

Soft  
Proce  
dures

# Soft Proce dures



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“THAT WHICH HAS BECOME  
HARD SHALL NOT TRIUMPH.”

— Andrei Tarkovsky, *Stalker* (1979)

# Soft Proce dures

 *Soft Procedures*  
by Alec Figuracion  
2024

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Art in the Department of Graphic Design of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island.

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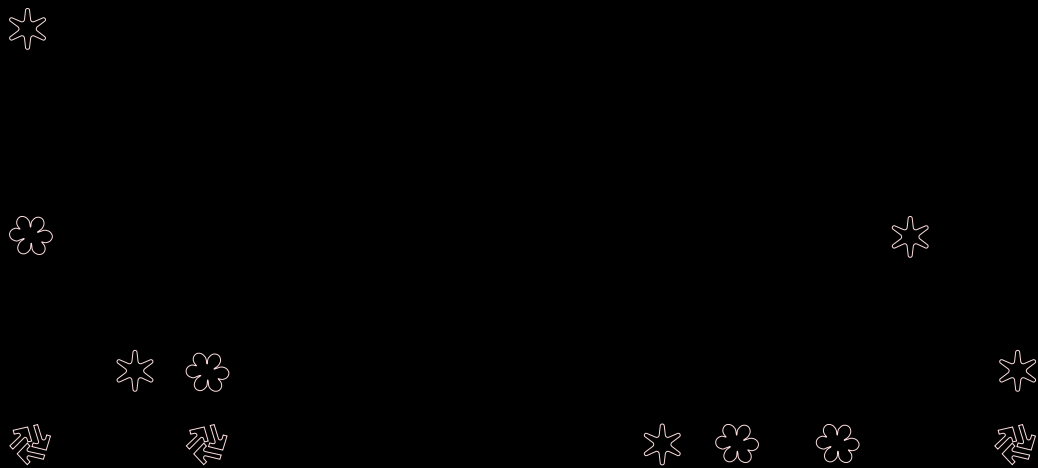
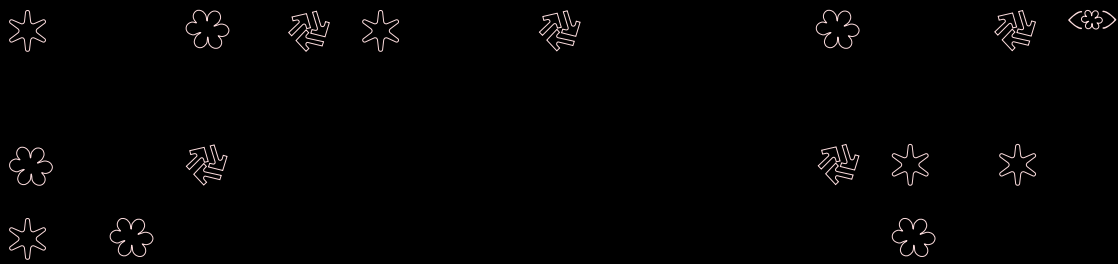
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# Soft Proce dures

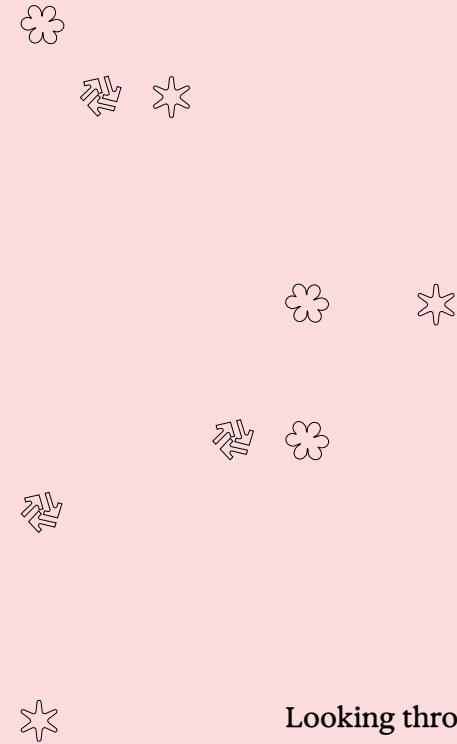


# Soft Proce dures

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# ABSTRACT



Looking through the soft lens—steered by an interiority that feels a little too much sometimes, and a culture which has been beaten down to a pulp by its past—I am interested in the hazy and undefined subjects and instances that occur around the peripheries of our lenses: fuzzy imprints of memories, ever-shifting notions of home, and shapeless narratives. Working primarily with the moving image, I investigate the multiple threads that might exist between them, and persistently shift and adjust the focus ring on the camera lens to embrace and celebrate multiplicities, and the malleability of our collective definitions of softness.

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[@sikoditwa]

PSYCHOLOGIST & RESEARCHER

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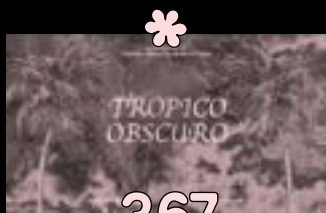
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# INTRODUCTION

*Dear Reader,*

I am writing this  
as I rest my back  
on a stack  
of pillows  
in my bed.

Perhaps you are also  
reading this in the same  
circumstance,  
either way I hope you are  
surrounded with  
all kinds of  
softness at the moment.

Because there are so many  
sharp edges everywhere, and  
I hope that this book could offer some sort  
of solace. Consider this book an extension of my skin;  
its words the soft reverberations of my echo; its  
sentiments a yearning for company. I feel a little less  
lonely knowing that you have this in your hands—  
this opportunity for  
contamination;

this  
gentle contact  
of our  
skins.

So, I am inviting you  
to surrender,  
to peer  
through  
your soft lenses,  
and to forget  
for a moment  
that  
softness  
means  
weakness,  
or  
the lack  
of  
courage.

Here, it means  
to  
be  
safe.

Ultimately,  
it means  
making  
a  
stand.

*Softly,  
Alec*

# INTRODUCTION [CONT'D]

Spherical aberration, in optics and lens technology, is a phenomenon in which the outer part of the field of view of a spherical lens becomes indistinct and blurry due to light rays not converging to a common focus. It is considered a lens flaw, and is an unavoidable optical problem of all spherical lenses, which are the most common types produced and sold as compared to their counterpart with aspherical shapes. Blurring in lenses, thus, is inherent. However, in photography and film, the soft focus is also an aesthetic choice that takes advantage of this flaw. On the other hand, the soft focus lens, a type of lens, deliberately introduces spherical aberration by design.

Rather than the sharp and defined, I am interested in investigating the soft subjects and instances that occur in the peripheries of our personal and collective fields of view. Fuzzy imprints of memories. Shifting notions of the places left behind. Obscured and shapeless narratives. What arises are multiple meandering angles and connections that might exist between them. However, the desire is to not blur these concepts even more, but to persistently shift and adjust the focus, much like turning the focus ring on the camera lens, to discover new and unexpected subjects within our fields of view.

*“I would say that in cinema, opacity and ineffability do not mean an indistinct picture, but the particular impression created by the logic of the dream: unusual and unexpected combinations of, and conflicts between, entirely real elements. These must be shown with utmost precision. By its very nature cinema must expose reality, not cloud it.”*

—Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (1985)

Building upon the methodologies of cinema, this body of work uses Sergei Eisenstein<sup>[a]</sup> and his Soviet Montage Theory<sup>[b]</sup> as an initial point of inquiry, but turns towards a multitude of other thoughts and visual thinkers, particularly Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky<sup>[c]</sup>, to depart from its objective and formalistic impositions upon the audience and accommodate matters of the soft, its malleability and many-sidedness. I am most especially moved by Tarkovsky’s interests in the poetry inherently produced in the moving image, his aspirations toward the beautiful, his generosity to include the audience in the cinematic process, and his unapologetic use of the word “feeling(s)” throughout his book *Sculpting*

*in Time* (1985), which he mentioned 63 times, not including its synonyms. Tarkovsky suggests that, “It [cinema] possesses an inner power which is concentrated within the image and comes across to the audience in the form of feelings... (p. 20)”

→

Sergei Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), Drama, Silent, 72 min • Sometimes referred to as “The Odessa Steps” sequence, this moment in the film portrays a semi-fictional massacre of the citizens Odessa from the Cossacks. The film is about the crew mutiny that transpired on the said Soviet battleship in 1905. The sequence is most noted for its demonstration of the Soviet Montage theory, and has been replicated in many films today.



[a]

Sergei Eisenstein is a filmmaker and theorist who is noted to have pioneered the formal and theoretical foundations of cinema with his methods of montage. He is known for his works, such as *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *Ivan the Terrible: Part 1* (1944), and *Ivan the Terrible: Part 2* (1958).

[b]

The Soviet Montage Theory purports that an edited series of sequential images produces complex meaning(s), and this idea is the formalistic and intellectual foundation of the moving image. Sergei Eisenstein is one of its pioneers, among other Soviet film theorists.

[c]

Andrei Tarkovsky was a Russian film director, screenwriter, and film theorist born on April 4, 1932. His mother was an actress, and his father a poet and translator. Both of them appeared in Tarkovsky's films—the former as an actress; the latter through his poems. He studied at the prestigious Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow, and his first feature film *Ivan's Childhood*

(1962) won the Golden Lion the same year at the Venice Film Festival. The film gained him international acclaim, but received much criticism from the Soviet government. This begins Tarkovsky's difficulties in making and distributing films in his very own country, because of political, ideological concerns. Despite this, his films continued to receive recognition outside of the Soviet Union. His films are often semi-autobiographical, charged with dreamlike and poetic imagery. He was preoccupied with themes relating to memory, the spiritual, and the metaphysical. His last film, *The Sacrifice* (1986), won him his second Grand Prix at Cannes Film Festival, among three other prizes. On December 29 of the same year, Tarkovsky succumbed to lung cancer in Paris, allegedly caused by exposure to toxic chemicals during the filming of his film *Stalker* (1979). In his last journal entry dated December 15, published in his book *Time Within Time: The Diaries 1970-1986* (1994), he wrote, "But now I have no strength left—that is the problem" (p. 354). In 1990, he was posthumously awarded the prestigious Lenin Prize in his home country, just a year before the Soviet Union's dissolution.



