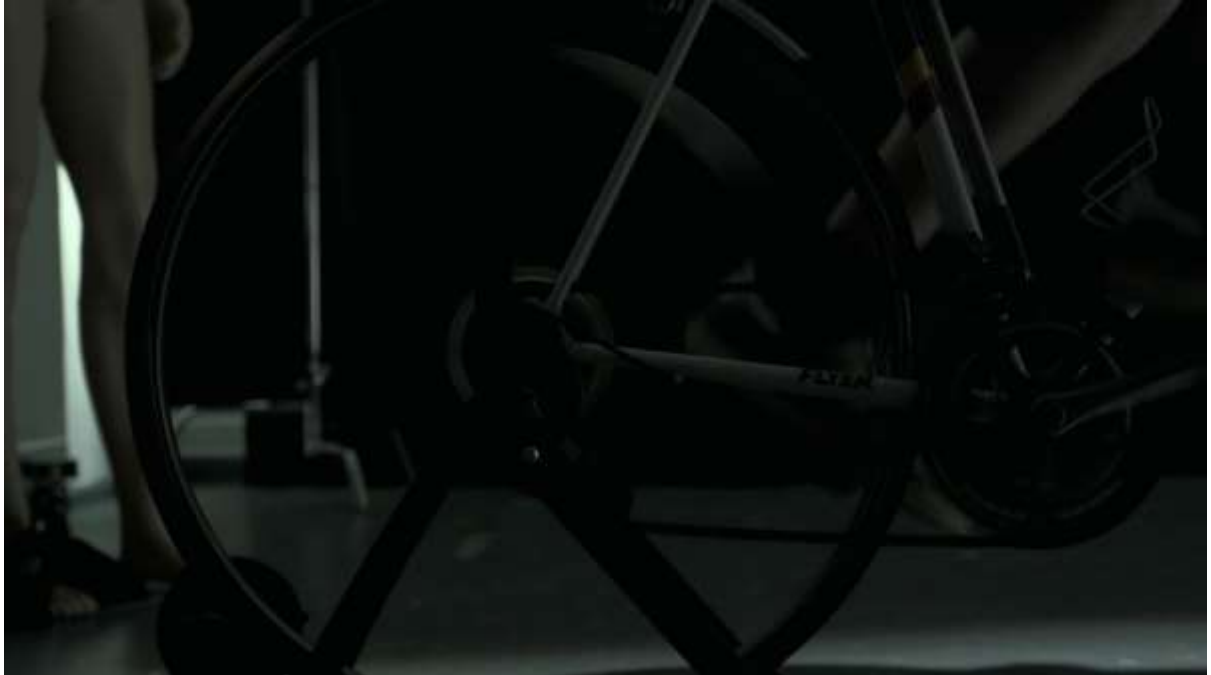




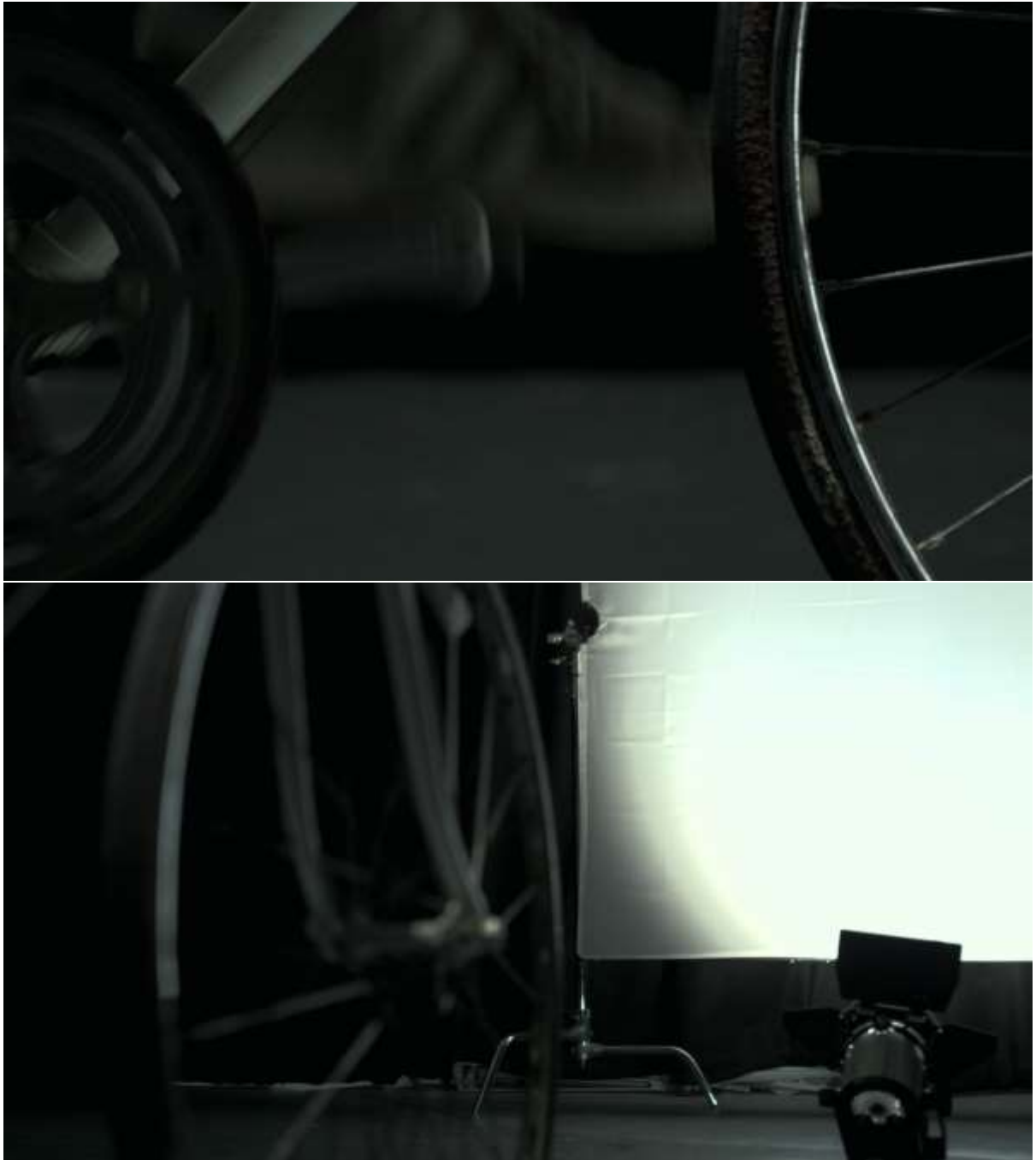










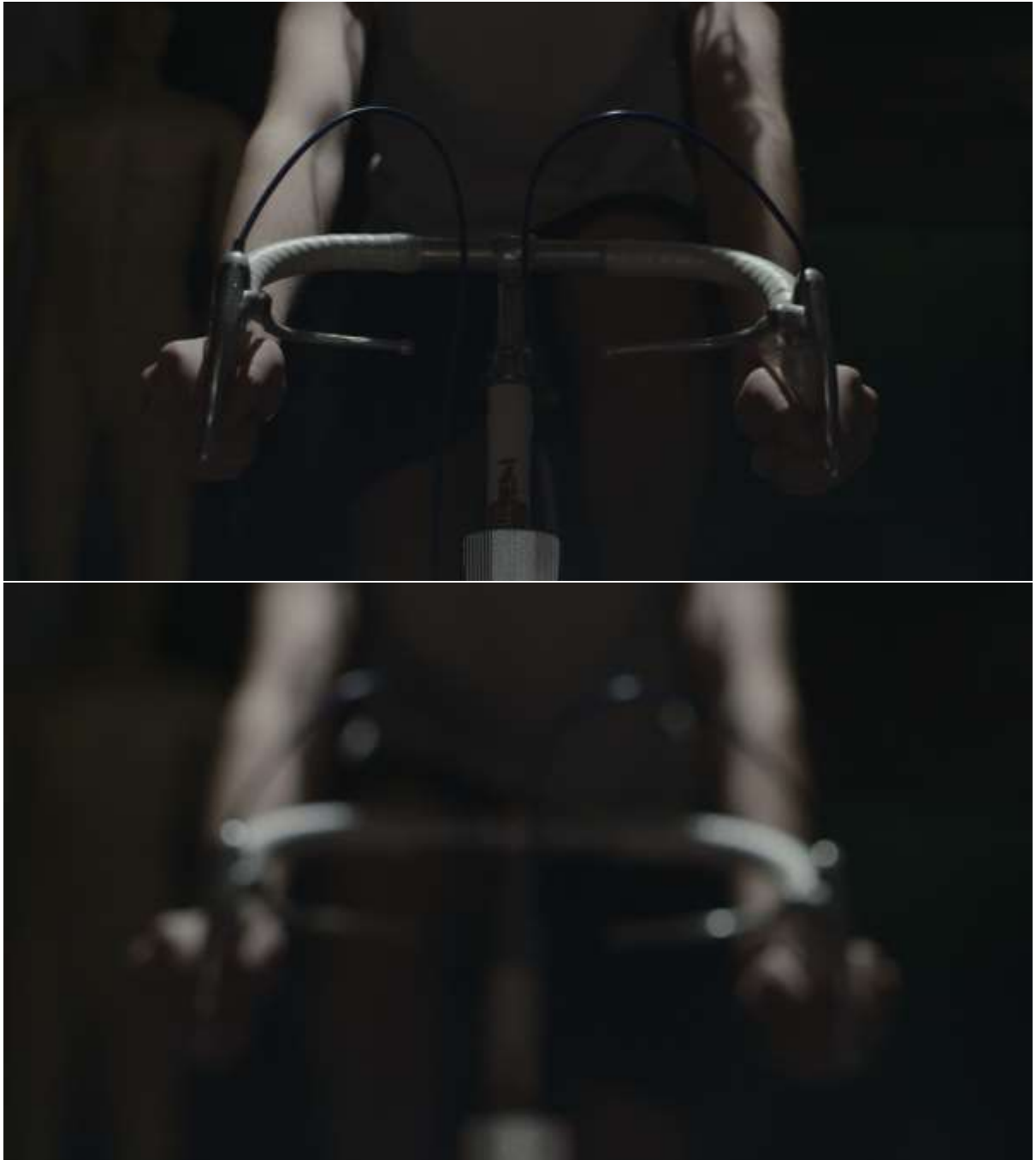














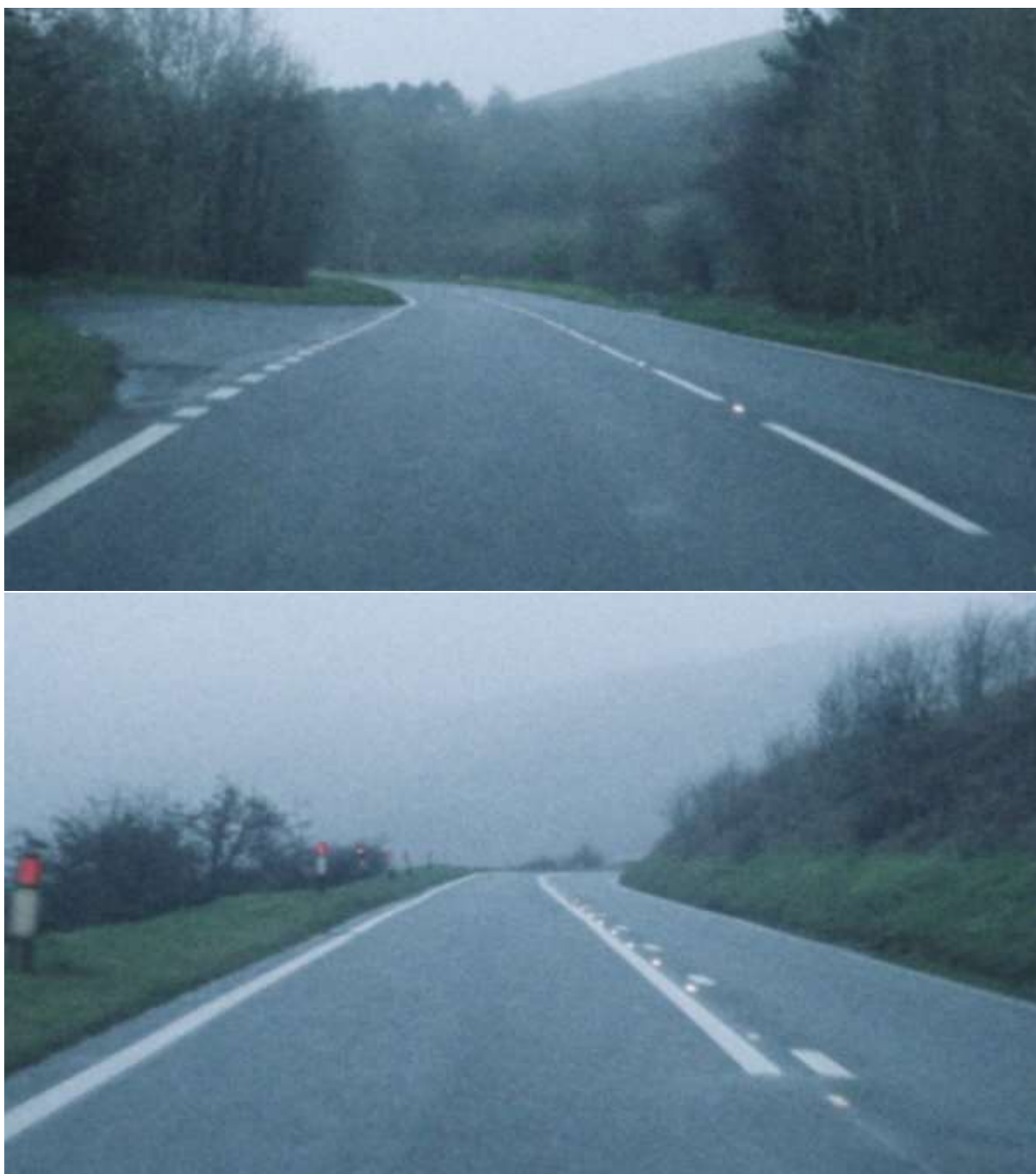














