

Specialism Report

The notion of directing can be defined as, “a person who is in charge of making a film and tells the actors how to play their parts.” (Dictionary.Cambridge) With the technology of today, as well as the popularity of movies, especially with online media-service providers, it appears to be simple to create a film. However, it is the research and knowledge which defines oneself truly as a director. It is the dedication to the piece, honoring the storyline and the appetite to create. Anyone can film, however few can direct. Differentiating this becomes essential, whilst thinking about how to direct, how could one person possibly give themselves the title of director if that person does not shed every inch of themselves to create their own piece and did not even think twice before shooting? This report will take on the elements of directing as my specialism and the areas I explored whilst creating my major project.

Plans and planning were undertaken throughout the development of this film, creating various shot lists, drafting and redrafting my scripts, planning the position of the cameras as well as lighting way in advance, drawing sketches of the set, building models of the set, putting an extreme amount of time and hard work into this film. All this has been done during these two years. It was truly a memorable process. I strived on the stress and the development of the piece. This is definitely a personal project along with the D.O.P, this is a project we had been working on for two years developed with our own budget and ideas.

Even though this specialism report focuses on directing, I would illustrate myself more as the storyteller than the director of this piece. What drove this film was not the idea of directing, that was not my priority, but the desire to film this concept: the story of the struggling musician who goes mad. Originally the storyline, which is inspired by the Devil's Trill Sonata by Giuseppe Tartini, brought on a stop motion, however later on, haven been introduced to Bela Tarr, the storyline took another direction, a more “sinister” one. This created a universe where the characters are helpless, where the world is not romanticized, but real and filled with disillusion. This is where *Its Last Thrill* got its main features from. Nevertheless the story of a man who “sells his soul” or makes a deal with the devil is well-known, it is not a new story. As Jacques Ranciere puts it whilst comparing Flaubert's thoughts to Bela Tarr, “there are no stories, say the novelist. There are no subjects, says the filmmaker. They were all told in the Old Testament.” (Ranciere:2013) This research illustrated the end of my dissertation, how humans are left repeating the same stories over and over again. Therefore it was not the idea of creating a “new story,” as it would be impossible, it was a way to create a different view, or a more personal view, illustrating this situation whilst not dishonoring the main influence, Giuseppe Tartini. Then came the idea of this realistic, dark atmosphere influenced by Tarr.

Step by step I developed this project by firstly being inspired by Bela Tarr. Having read the books which some of his movies were based on, by Laszlo Krasznahorkai, as well as *The Time After* by Bela Tarr by Jacques Ranciere, the characters became clearer to oneself. This idea to have these types of characters within my film drove the final piece to this direction, illustrated perfectly within this quote found in *Satantango* by Krasznahorkai: “any capacity he might have had in the realms of touch, or taste, or smell had also deserted him, leaving nothing but the throbbing of blood and the calm workings of his organs to disturb his utter lack of consciousness,” (Krasznahorkai : 1984)

The most important factors of this film was ensuring that the scenes imagined were portrayed as envisioned as well as representing the main character with the desired depth. As mentioned, this is not an original character, all characters for these last centuries all revolve around the same prototypes. Therefore it was essential, even if the character illustrates yet again an old musician, to try and create depth by illustrating the message and themes the director, myself, wants to get across, inking them within the character and storyline.

Most of the time when asked to create a character with depth, one starts illustrating its backstory, which automatically becomes very cliché, however having studied Bela Tarr, his characters have an extreme amount of depth without having any at all. The descriptions of these characters can be explored in many ways yet in reality the characters are simply there, they are observers, still and empty. This was what was needed for the main actor to understand. A sheet was then created illustrating all the psychological aspects, themes of the character and storyline, to portray not only the desires or what that character is thinking but also all the hidden unconscious, “unconscious” aspects. It was important to have an actor who understands the character, someone who enjoys its depth, nothing feels better than having a team no matter how different they are, all understand and take an interest in the concepts of the script. “They have really big sensibilities and somehow, when we were talking about the life, situations or anything, they had the same point of view. Of course, Mihály is a musician and László is a writer. Even though we have a different language, we somehow think about the life together, not about a film.” (Kudlac : 2016) Here Tarr illustrates the importance of having the right crew.

The character and the themes of this film were éléments that research and interest permitted to develop. For example: the main character’s piece gets played after his death and this causes everyone who listens to it to die, hence there is this death within his creation affects himself and mankind. This is also portrayed by Guan Xiao’s *David* from 2013 where art becomes repeated, reused, recreated, sold, expanded, compressed, and destroyed. The theme of whether to “die on one’s knees or live on one’s feet” also is implied with the film. The task of the director here for this film was not to overdue these concepts but have them hidden, to allow the audience with this certain intellectual mindset to analyze it as they wish. “Hide the ideas, but so that people find them. The most important will be the most hidden.” (Bresson:1975). It is important for the director to agree with the themes and “message” of the piece, to have then this solid unity with the rest of the crew. Indeed this project did not go into the direction of actors, instead the “passion” for this story and the character brought on this intensive planning and research. The film was expanded and dislocated completely, until every inch was explored. This amount of planning made it comfortable to explain the character to the actor, when posed questions the answers were evident, for the foundation of the character and storyline was solid enough, no matter what.