So, beyond the pursuit of an intellectual and active discourse, *Soft Procedures* holds and makes space for the affective. It recognizes that feelings are significant in the process of embodying creative work, tenderness a part of fostering communities, and vulnerability as an act of resistance. This book, as a container, presents a mash-up, or yet a shape-shifting, fuzzy, malleable cloud of evolving research, imprecise ruminations, personal works, and multiple dialogues made visible through this author's soft lens—steered by his interiority that feels a little too much sometimes, and his culture which has been beaten down to a pulp by its past.

This introductory text offers a gentle guide of you, the reader, to get acquainted with this book's winding trail of meandering orientations (or disorientations) and associations (or dissociations), which are loose, often-times tangential, and sometimes even contradictory. I invite you to follow along, and en route encourage you to reshuffle the fragmented thoughts, wade through the murk of hazy snapshots, and continuously shift and adjust the soft focus lens so as to discover new and unforeseen connections within our fields of view; our fields of depth; our fields of focus. Tarkovsky (1985) highlights that, "Only through the diversity of personal interpretations does some sort of relatively objective assessment emerge (p. 46)."

This book has three main sections: (1) *Fields of View*, which contains my research, ruminations, and recollections in the form of fragmented writings; (2) *Fields of Depth*, which is a collection of transcriptions of conversations with designers, artists, and academics from different disciplinary fields; and (3) *Fields of Focus*, which consists of a selection of work done during my time here in Providence, RI.

These sections are deliberately interspersed, and strewn altogether in the hopes of telling a richer, open-ended narrative, and to steer clear from any more impositions upon the reading experience. However, much like the retelling of a memory, there are still some gaps in this thesis narrative. But, perhaps, that is okay. The view looking through the soft lens is never sharp and explicit, anyway.

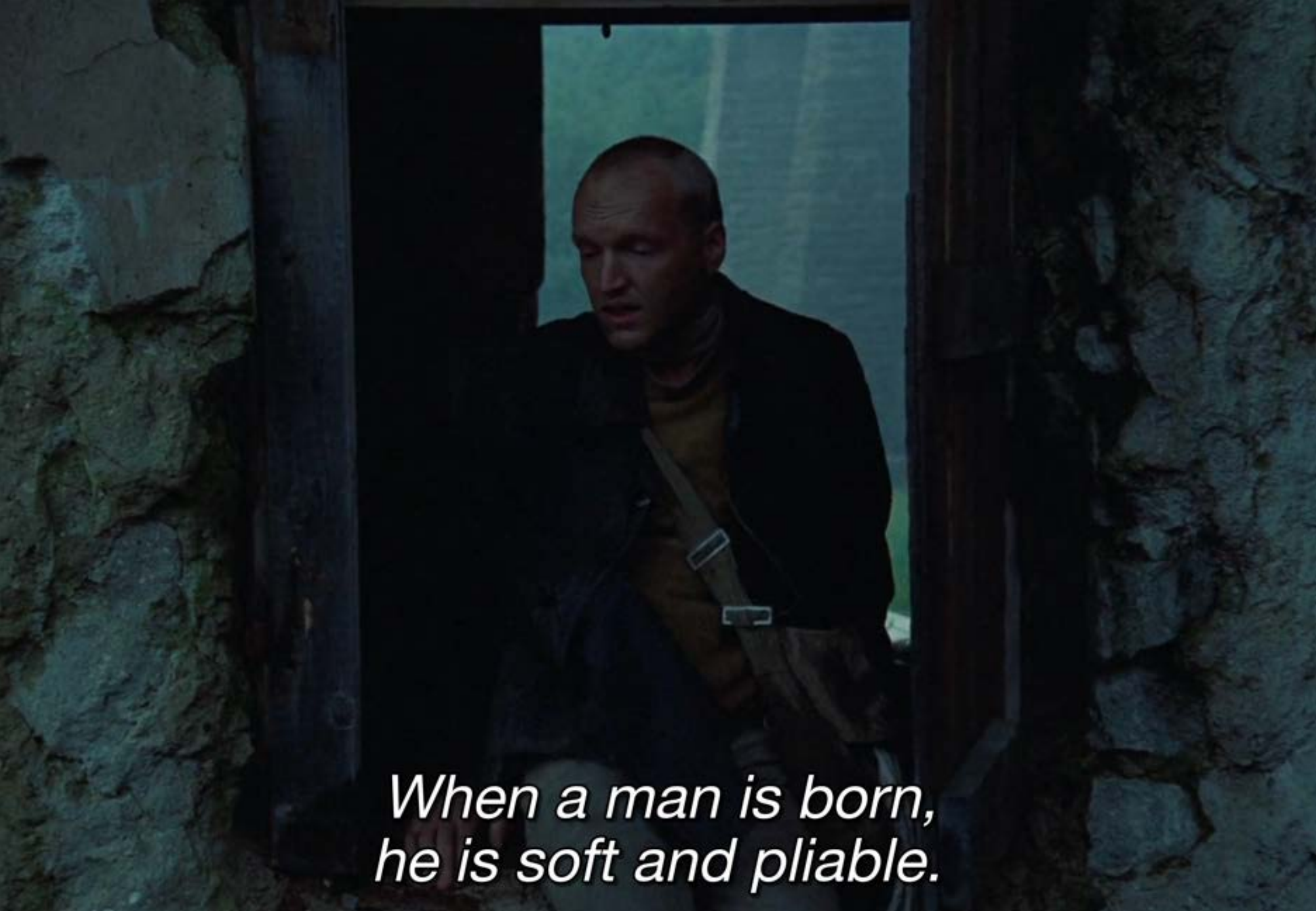
→  
Donatella Baglivo,  
*Andrei Tarkovsky: A Poet in the Cinema*  
(1983), Documentary,  
65 min • This still  
shows Andrei Tarkovsky  
sitting on a tree  
and being interviewed  
for the documentary.  
Here, Tarkovsky rumi-  
nates about welcoming  
loneliness as part  
of the the creative  
process, and an impor-  
tant aspect of being  
young and human.

Andrei Tarkovsky  
*Stalker* (1979),  
Drama, Avant-Garde,  
Sci-Fi, 163 min.

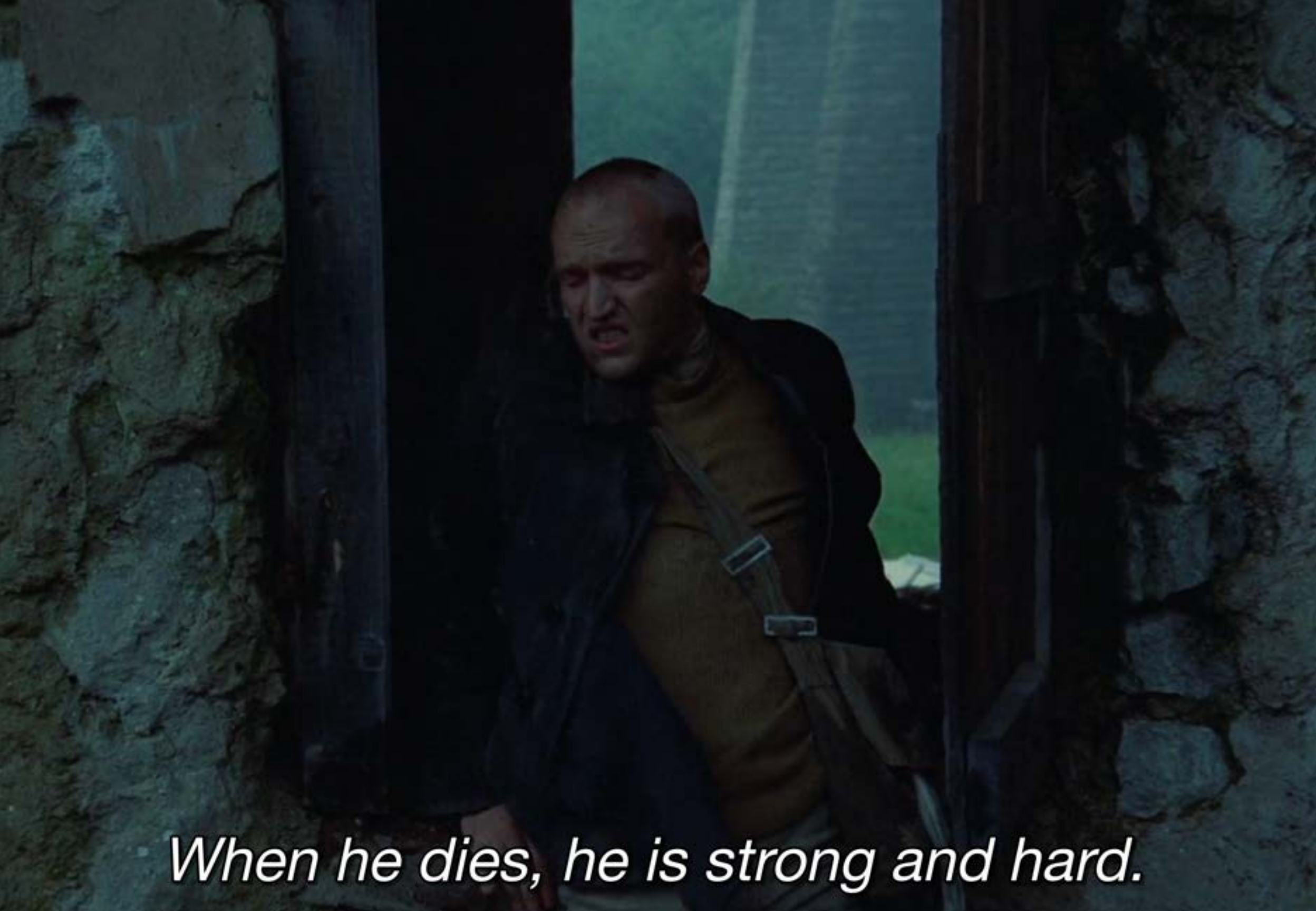


*For softness is great  
and strength is worthless.*




A man with a shaved head, wearing a dark jacket over a brown shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is looking down and to his left with a somber expression. He has a brown strap with a buckle across his chest. The setting is a dark, stone-walled room, possibly a bunker or a prison cell, with a doorway behind him leading to a brighter area. The lighting is low and moody, with a blueish tint.