## **Category Is**

### **Introduction**

Miriam Nosworthy seeks a cinematographer that can allow for her project to explore the positive side of Drag within today's society. The project requires an element of expository documentary filming experience, with segments being staged to benefit the narrative. Her main point of reference for the visual execution is street photography.

## Street Photography Research

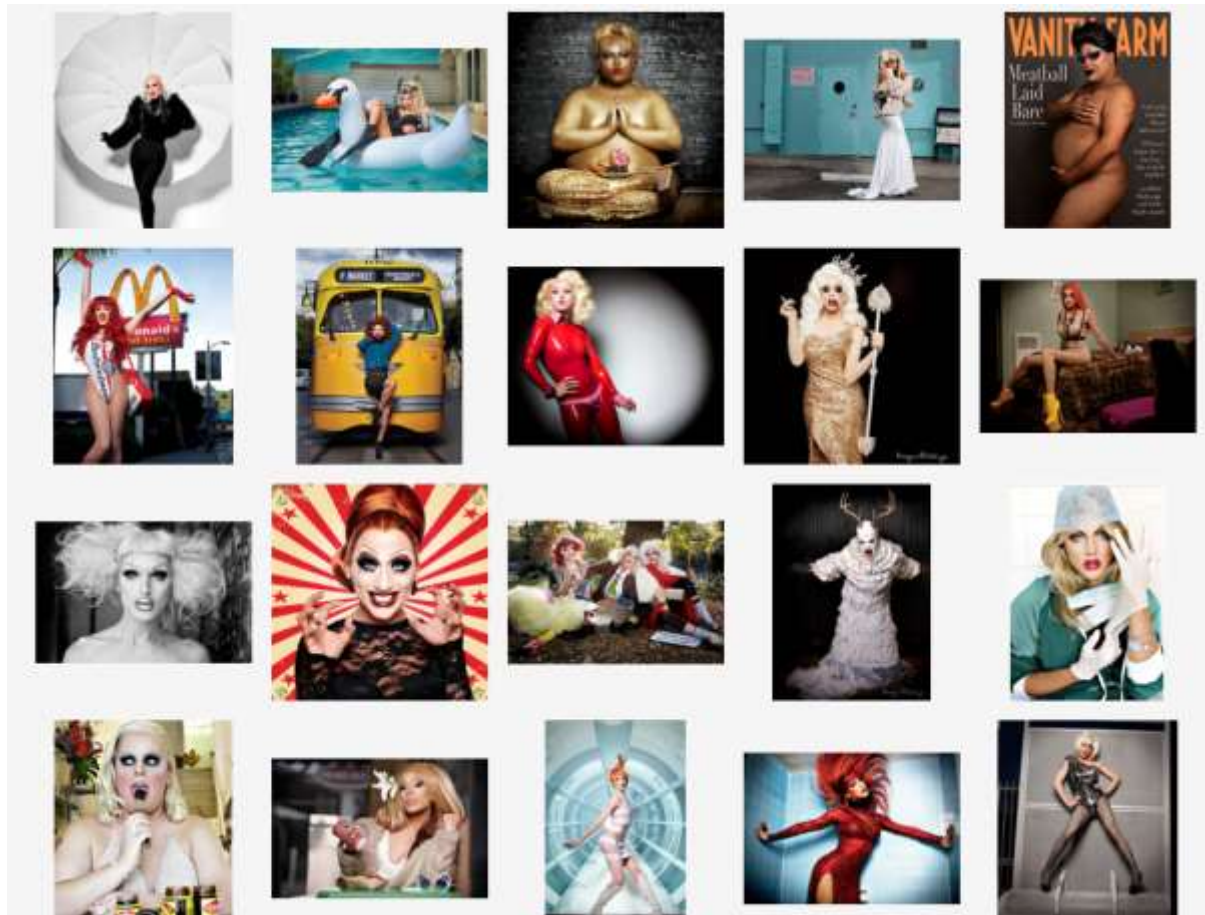
“Street photography as a whole is a genre of photography in which the photographer captures candid moments of people's day-to-day lives, often in public places. It documents society” Street Photography London (2017).