The decision was taken to build a set in order to have more control over the filming process as well as being able to represent everything I had in mind. The possibility to use more equipment and more flexibility to move and change. During the build of the set, it was essential for the director to be there, to direct the exact position of the room, the lengths needed for the the moving tripod which is needed for the inspired shots,, as well as the placements of furnitures. Ensuring the visual of the room reflected what I imaged.

Tarr’s moving and coming into the shot, as well as the concepts of story within a story, where two stories simultaneously happen at the same time, were applied within the film. For example the dreams scenes, the death scenes and the scenes of the old man in his room. Tarr also illustrated or implied to be patient, to not yell cut as soon as the scene is done, but to leave the camera rolling, unsettle the crew. Indeed one aspect that was desired within the film was the slowness, the tracking shots. Though many elements limited these shots (such as the set, the flooring, post production problems), the outcome was still notably the desired one. It was this slow pace I wanted as a director to have, to create this universe of the Devil’s Trill, this sinister yet real one.

“The image becomes authentically cinematic when (amongst other things) not only does it live within time, but time also lives within it, even within each separate frame... The image is not a certain meaning, expressed by the director, but an entire world reflected in a drop of water.” (James : 2015) Unlike many films today there are few directors who stick to the “old ways” of filming, so many give into the new technological ways, as well as filming everything that is beautiful, (shallow depth of fields and

drone shots) only with the purpose to ensure the audience will find it beautiful yet none of these shots actually have a purpose for the storyline itself, each frame here is part of the created universe, one's personal universe which happens to oppress the characters. "Because as I see, what I think, filmmaking is a kind of reaction to the world-you're just telling people how you see the world, from your point of view of course." (Sbrizzi, 2011).

As director, I looked into incorporating this idea of poetic cinema. Indeed music is an essential element within the film, as well as the moments of silence. The interruption of the music in the beginning, the door scene and the silence in the end illustrates a certain pause, as if a narrator would come in. The film itself has a certain musical structure. It was indeed intended that this film has a movie poetic feel, in where there are metaphors, recurring elements, and 'verses'. "A film is never really good unless the camera is an eye in the head of a poet." says Orson Willis (Millerson : 2009) Every song, every image is essential and can be interpreted, just as in the structure, imagery and words of a poem. "La liaison et la logique poétique au cinéma, voilà ce qui m'intéresse. Et n'est-ce pas ce qui convient le mieux au cinéma, de tous les arts celui qui a la plus grande capacité de vérité et de poésie?" (Devidts, 2012) This is what I wanted to portrait, a real as well as poetic piece. Like a poem the piece can be interpreted, each section/verse has its own imagery. I wanted to create a piece, like poetry, where every bit can be analyzed, not just the words but their positions and the letters which construct the words. Whilst watching this film, the audience should feel different amounts of emotions, like a symphony with its four movements.

This brought the idea of removing dialogue whilst in the room of the main character. Indeed within the first draft of the film, the film opened with a series of exchanged dialogue between the father and daughter, in hopes that it would explain the entire film. But draft after draft more and more dialogue was erased. With only the daughter crying against the door and the news reporter at the end. But the main character stays silent., the last scene is completely silent. "A film in cinema is what in theatre would be realism—and vice versa. In cinema—as in life—the text, the words, are refracted in everything apart from the words themselves. The words mean nothing—words are water." (Tarkovsky:1989) This allowed the piece to be more impactful, the words would have taken away the emotions and impact of the shots. The audience's attention would have shifted and throughout the room scenes, that is something I definitely did not want. Therefore, for the knocking scene, having already recorded the audio of the daughter, I had to re-record everything again and again in order to receive the right amount of words and emotion through her speech. All these elements and several others revolve around the idea of creating a "poetic" piece. To give it a style and a certain flow. The outcome of removing dialogues, fast pace scenes etc, was indeed remarkable in my perspective.

This film reflects perfectly everything I had been wanting to explore and create. It is indeed a success from my point of view, I had created a film from scratch, from the research, script, then directing it then finally finalizing it. "Cinema is not a representational system but an expressive machine with the power to produce movement, to provoke a affect, and even to make us think." (Herzogenrath, 2017) Hopefully this is shown within the final piece. All in all the film has been created, I created it. There is no final conclusion for this project or this reflection. There is no plan for the future of the project. I have expressed everything I wanted to, liberated myself and I am proud. Now the piece just simply exists.

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Time Within Time: The Diaries 1970–1986 Book by Andrei Tarkovsky