*When a man is born,  
he is soft and pliable.*

A man in a military uniform stands in a doorway, looking distressed. He is wearing a dark jacket over a brown turtleneck and has a satchel slung over his shoulder. The doorway is framed by rough, textured walls. The lighting is dim, with a bright light source visible through the doorway behind him.

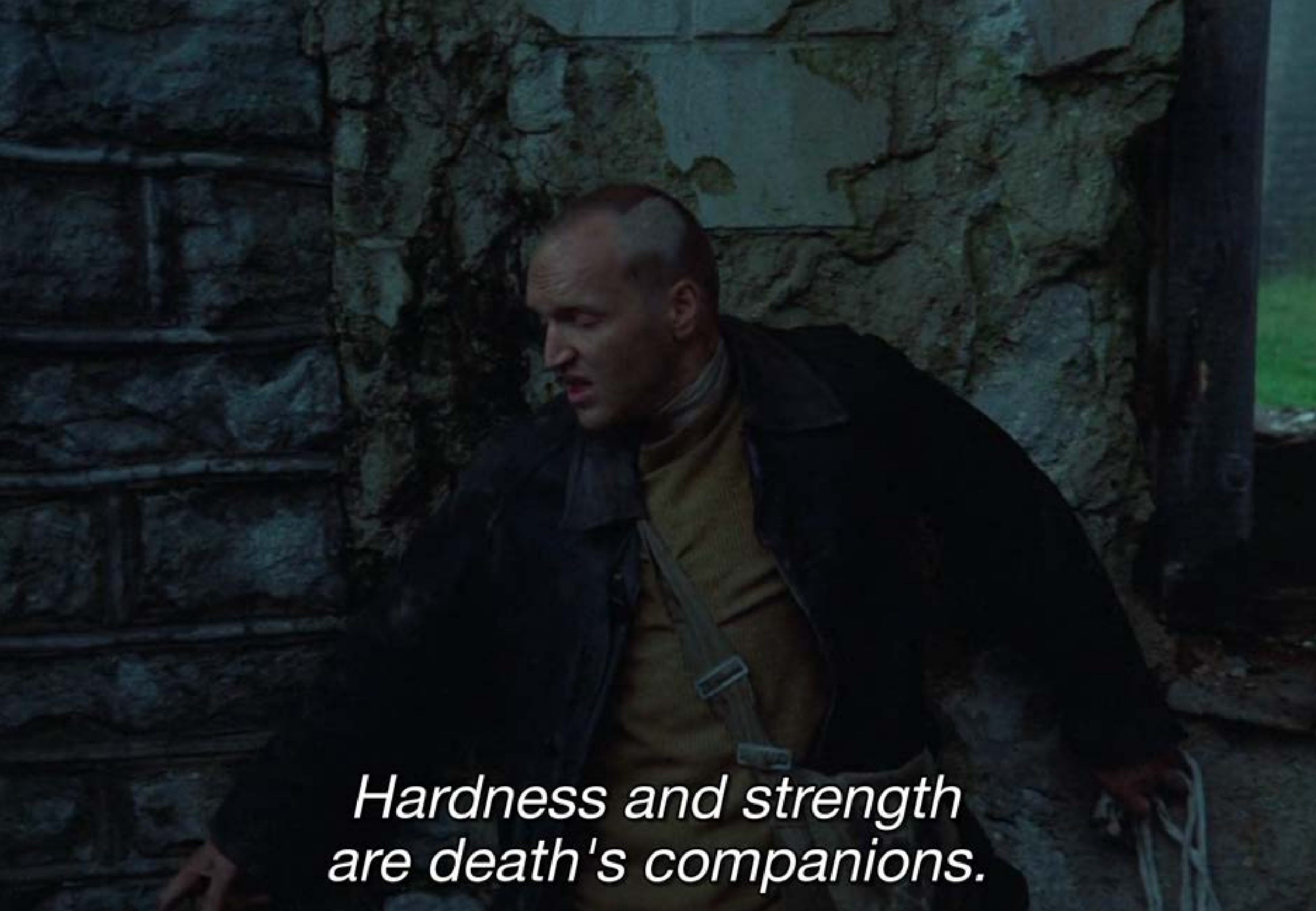
*When he dies, he is strong and hard.*

A man with a shaved head, wearing a dark military jacket over a tan shirt, sits in a doorway. He has a somber expression and is looking down. The doorway is framed by rough, textured walls. Outside the doorway, a bright green field is visible under a clear sky. The overall lighting is dim, with the primary light source coming from the opening of the doorway.


*When a tree grows, it is soft and pliable.*

A man with a shaved head, wearing a dark jacket and a tan scarf, sits in a dilapidated room. He is looking down and to his right with a somber expression. The room has crumbling stone walls and a large, jagged hole in the wall behind him, through which a bright green field is visible. The lighting is dim and moody.


*But when it is dry and hard, it dies.*

A man with a shaved head, wearing a dark jacket over a yellow turtleneck, is sitting on the ground against a rough stone wall. He is looking down and to the left. The scene is dimly lit, with a window or doorway visible on the right side showing some greenery outside.

*Hardness and strength  
are death's companions.*

A man with a shaved head, wearing a dark jacket over a brown shirt, is sitting against a rough stone wall. He has a somber expression and is looking down and to the right. A strap is visible across his chest. The lighting is dim, creating a moody atmosphere.

*Flexibility and softness  
are the embodiment of life.*

A man in a dark coat and hat stands in a doorway, looking down with a somber expression. The scene is dimly lit, with a stone wall on the right and a rough wall on the left.

Andrei Tarkovsky  
*Stalker* (1979),  
Drama, Avant-Garde,  
Sci-Fi, 163 min.

*That which has become hard  
shall not triumph.*



<\*

1

... Rays

of warm light

... Icing

on the

nose

... A

New Order song

... Dance

... Slow

motion

... Fades,

and dissolves

2

The blurriness or softness captured in a photograph or video is traditionally considered an error, often-times a beginner's mistake—a face shrouded in haze; a body appearing to quiver in motion. It is the result of imprecision from the not-so-good eye and the not-so-deft hands. It is a failed image.

→

Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Egerstrom House*, Architecture Series (2002), Gelatin silver print.



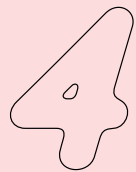
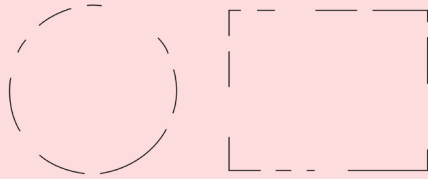


# 3

In Gestalt psychology, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” It describes how complex images can be reduced to simple forms and shapes. Some principles in this school of thought include “closure”, which means that a pattern with missing parts or gaps will be filled in by the brain to make a complete image, and “continuity”, which states that elements arranged along a line or curve are perceived as related, whereas those that are not are separate, among others. In this theory of perception, to make meaning is to smooth incongruent lines, to organize into a system, to arrive at a systematic whole, and to render the view of the world complete, clear and crisp.



→  
An example of the “law of closure.”



What becomes of the other parts of the image—the gaps, the periphery, the opaque, the entanglements? How do you put together broken shards when their edges have become fuzzy; simplify endless states of flux; tug and shape a story that is amorphous and free from structure? How do you make whole multitudes; make clear the fuzzy and soft?

→  
Apichatpong Weerasethakul, *Vapour* (2015), Short, 21 mins.



Fields of View

↗  
Lorna Simpson, *Cloud* (2005), Serigraph on 9 felt panels.

5

“The whole is not a closed set, but on the contrary that by virtue of which the set is never absolutely closed, never completely sheltered, that which keeps it open somewhere as if by the finest thread which attaches it to the rest of the universe.”<sup>[5-a]</sup>

— Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983)

[5-a]

Deleuze further discusses this in his book *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983) with his concept of the “out-of-field”. For Deleuze, the film frame or shot contains sets of things that are of visibility and legibility: the characters, the props, and other elements seen within the frame. These sets are its physical, spatial, or geometric components. But the frame or shot is never absolutely closed, he suggests. It extends itself to an audience and gives rise to the unseen and the infinite—the life of each character, or sound moments continuing outside of it. For Deleuze, this creates the capacity to open the image to a fourth dimension that is time, and a fifth which is the spirit. “... the Open [“out-of-field”], and relates back to time or even to spirit rather content and to space” (p. 17).

In his book *The Open Work*, Italian thinker Umberto Eco compares notions of completeness to a road traffic sign, which can be viewed and interpreted with a singular interpretation. A red octagonal sign that says “STOP” only means one thing to the driver. For Eco, what distinguishes creative work, the “open work”<sup>[6-a]</sup>, from a stop sign is the infinite number of ways one could view, or read it. It requires an active participation from the audience who is “... bound to supply his own existential credentials, the sense conditioning which is peculiarly his own, a defined culture, a set of tastes, personal inclinations, and prejudices.” For Eco, the work is an open field of meanings, rather than a string of meaning.

<\*>

<\*>

[6-a]

In *The Open Work*, originally published as *Opera Aperta* in 1962, Umberto Eco attempts to demonstrate the definition of the “open work” using two concepts. First, an “open work” holds meaning and narrative beyond its structural or physical edges. It is not static, but always dynamic because the work extends itself to the audience who gleans their own meaning from it. On the other hand, the “open work” is also one that is intentionally left open for collaboration. One example he provides is Alexander Calder’s *Mobile* series (1930s–70s), mobile-like sculptures that move with the air and take on multiple spatial configurations. Eco calls this open work as “works in movemovent”, which has an inherent unpredictability and agency programmed into the work itself for which a collaboration between the author and the audience is in a perpetual state of variability.

→  
Stanley Kubrick,  
*2001: A Space Odyssey*  
(1968), Sci-Fi,  
139 min.



→  
Still from a footage  
taken at the parking  
lot of Stop & Shop,  
Pitman St, Providence,  
RI, for the project  
*Stories* [see p. 329].



→  
Jeff Wall, *Passerby*  
(1996), Gelatine  
silver print.



6

The bokeh<sup>[7-a]</sup>, is a term in photography and film that refers to an aesthetic quality or effect that embraces the blurriness of the out-of-focus parts of the image as a result of a shallow depth of field. It originates from the Japanese word *boke*, which means “blur” or “haze”. Outside of its adaptation in the English language, bokeh has several meanings and nuances in its original Japanese etymology, including not being able to think clearly, or half-asleep, or jet lag, or mentally hazy—qualities of mental or physical exhaustion, and manners or expressions of human vulnerability.