Street photography seems to invoke a narrative, no matter how small. The mise-en-scene has an air of legitimacy to it. Established rules of composition aren't always adhered to, they almost come second to the idea of capturing something in the moment that it's happening. Street photography embodies humanity, and showcases the many stories that surround us. The representation of culture adds to the subject's own representation.



The walk that Miriam seeks to take the artist on is what allows for me to truly infuse this genre of photography. Though it is also the artist that should be captured primarily, I expect the crowd will display behaviours that can convey the situation more emotively.

## Magnus Hastings



Magnus Hastings's work with Drag Queens flaunts a bold use of colour, almost seemingly to supplement the boldness of the subjects' lifestyles. In some cases, you can find inspiration from street photography but, then in others, it seems to pull from his celebrity photoshoot background. Hastings likes to keep his photographs in the medium shot (MS) to medium-long shot (MLS) range, as to show off the details of the artist's outfit. The key element of understanding his work is that it's a portrait of the personality the artists have created. It celebrates confidence and challenges perceptions of what society deems beautiful.

## Visual Research

As we move to analyse more audio-visual texts, the director has highlighted the productions of YouTube channel, Refinery29, as notable points of visual references. This open platform does impact the freedom one is granted during the shoot, as there are looser guidelines as to what can be portrayed – you can extract raw emotion.

### Refinery29 (2015)



The use of mirrors is a prominent theme within the comparable production. In literature, this usually infers the act of reflection. Within the premise of drag documentaries, this tends to be where the most personal reflections take place. Coupled with the act of covering up the person beneath, it lends itself to the idea that the artist is positively moving on from a past experience.



A typical video would follow a single subject through from beginning to end, makeup application to the end of the night. Infused into this production are elements of street photography. Cutaways to still lives of the subject in an urban environment showcase them as being confident with the ability to venture into the outside world in their garb. These staged sequences could be transformed into daytime scenes, although this element of control could be perceived to be a risk with an unknown response. From one's perspective as a camera operator, it would also pose the risk of capturing oppositional content.

*Category 1s*, is envisioned to follow a similar narrative sequence. Irrespective of the finer narrative points, the visual model will be divided into the following stages:

- Makeup Application
- Performance
- Interaction

## Test Footage

### The Makeup Artist





Running this test allowed for the coverage of makeup application to be explored. Notable lessons have come from the inability to quickly collect shots, such as big and extreme closeups.

## Free-flowing

Our first test was captured with a documentary approach, seeking to capture moments in their raw, unfiltered moment of time.