→

Giuseppe Tornatore, *Cinema Paradiso* (1988), Drama, Romance, 124 min • An example of the bokeh aesthetic where highlights in the background, in this case pertaining to the multiple light sources behind the character, create an out-of-focus blurred quality to the image.



[7-a]

In 2009, MIT Media Lab has also found another application for the bokeh in the form of small barcodes called bokodes, referring to their form as a tiny blurry spot on a surface. They hold much more information than regular barcodes, and can be scanned by any digital camera, including one’s phone camera, from different angles and from 13 ft. away without needing a laser scanner to read the information.

The montage, according to Oxford Languages, is “the technique of producing a new composite whole from fragments of pictures, text, or music.” The idea of film as an art form spliced together by composites is a tenet of the Soviet Montage Theory<sup>[8-a]</sup>, perhaps best illustrated by the cognitive event arising from the

&lt;\*

\*&gt;

craft of film editing that is the Kuleshov Effect<sup>[8-b]</sup>. Demonstrated by Soviet filmmaker and film theorist Lev Kuleshov, it suggests that the audience would derive more meaning from the interaction of two distinct sequential shots than from a singular one. Soviet filmmaker and film theorist Sergei Eisenstein further claims that, “It is montage that produces the sense of the three-dimensional [the ‘third meaning’] in cinema.”

[8-a]

Soviet Montage theory is an approach to filmmaking and understanding cinema that focuses on film editing techniques. An essential contribution of Soviet filmmakers and film theorists, it brought about formalism in the language of cinema. Sergei Eisenstein is one of the primary driving forces of the movement. In the chapter *A Dialectic Approach to Film Form* from his book *Film Form* (1949), Eisenstein mentions the shot and the montage are the basic elements of cinema. He further suggests the latter is also “the nerve of cinema” (p. 48), and that, “to determine the nature of montage is to solve the specific problem of cinema” (p. 48).

[8-b]

→

Stills from Kuleshov’s short film experiment, where the same shot of an actor’s expressionless face is cut back and forth with three other shots: a bowl of soup, a girl in a coffin, and a woman on a couch. When shown to an audience, they perceived that the actor’s face is different each time it appeared. Here, Kuleshov presents film as a medium of inherent narrative causality.



9

... In a car,  
the views  
from the window  
running  
24  
frames  
per  
second [see p. 67]

... The stars  
in his cake,  
and  
the sugar  
in the  
sky [see p. 163]

... The truth  
conjured with  
embellishments  
and  
errors [see p. 201]

... A cartographer  
who has forgotten  
the shape  
and contours  
of the  
land [see p. 239]

... A note,  
containing  
an admission  
stuck  
in his throat,  
buried under \* \*  
a Green  
Mango  
tree [see p. 113]



Agnès Varda,  
*Beaches of Agnes*  
(2008), Documentary,  
108 min.





# ASHLEY GOVERS [& JURJEN VERSTEEG] OF FROM FORM



Interview conducted on Friday, 03-22-24 over Zoom.

From Form, built by duo Ashley Govers and Jurjen Versteeg in 2013, is an independent creative studio for film and design based in Rotterdam, Netherlands. They work on commercial and independent projects, including short films, campaigns, commercials, film titles, graphic design, photography, and animation. They love to design sets, engage with analog methods, such as filming with the 16-mm Bolex camera, and are drawn to imperfections.

In this conversation, we discuss some ways to reconcile filmmaking and graphic design as one practice. Framed within the context of their work, we also consider what it means to be a multidisciplinary designer in this increasingly specialized field.

AF 00:19 *I'm always curious about the overlap between filmmaking and graphic design. The link between the two seems very obvious but it is interesting to me the many ways people articulate their response towards the question, especially within the context of their practice. What do you think is the relationship between graphic design and film?*

AG 01:06 **Yeah, I think for us, we like to focus on film projects but our way of approaching it is always in a graphic way. So we always let graphic design be part of our film projects.**

I can maybe also tell a little bit about how we started, because I actually come from a different background. We lived elsewhere in the Netherlands before, and then came to Rotterdam to study at the Willem de Kooning Art Academy. There, I was studying interior design, and was making furniture, but I also had lectures in photography. It was very broad. My husband [JURJEN VERSTEEG] was studying film, but he also did a lot of motion graphics back then. He also did a lot of still [PHOTOGRAPHY] and animation. And then we started to collaborate during our time in the academy. And then actually after that, we started to work more together. I was helping him also with doing set design and stuff like that. And so, I think a year after we graduated, we started the studio because we noticed like, oh, we could really complement each other and lead the different disciplines.

So that's why we started to focus more on film, and we found that there's a lot of freedom in it that we really like.

AF 03:32 *Was there a specific moment when you realized that this is what you're going to do? Like a specific project maybe that made you arrive at this niche [THE INTERSECTION OF GRAPHIC DESIGN AND FILM].?*

AG 04:16 **Well, the studio is having its 11-year anniversary this year, actually.**

<24>

<24>

AF 04:19 *Cool!*

AG 04:20 **And we started actually with doing work that is more about craft and building sets and stuff like that. But for us back then, we didn't really notice that graphic design was bigger than just, let's say, making posters—that we also do. But I think during the years, we realized that the way we look at shots, or do our art direction has its own graphic style.**

AF 05:20 *Cool, yeah! I can see that a lot in your work too. That reminds me of this project that you guys are working on, which is the "Two Deserts" film. I was reading a little bit about it on your website. And I think it's a wonderful combination of graphic design and film. If I'm remembering correctly, it's based on this magazine called Desert Magazine. I'm just wondering if you could talk about the process of doing that project. What stage of production are you on right now?*

→

Work in progress still from the short documentary *Two Deserts* by From Form.



AG 06:13 **Yeah, I think within our work, it's kind of a special project, because we're sort of working on it for a couple of years now. We started it because we went to the US and made a road trip along the West Coast. We were**

also visiting the desert, and we didn't expect that this landscape had such an overwhelming impression on us. When you're there, you really appreciate the silence, nature, and this experience. So, when we got back to the Netherlands, the place just stayed in our minds. We know how it feels to walk in the forest, or to see the sea, because we have a lot of sea around us, but this landscape was intriguing to us and was still so clearly in our minds. So we thought we really have to dive into this, and find out where this feeling comes from. Why do we have all of a sudden an obsession with the desert?



That is actually how it started. But we, of course, needed to have some subsidy to make the film. I think it was during the pandemic that we started to write, and we got a little bit of money during that time. We went to the US again to shoot some initial footage for the short documentary. But we actually still needed money to make progress. We had two years of writing, and asking for more subsidies. Unfortunately, it didn't turn out well. That's why the film went in silence for a while. So we're now at a moment like, okay, what are we going to do? Are we going to finish it? Do we have to close the studio windows and just just work on this project for a while. Or do we do crowdfunding, or something like that? So yeah, that's where we are now actually. But hopefully we get to finish the project.



A cover from *Desert Magazine* (1983).



So, we started to research a little bit on this area in California, and discovered this magazine [DESERT MAGAZINE]. We were just so intrigued by this magazine It's so niche. Every issue, it only talks about the desert—the things you can do, readings and articles about it. We found it very intriguing that someone had put all this effort into making this and gave it life.

We were also very intrigued by its graphic design, of course. It's super nostalgic. That's also why we thought to make a film about it—combine its graphic elements with film.

AF  
10:42

*I guess you would have more time also to really develop the project. I'm really excited to see it. Because I was really intrigued by the whole concept. And yeah, like what I said, it's a perfect mix of graphic design and film. I'm curious about what sort of techniques or formalistic moves are you employing to make this relationship between filmmaking and graphic design in the film? Like, how are you using the magazine as a graphic material in itself to tell a story through film? Only if you're okay to share that.*



Behind the scenes of filming *Two Deserts*



AG  
10:42

I can tell you a little bit about that. We actually want to play with all kinds of techniques, so we want to use film, also stop motion, letterpress, stills, and also taking materials and references from Archive.org. You're working with this magazine, which is a physical thing, so

there are also many scans from it. From that we can create this very rhythmic edit of all the stills to make this magazine come alive. We're also using photography and miniature models, scale models. They'll all be a part of it. It will be a mix of media and very playful.

AF 12:53 *Yeah, also when I look at your films, you can tell that graphic designers made it. So I'm curious, when you make films, is it [GRAPHIC DESIGN] always in the back of your head? Are you conscious about reminding yourselves that graphic design should always be in your films? Or has it become intuitive for you? If that question makes sense.*



→ From Form, *Look. Touch. Feel*, Dutch Cancer Society (2023), Commercial, 14 sec.

AG 13:33 *I get what you mean. I think it's quite naturally how it goes for us now, actually. I mean, we're very lucky that we have created this language for ourselves. And I think within a project, because we also do a lot of commissioned projects, we get asked for that specific visual language. When a client comes to us, they really value our aesthetic. We don't really think about how to combine this graphic language [WITH FILM], but it's more like the way we see.*

AF 14:42 *Yeah, I also started thinking that way I suppose. I mean, I come from a filmmaking background, but then I started studying graphic design, and it has become intuitive for me*

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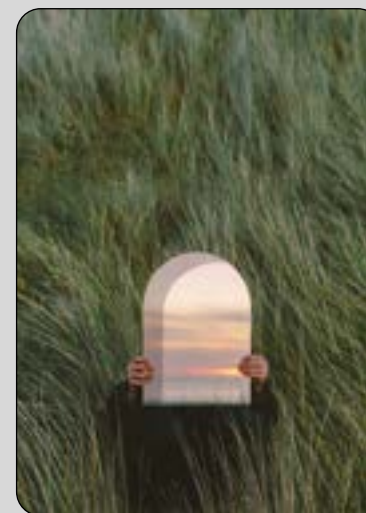
<관>

*now too—having this new knowledge informing this visual language in my filmmaking, I think.*

AG 15:04 *We ask ourselves: if we make an idea or a concept, is it still us, you know? We keep it close to ourselves. On the other hand, we try new things every time, but then in different ways. I think we just like to combine different disciplines in terms of the inspiration we're getting. We can really like a painting, for example, or films of course, objects, furniture, architecture. There's even just colors, combinations of colors, or a specific form. So, every time is really different—where we get this inspiration from, what things we connect to.*

*So, for example, we worked on the *Into the Great Wide Open Festival*—I don't know if you've seen it on our website. It's from 2016, a little bit older. We were very intrigued by the nature of the island, and the work of this surrealist painter, René Magritte, a Belgian artist. There's a moment when we probably bought a book about him, or saw something. At that moment, we were connecting these things into that particular project.*

→ Some stills from the photo series, inspired by René Magritte, for the *Into the Great Wide Open Festival* (2016) campaign and identity.



*And maybe for another project, we're probably into some sort of material or furniture, and then we try to connect that thing within that project. So, there's*



always this specific moment when we're into something. What is in our minds, we put a lot of it into a project, if that makes sense.

< 24 >

< 24 >

AF 17:41 *Yeah, that makes sense. Thinking about inspirations, are there any particular films or filmmakers that you are really inspired by, or like you draw inspiration from that helps you in this practice of graphic design and filmmaking?*

AG 18:05 **At the moment, we are locked into Agnès Varda films, and *Les Blancs*. Do you also know *Les Blancs*?**

AF 18:10 *No, I haven't seen *Les Blancs*, or any of Agnès Varda's films, actually, which I should probably watch.*

AG 18:16 **You'll probably love it.**

→

Agnès Varda,  
*Le Bonheur* (1965),  
Drama, Romance,  
77 min.



AF 18:17 *I've only seen a clip from *Gleaners*, I think, but that's about it.*  
[I DID LATER ON WATCH SOME AGNÈS VARDA FILMS]

AG 18:34 **So yeah, that's what we're into right now, at the moment.**

AF 18:34 *Basically, in terms of Agnès Varda, are you looking more into the narrative aspects of her works, or the aesthetic aspects of her works, or just the overall, general feel of what she does?*

AG 18:59 **I think both, actually, and also the way she works. She's often behind the camera herself. Also, we run the studio between the two of us [WITH HUSBAND JURGEN VERSTEEG]. But of course, within a project, the team can grow. We work with freelancers around us, but we still try to do a lot of things ourselves. So we're trying to do as much as possible to create things out of our own hands, you know? I mean, you can say that we have this control, but also we feel that in a way we like to keep it close to our own signature.**

AF 20:57 *Yeah, I guess that reminds me how you guys tend to work with analog and physical materials. And you're also really into imperfections. I guess my question is what makes you interested in approaching work through analog methods and the imperfections that come with it?*

AG 21:20 **Yeah, I don't know if I have a direct answer to that—where it comes from, actually. I think our love for prints, and our love for used objects where you can see the imprint of time. We're really intrigued by that. So that's why we love to get in those details and to try to copy that into creating new work. With the Museum Night campaign, for example, it was really like a hybrid form. We shot the photos digitally, and then we made a stop motion out of them by printing them on a flipbook, so we brought it back to digital. We really wanted it to feel like a real, used flipbook. So we made sure that it felt used. I think, also, our love for nostalgia is so big that it really has to feel like we actually found this old flipbook from like 30 years ago, maybe. So, I think in our work it becomes this aesthetic.**

→  
Some stills from the  
stop motion flipbook  
created by From Form  
for the Amsterdam  
Museum Night campaign  
in 2022.



&lt; 24

&gt; 25

AF  
23:32 *Yeah, I also tend to gravitate towards that aesthetic, especially since I just discovered or it was my first time using the 16-mm Bolex camera here in school. And I can't seem to explain why I am just drawn to the graininess of it, I don't know. It just looks so much better than digital.*

AG  
23:57 *Yeah, it's hard to explain actually. There's just a feeling to it that's real. I mean, we're not DOP's [DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY], you know, we just have a love for film, but the Bolex is a sort of an easy camera, like a hands on camera. The feeling that you capture is just a very different feeling than that of digital.*

[ABRIDGED. . . ]

AF  
28:41 *Yeah, I also want to ask about being a multidisciplinary. Especially right now where a lot of studios or companies are looking for specialization, more so within graphic design. I was wondering how you have navigated that, or how you are still navigating that? Perhaps you've already established this sort of thing for you, but I'm wondering how you initially tried to reconcile that—between being multidisciplinary and having a specialization.*

AF  
29:34 *I think maybe because we're still quite small, and it's just the two of us mostly running the studio. We learn by*

doing. When we do different things, we also learn new things every time. We also like to work with people as much as we can—gathering a team with people who are specialized in a specific area. So yeah, one time we did a project for Ace & Tate, a company that sells glasses. We made a commercial video for that, and then we worked with an illustrator who made the backgrounds. It was a very new collaboration, and we didn't know if it was gonna work out at all, but just we tried to figure it out along the way. It turned out well in the end. I don't know if that answers your question.

AF  
31:41 *Yeah! For myself, I was just thinking about how I come from a different background, which is filmmaking, and I'm doing graphic design now. So, I think, I'm still trying to reconcile this idea of being a multidisciplinary versus focusing on one thing. I do motion too, so I'm asking myself if I should just do that, or do graphic design and also film, or just blend it altogether like what you guys do.*

AG  
32:18 *I think even nowadays a lot of people are doing different things, like film, photography and graphic design. I think it's nice to change within what's needed.*

AG  
32:46 *Do you have any advice for people who want to pursue this track—of blending two different mediums, whatever those things are, together and successfully doing it?*

AG  
33:28 *I think, just make a lot of work. Try to make it yourself, and get people to see it. You don't have control over that always, but it's easier nowadays to get your work shown with all the online platforms—*

[JURGEN VERSTEEG, THE OTHER HALF OF FROM FORM, COMES IN. . . ]

JV  
34:10 *Hey!*

AF Hello!  
34:11



AG We're about finish! [TO JURGEN]  
34:13

JV Sorry, for jumping in so late!  
34:14



AF No, you're good! Nice to meet you!  
34:16

[ABRIDGED...]



AF I was just asking Ashley if she has any advice for finding a  
34:16 successful balance between doing two different mediums as a  
sort of professional, or design practice.

JV Yeah, from what I see on your website, I was already  
35:28 impressed. It's all coming together. I mean I don't wanna  
sound like a cliché, but it's just a matter of doing and  
making. I think combining those two things can be done  
in so many different ways, but it is how both should  
inform a concept or the work.

→  
From Form,  
*The Immeasurable  
Impact of Film*,  
Cineville (2018),  
Commercial, 45 sec.



AG I think it's really good to embrace those two disciplines  
36:03 and really use it as your selling point.

[ABRIDGED...]



Abbas Kiarostami,  
*Close-Up* (1990),  
Documentary,  
98 min.





# TENDERNESS MONTAGE



Fields of Focus

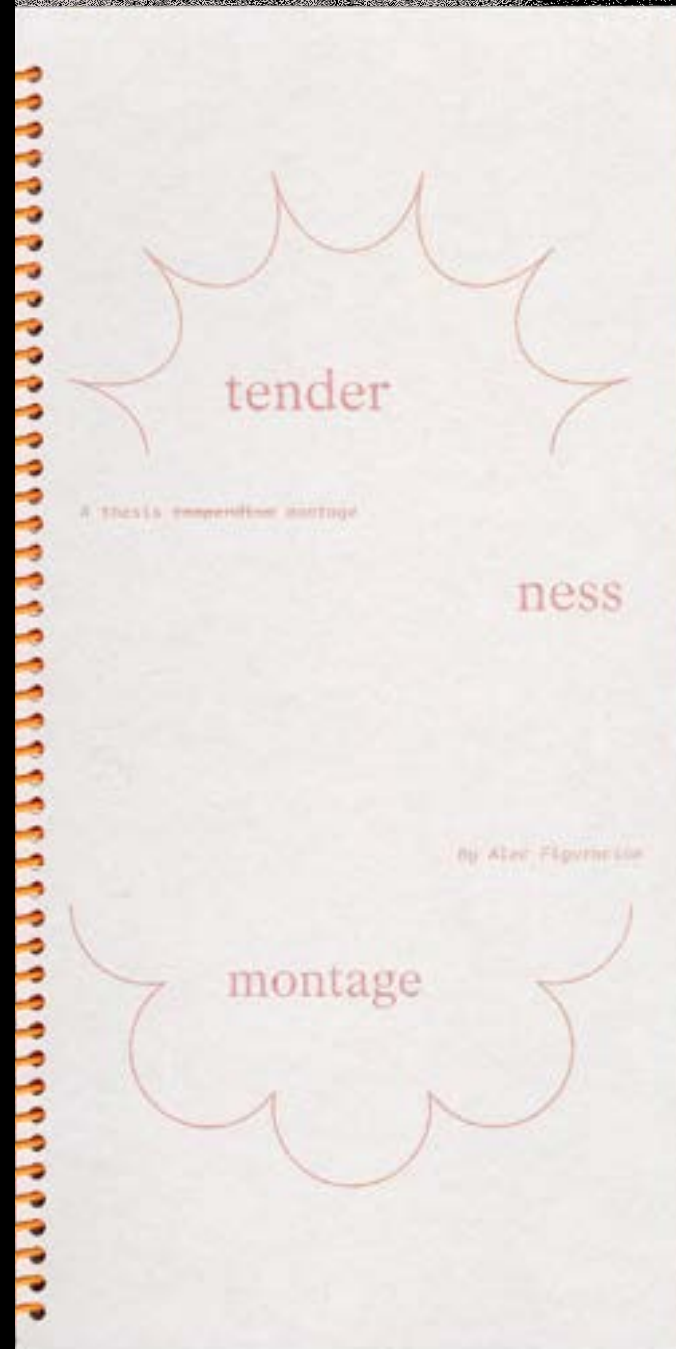
Spiral-bound book,  
20 perforated pages,  
6x12", Spring 2023

*Tenderness Montage* is a document that contains the uncertainties, disorientations, and fuzziness of the process to initially compose a whole, or a thesis, or just something to say. Composed largely of writing that interrogates personal intuitions, actions, intellect and history in order to define a thesis direction, this publication began an inquiry towards reconciling my background in filmmaking and learnings within graphic design as one practice.

At that time, it was challenging to write when the goal was still a blur. But writing has since become my process of wading through existential murk, and has allowed me to utter in written words the things that my speech can't.