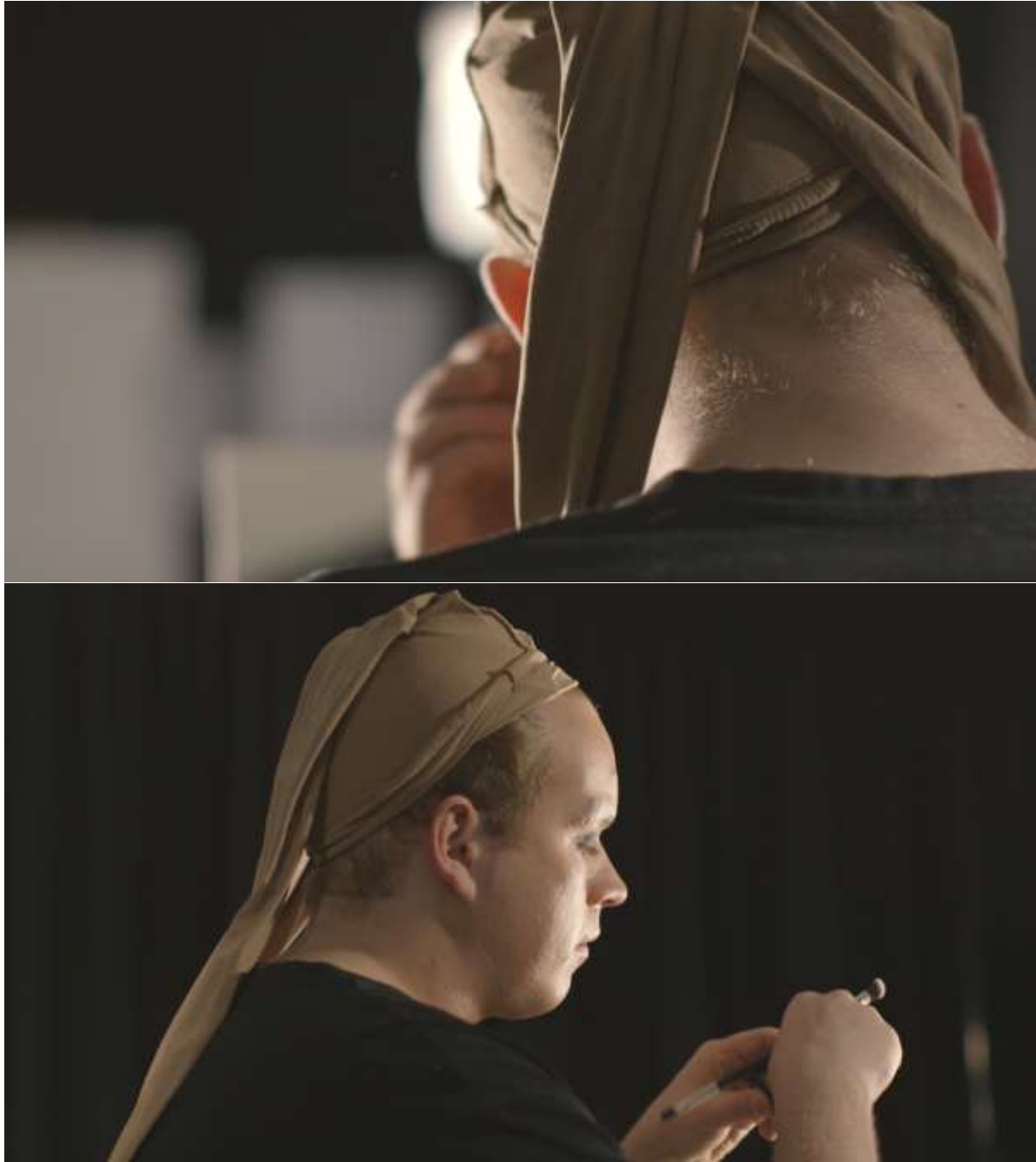




This approach placed a lot of stress upon oneself as framing, arguably the most important element when recording opinions, was affected by environmental factors that were out of our control. There was a clear distance between the camera and subject in this footage, something which limits the engagement with the subject.

## Staged Session

Our second test revolved around a staged scenario of makeup application whilst the subject was interviewed. This challenged oneself to become comfortable within the shooting environment, allowing for the true engagement with the subject.









Appropriate lighting plans were created, inspired by the Refinery29 video. Soft, diffused light is commonly used within beauty portraiture to create a welcoming atmosphere and to convey the subject in a flattering way. Though not as warmly lit as the research implies, the aesthetic of this test allows for more creative control when in the editing stage. Replicating the depth one may find within a dressing room, this test evokes a sense of reality.

## Critical Reflection

To reflect upon the pre-production work for both Alex Jones's, *Stationary Bike*, and Miriam Nosworthy's, *Category Is*, is to study one of strongest evolutions in my work to date. It has been throughout these past months that the most imaginative and visually triggering work has been born. I have worked on key scenes repeatedly, picking apart the core elements that I demand control of. I have also pushed my mind to accept new paths of life, to engage with a documentary subject at the ground level instead of merely watching it. The cinematographer cannot hide when their iris tells the story.

Reflective practice begins "where practitioners are problematizing their practice and learning afresh about both the knowledge and skills and attitudes that their practice demands" Jarvis (1999: 178).

Throughout the pre-production period of *Stationary Bike*, our greatest developments have stemmed from reflecting on the skills that we already possess. The most obvious example for my role as cinematographer has been through the reshoot of one key forty-five second scene. Though I may now tote the skills to properly take control of camera language and to light effectively, the striving for new mindsets is what has led my work on the project. I am under no illusion that my work is beyond the capabilities of another creator, but, in its simplicity, the production has been visualised to reflect the novel. From this reflection on myself, I have targeted the works of David Fincher.