*Tenderness Montage* is a container that holds rudimentary thought fragments, compressed time, and the potential for which this book, *Soft Procedures*, took shape. It is a publication that takes the form of Eisenstein's montage. Each spread is perforated into three horizontal sections, which the reader can tear so they can arrive at their own three-tiered reconstructions and narratives.

In this publication, the top section contains meandering self-reflections about being a maker and visual thinker (Foundational Principles), the middle brings the footnote away from the margins and into the center of the book, while the bottom explores a specific philosophical viewpoint about one's own graphic design practice (Critical Position). These are then interjected by spreads of selected studio work. This work is an initial exploration on translating and then complicating the montage. Its formal structure illustrates a transferring of authorship from the writer and designer to the reader, who is given agency to find and make their own meaning.





This is a montage. A piecing together of fragments and a compression of time. A wading, through the muck and stuffing of remembering. Slow motions. Light leaks. Gestalt principles. Shadow boxing and joggling. Trying on clothes. A New Order song. Dance. Fades and dissolves. This writing is an act of shortening, gathering. Pickering through, and sequencing half-remembered, discombobulated recollections of junctures and unravelings that defined a life dedicated to making.

4  
The assembling or piecing together fragments of text, image, music, or sound, in order to form and create a narrative whole.

1  
Ferdinand E. Marcos was the 10th president of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986. He is also a dictator, kleptocrat, and human rights abuser. He left the country billions in debt and committed 2,000 killings and disappearances, 15,000 prisoners, torture and abuse, and 60,000 sexual violations under Martial Law.

•  
Lathala men and women give a salute on the 1986 EDSA Massacre with substituted bands during the 1986 People Power Revolution in 1986 in Manila, Philippines

In 1986, over two million Filipinos gathered and marched along the stretch of Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) – the so-called main artery of Metro Manila – to end the dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos. Propelled by the accumulation of a repressed political movement, electoral fraud, and violent and abusive rule, the peaceful mass resistance successfully ousted the dictator, ending his two-decade regime and the nine-year martial law. This pivotal period in the Philippines's history is referred to as the EDSA Revolution, or the People Power Revolution, or the Bloodless Revolution, where tanks were met by prayer, guns by substituted bands and flowers.





A wading  
through

• Alfred, Lord  
Tennyson,  
"The Charge of the  
Light Brigade"  
(1854)

the murk  
and  
shuffling

• Robert Frost,  
"The Road Not  
Taken" (1916)

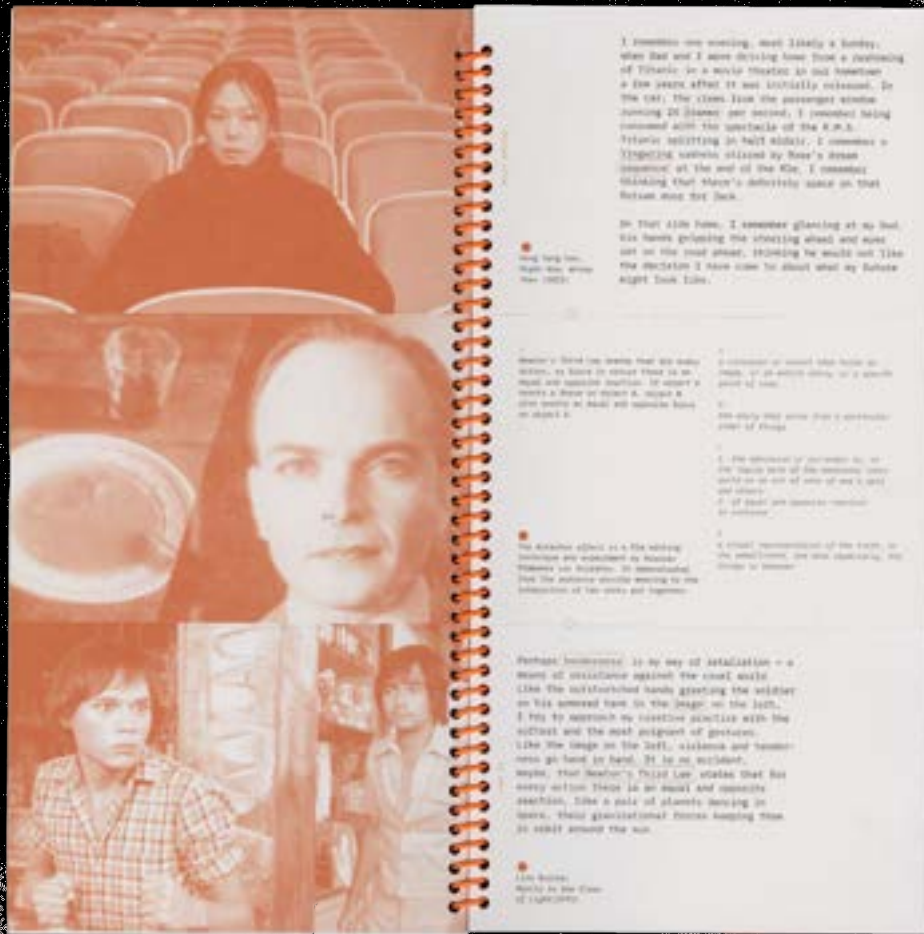
of  
remembering

• Emily  
Dickinson,  
"The Heart  
That Strives  
Against Itself"  
(1895)

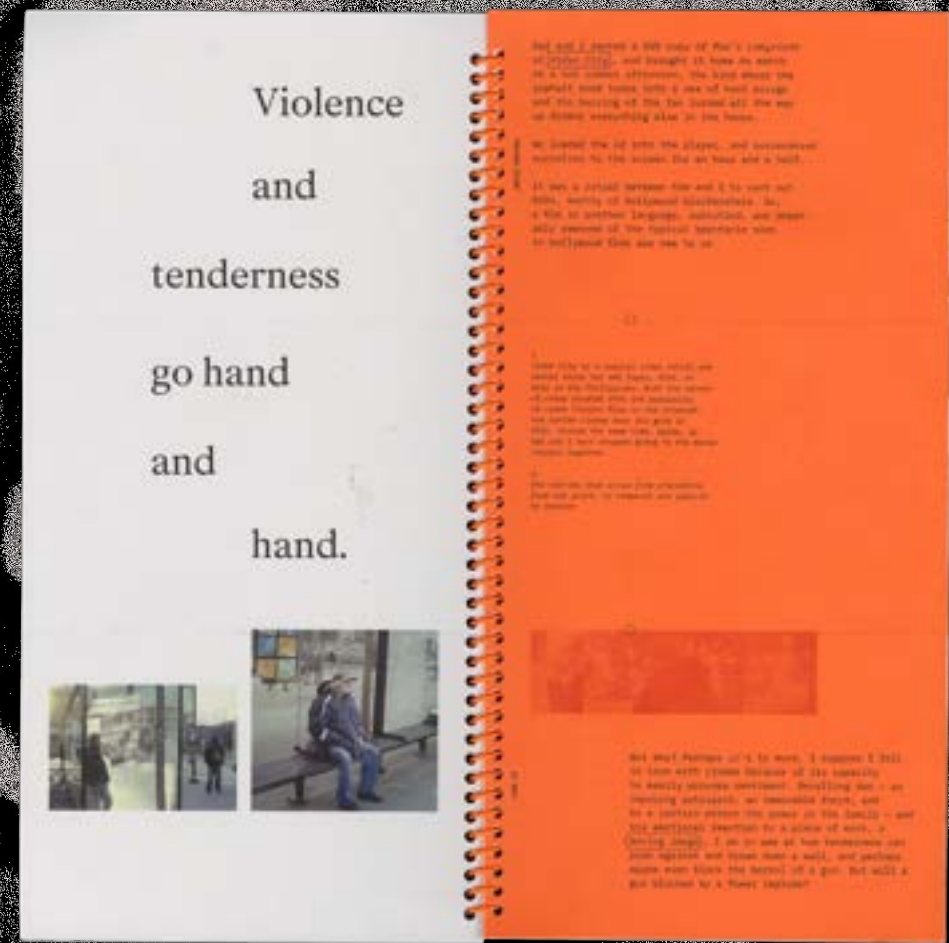








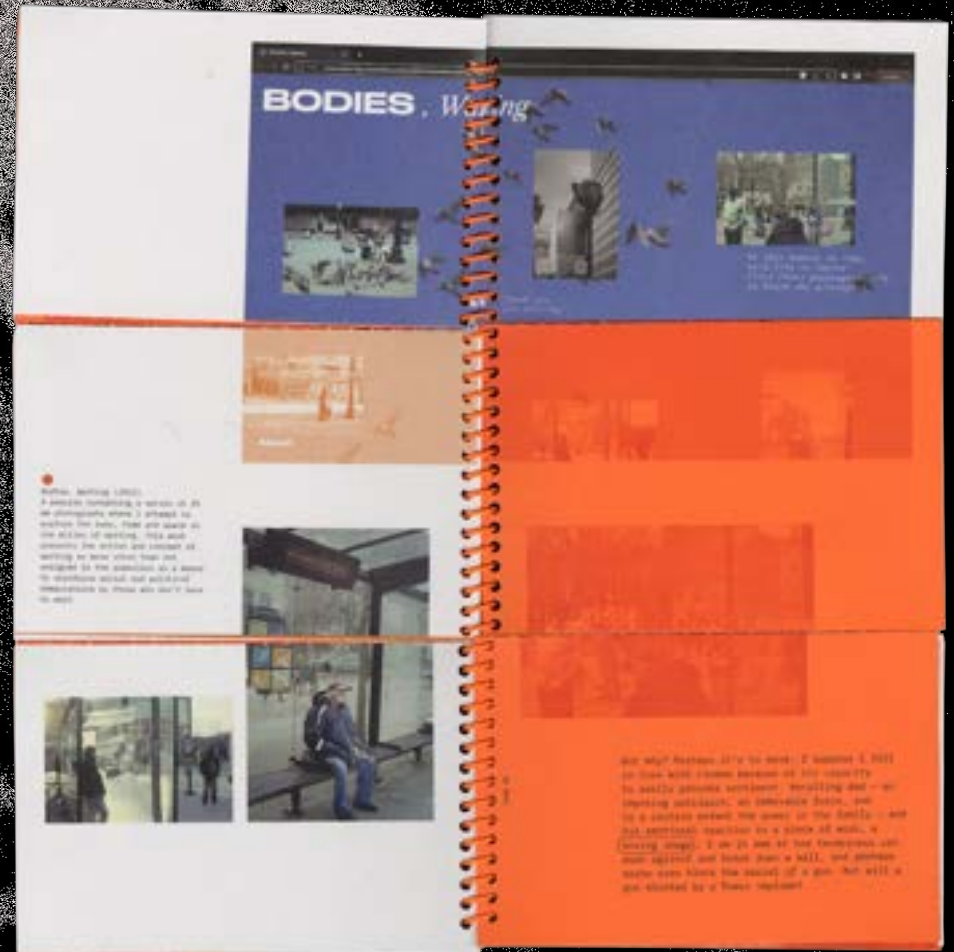
↗  
A spread in its untorn form.



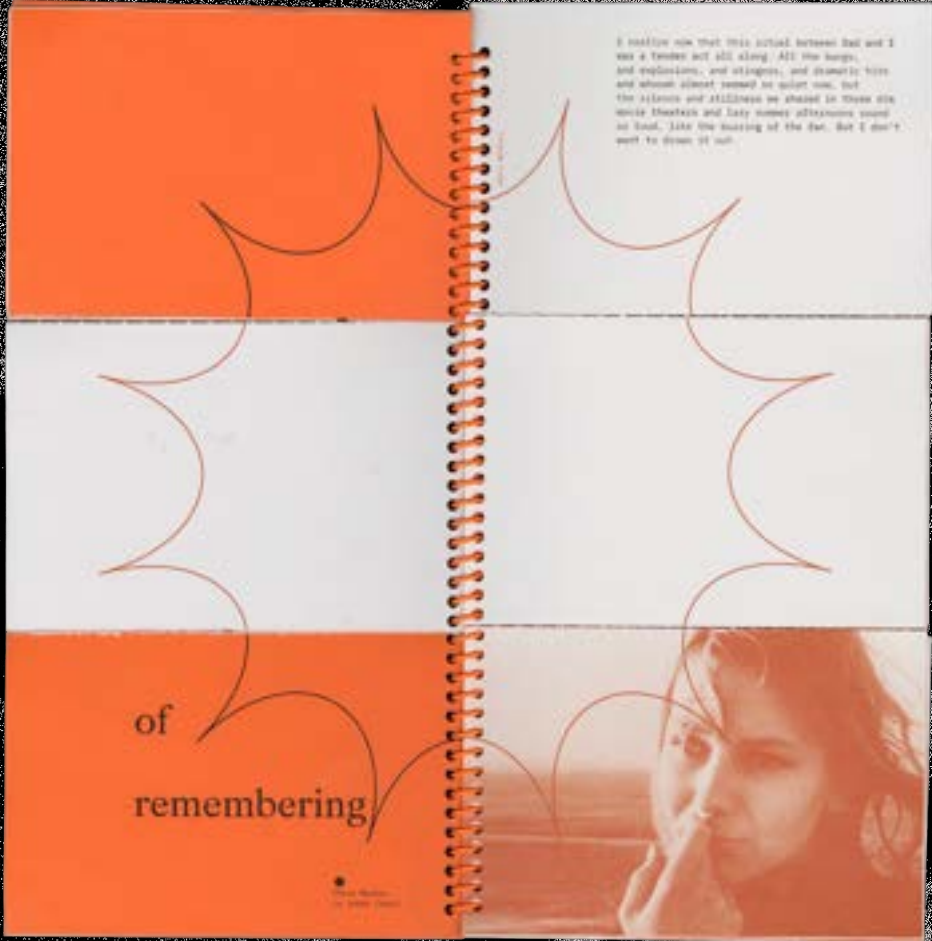
↗  
A spread in its untorn form.



↗  
Spreads that are torn and that produce a new composite.



↗  
Spreads that are torn and that produce a new composite.



Spreads that are torn and that produce a new composite.



Spreads that are torn and that produce a new composite.



I am writing this tipsey, thinking of going for another round.

But what is  
making if not  
self-destruction?

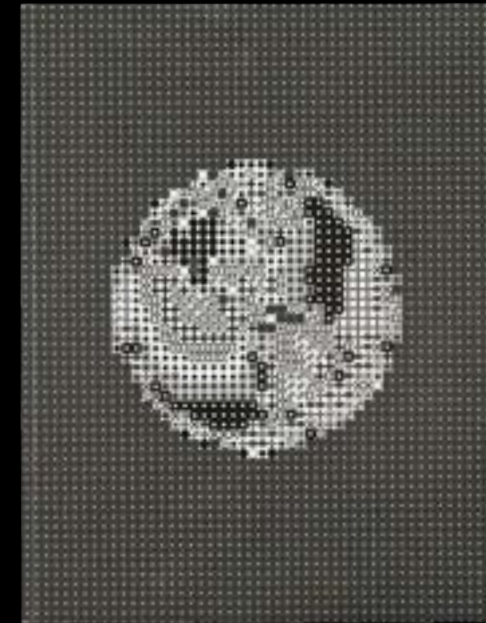
Within the time of writing and finishing this compendium, Bongbong Marcos, the complicit and unabashed son of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, is presently serving as the 17th president of the Philippines. By all means, another round.



# MAPPING OF DOUBTS, ATLAS



Book, Collaborative  
Publication, 8.5x11",  
16 pages, 2022



*Mapping of Doubts* begins an inquiry into questioning Western cartography, preceding another project that undermines and re-enchants Google Street View as a mapping tool<sup>[see p. 201]</sup>. This publication takes cue from Parish Mapping<sup>[a]</sup>, a counter-mapping<sup>[b]</sup> practice of visualizing and defending what people claim as their own locality and what they value in it as opposed to conventional maps that are defined by metrics and accuracy. Through a meandering trail of intentionally finding uncertainties, representing disorientations, and blurring delineations within the self, a foreign place, and amongst new friends, this work embraces the power of doubt as its way of claiming and defining new-found territory—the graduate school endeavor.

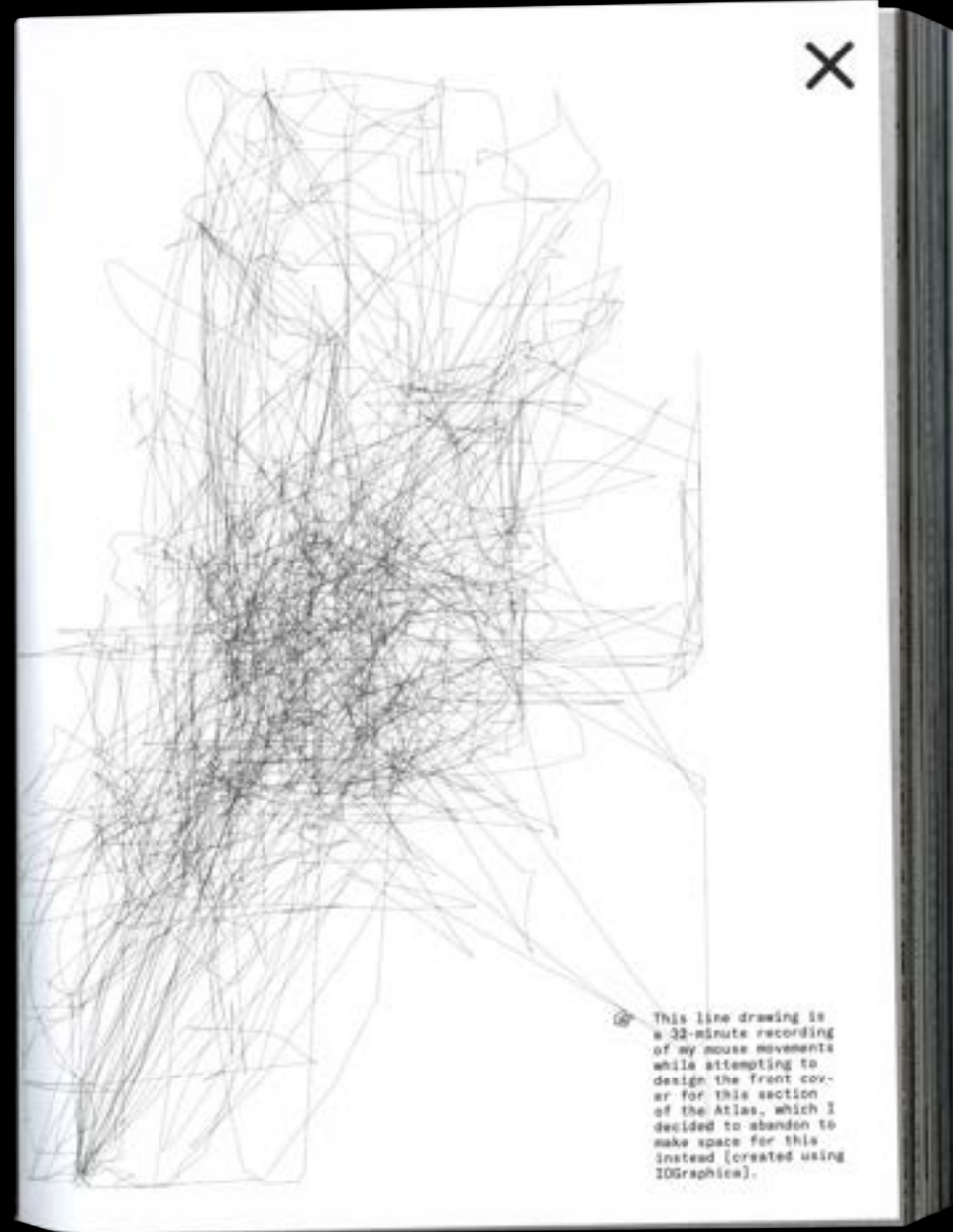
*Mapping of Doubts* is my eight-spread contribution to the 2022 *Atlas*, a recurring collaborative publication between a cohort of RISD MFA Graphic Design candidates, this work is an exercise to map the doubts of subjecting oneself into graduate school and the myth of “virtuous struggle and suffering” surrounding the experience.

[a]

The Parish Maps Project is an initiative by the charity Common Ground launched in the UK in 1985. It aims to focus on localities as a way to create "... a community of values, and about beginning to assert ideas for involvement. It is about taking the place in your own hands". These maps, made by local residents of each parish, then become artworks that are often displayed in schools, churches, and village halls.