"Behaviour over time. It's a fraction. So behaviour is the most important thing, of every piece of material that you read, that you perform in, and you direct. Look at the behaviour" (Wright, 2017).

It is from here that I have performed abstract conceptualisation within trial storyboards. Active experimentation with the new shots have preceded new paths for the editor to craft the footage along – showcasing David's mentality and characterisation under new light. And from this newfound experience, further review and expansion upon the shot list continues.

"New links may be formed between previously isolated themes and the relative strengths of relationships may be assessed. Again, a significant skill in learning may be developed through an understanding of one's own learning style and needs" Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985: 34).

One of the more important personal developments during this module has been my relationship with the editor for both projects. Due to the understanding of each other's expectations, we have now worked in unison during pre-production to ensure that recorded footage meets them. For instance, the decision to allow black to exist within Alex's frames poses unique challenges for the editor, but through extended discussions this creative choice has flourished. Through the knowledge gained from speaking to the editor, my shots have evolved to deliver more experimental movements and emotive direction.

"Reflective practice has its roots in the Enlightenment idea that we can stand outside of ourselves and come to a clearer understanding of what we do and who we are by freeing ourselves of distorted ways of reasoning and acting" Brookfield (1995: 214).

I personally believe that *Category Is* suffers from the director's attachment to the subject. The opening tests, discussions with actors, and creative decisions have all been affected due to an approach directed by a fan of the topic. The decision to portray the

subject is a purely positive way hinders the message that I believe this production can embody. However, I believe that both myself and Miriam will be changed for the better as this project steams ahead.

My own experiences of drag stem from the historical media portrayal of the stars, contrasted by recent blooms of entertainment shows such as Ru Paul's Drag Race. With such limited experience, the lifestyle maintains an air of curiosity. This was clear in our first night of recording. The lack of structure and spontaneity wasn't so much uncomfortable as it was unnerving. Political correctness plays a part when one falls back on neutral behaviours. Reflecting on the night itself, the footage left peers with a feeling of disconnect – the distance of the camera did not reflect the atmosphere of a documentary. To reflect properly on the situation, one thinks of the following quote,

“Reflection is a basic mental process with either a purpose, an outcome, or both, applied in situations in which material is unstructured or uncertain and where there is no obvious solution” Moon (1999: 10).

My personal development through these tests have ultimately led, so far, to the interaction with an artist where no such experience existed before. This ultimately led to the capturing of some of my most engaging work, with unprecedented levels of detail captured. The act of applying their makeup, something which represents so much emotionally to artists within the lifestyle, was shot from positions that display rapport.

Expanding upon this development as the project goes on is one of my core ambitions. Through the confidence that further tests will generate is most likely what will help me aid Miriam in showcasing her true vision.

To conclude upon the experiences of the past few months is to understand that a chapter of my career has been wrote. I am aware that personal developments have taken place and I am a better cinematographer as a result. My ambitions moving forward are to hopefully deliver these two projects in excelling standards of visualisation. Through these concrete experiences, I reflect, and from the reflection, art will be realised.

## References

11.22.63 (2016). Bridget Carpenter.

1922 (2017). Zak Hilditch. United States.

Ariel Luque (2017). *Instagram*, 19<sup>th</sup> October. Available at:  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BaaD0LaF67f/> (Accessed: 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Ashley Jarman (2017). *Instagram*, 16<sup>th</sup> October. Available at:  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BaTXyYnAUQZ/> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Ben Sierra (n.d.). *Pinterest*. Available at:  
<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/780741285372225333/> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

*Black Mirror* (2011- ). Charlie Brooker.

Boud, D., Keogh, R., and Walker, D. (1985). *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*. New York: Kogan Page Ltd.

Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cyril Rana (2017). *Instagram*, 15<sup>th</sup> October. Available at:  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BaRokULFZTL/> (Accessed: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Dieter Krehbiel (n.d.). 'New York Subway', *Pinterest*. Available at:  
<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/222928250285937344/> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

*Donnie Darko* (2001). Richard Kelly. United States.

Emre Kaan Sezer (n.d.). 'Downtown Spirit'. Available at:  
<https://500px.com/photo/5345015/downtown-spirit-by-emre-kaan-sezer-> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Eric Giovon (2017). *Instagram*, 15<sup>th</sup> October. Available at:  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BaQYrXmg8dg/> (Accessed: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Eric Kim (2017). 'Laughing Lady'. Available at:  
<http://erickimphotography.com/blog/product/laughing-lady/> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Fred Herzog (1962). 'Shopper'. Available at:  
<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/41376890298743903/> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

*Gerard's Game* (2017). Mike Flanagan. United States.

Haoyuan Ren (n.d.). *Pinterest*. Available at:  
<https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/273593746095427263/> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Hastings, M. (n.d.). *Drag*. Available at: <http://magnushastings.com/drag-2/> (Accessed: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Jarvis, P. (1999). *The Practitioner-Researcher: Developing Theory from Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Jason Hehir (2015). 'Brick Lane By Night'. Available at:  
<http://jasonhehirphotography.blogspot.co.uk/2015/06/brick-lane-by-night.html> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Jerry Chen (2017). *Instagram*, 5<sup>th</sup> October. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BZ3gKu9lVxP/> (Accessed: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Joe Pacca (2017). *Instagram*, 11<sup>th</sup> October. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BaHDJrGltpV/> (Accessed: 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

King, S. (2003). *Stationary Bike*. United States: Scribner.

Logan Triplett (2017). *Instagram*, 6<sup>th</sup> October. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BZ6Uez4A7jC/> (Accessed: 6<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

*The Machinist* (2004). Brad Anderson. United States.

Magnum Depardon (1980). 'Glasgow, Scotland'. Available at: [https://pro.magnumphotos.com/C.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&ALID=2K1HRG6JM3\\_J](https://pro.magnumphotos.com/C.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&ALID=2K1HRG6JM3_J) (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Matt Ryan Gompper (2017). *Instagram*, 15<sup>th</sup> October. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BaSIRfJloj2/> (Accessed: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

*Memento* (2000). Christopher Nolan. United States.

Michał Sz (2017). *Instagram*, 15<sup>th</sup> October. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BaSJ4lpH7IT/> (Accessed: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

The Minds of Many (2017). *Instagram*, 16<sup>th</sup> October. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BaTpd8CDd1o/> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

The Minds of Many (2017). *Instagram*, 16<sup>th</sup> October. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BaT51m1jcxZ/> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

*Misery* (1990). Rob Reiner. United States.

Moon, J. A. (1999). *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development: Theory & Practice*. Sterling, Virginia: Kogan Page.

Norman Parkinson (1960). *Daily Mail*. Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3208768/The-man-reinvented-fashion-shoot-Inside-glamorous-world-photographer-Norman-Parkinson-list-friends-including-Audrey-Hepburn-Jerry-Hall.html> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Paola Franqui (n.d.). 'Magical New York City'. Available at: <https://photogrist.com/magical-new-york-city-paola-franqui/> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Persio Pucci (n.d.). 'Brazil'. Available at: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/154107618474169563/> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Peter Mosiman (2017). *Instagram*, 17<sup>th</sup> October. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BaXXMB-hKUZI/> (Accessed: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Refinery29 (2015). *Everything You Don't Know About Drag Queens*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGk1kQful9M&t=59s> (Accessed: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

*The Shining* (1980). Stanley Kubrick. United States.

Spatial Flow (2016). *Instagram*, 28<sup>th</sup> December. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BOjuQuyAutK/> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Stanisław Horodecki (2017). *Instagram*, 7<sup>th</sup> October. Available at:  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BZ9mbalHKmi/> (Accessed: 7<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Stanisław Horodecki (2017). *Instagram*, 14<sup>th</sup> October. Available at:  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BaPIOFNHF71/> (Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Street Photography London (2017). *What is Street Photography London?* Available at:  
<http://www.streetphotographylondon.co.uk/about-street-photography-london/> (Accessed: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Thomas Toft (n.d.). *Pinterest*. Available at:  
<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/413064597059078596/> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Vivian Maier (1954). 'New York, NY'. Available at: <http://www.vivianmaier.com/gallery/street-1/#slide-40> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Vladimir Zotov (n.d.). 'Street Flute'. Available at:  
<https://www.saatchiart.com/art/Photography-Street-flute/953504/3356626/view> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Wright, R. (2017). 'David Fincher gave Robin Wright one piece of advice on directing 'House of Cards''. Interview with Variety. Available at:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJnRyXdMf\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJnRyXdMf_c) (Accessed: 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Zen Inside Zen (1989). 'San Francisco Girl', *Pinterest*. Available at:  
<https://www.pinterest.de/pin/453245149989911848/> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

*Zodiac* (2007). David Fincher. United States.