[b]

Maps are intended to represent and delineate. It has been historically and concurrently used to define a territory and for colonial conquest. Counter-maps challenge these notions of western mapping practices, and the dominant power structures that make them. They acknowledge that there is more than one basis for knowledge, aside from representations of a place usually seen through the lens of power. Counter-mapping mostly refers to the mapping practice of indigenous cultures to reclaim their land from colonial narrativization and conquest, but it has also become an umbrella term for other related practices, including mental maps, and Parish Mapping.



This line drawing is a 32-minute recording of my mouse movements while attempting to design the front cover for this section of the Atlas, which I decided to abandon to make space for this instead [created using IDGraphics].

This is

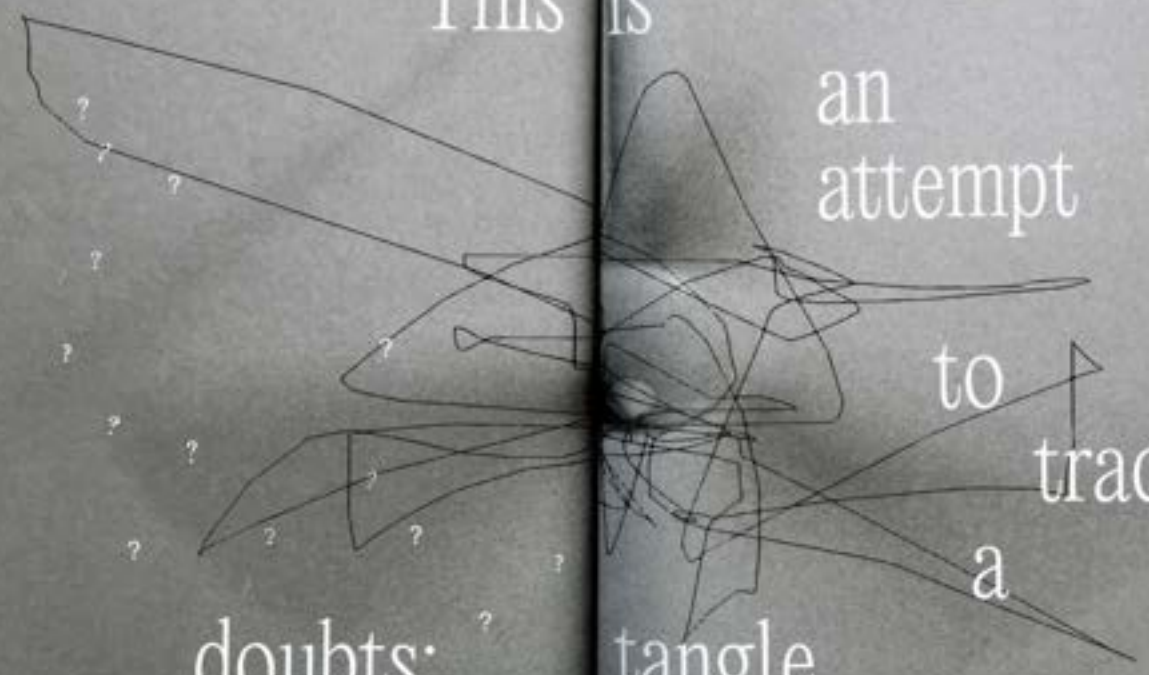
an  
attempt

to  
trace

doubts;

tangle

of





250 AD

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples to him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."



6 Raphael, The Incredulity of Saint Thomas

Fall 2022

A graduate student is uncertain about which IKEA desk to purchase for his empty room in a new apartment.



ⓘ This sturdy desk is guaranteed to outlast years of coffee and hard work. The A shape of the legs is a smart design feature that allows you to use all the space under the desk for your office chair and storage [IKEA website].<sup>2</sup>

**MICKE**  
Desk, 55 7/8x17 1/2"  
\$99.00  
★★★★★ (2M)



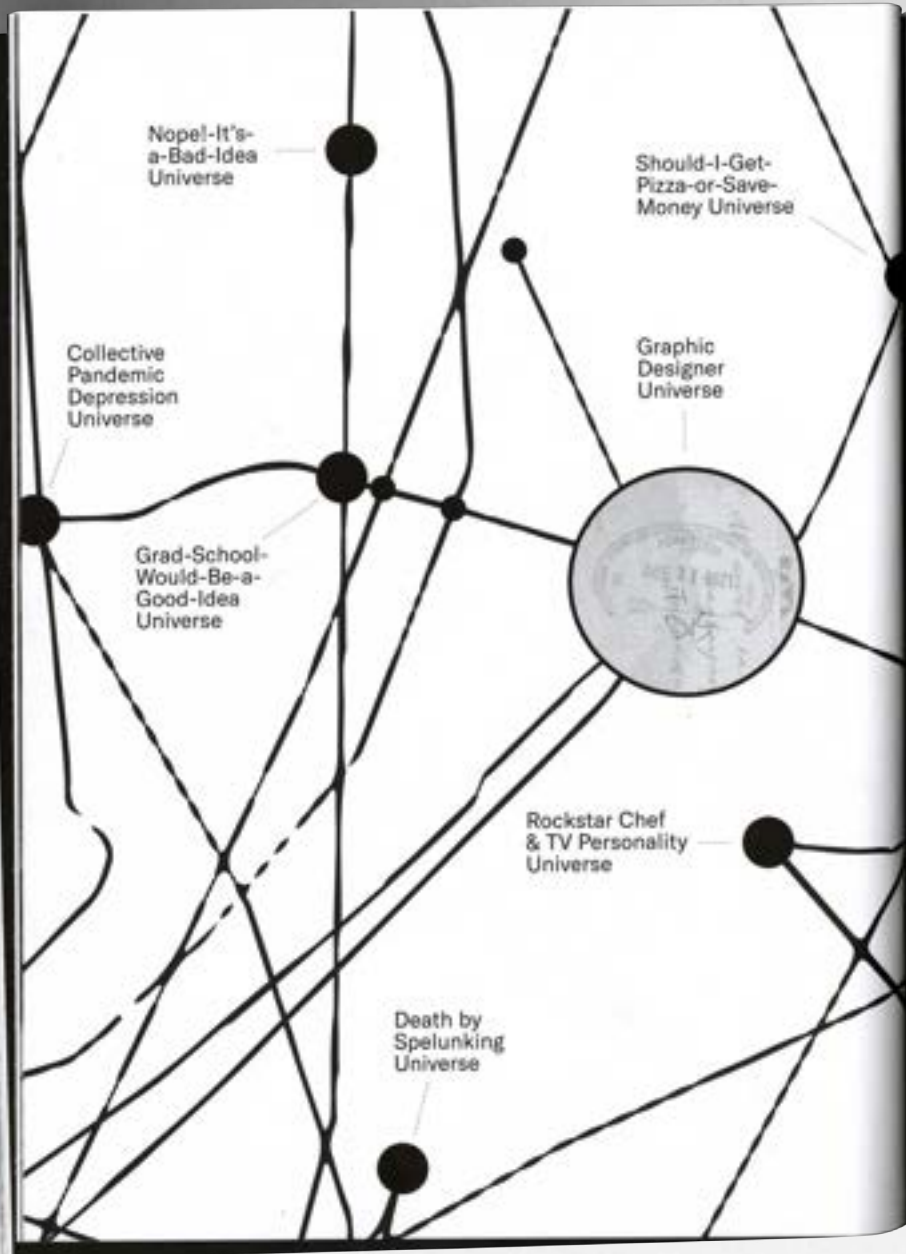
● Available for delivery

**TRÖTTEN**  
Desk, 63x31 1/2"  
\$169.00  
★★★★★ (8)



● Available for delivery

© 2022 IKEA of America, Inc. All rights reserved. IKEA and the IKEA logo are registered trademarks of IKEA of America, Inc. in the United States and other countries.



to archive  
but  
and  
ors

*"Shhhh... Just be a rock \* Ugg, Everything Everywhere All at Once).*

and  
ifs;



Ephemera from Avon Theater at Thayer St. when I watched Everything Everywhere All at Once for the second time.





\* \*  
\* \*

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Noah Baumbach,  
*Frances Ha* (2012),  
Comedy, Drama  
86 min.



<\*>

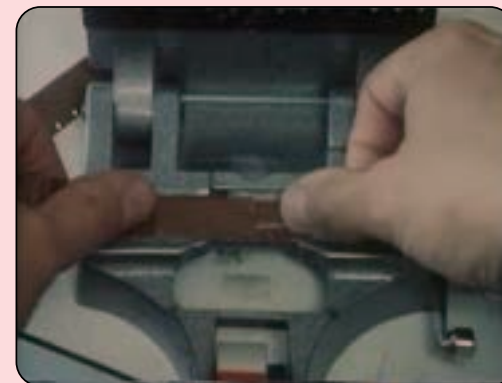
# 10

*"I was convinced that I could rearrange these piles of photocopied images, short essays, and bits of cut-up paper into a version of myself that felt real and true."*

—Hua Hsu, *Stay True* (2022)

→

Depicted are some of the process in film editing with the antiquated Steenbeck flatbed editor, which requires one to literally cut and splice film using a guillotine tape splicer, shown in the second image.



Fields of View

# 11

*"Everything I write, I believe instinctively, is to some extent collage. Meaning, ultimately, is a matter of adjacent data."*

—David Shields, *Reality Hunger* (2010)

# 12

He remembers one evening,  
 most likely a Sunday,  
 when he and his Dad  
 were driving home  
 from a reshooting  
 of *Titanic*  
 in a movie theater  
 in their hometown<sup>[12-a]</sup>  
 a few years  
 after it was  
 initially released.

In the car,  
 the views from the  
 passenger window  
 running  
 24 frames  
 per second,  
 he recalls  
 being consumed  
 with the spectacle of  
 the R.M.S. Titanic  
 splitting in  
 half  
 midair.

<\*> <\*>

He remembers a lingering  
 sadness stirred  
 by Rose's  
 dream sequence  
 at the end  
 of the  
 film.

He remembers thinking  
 that there's definitely space  
 on that flotsam door  
 for Jack.

On that ride home,  
 he remembers  
 glancing at  
 his Dad,  
 hands gripping  
 the steering wheel  
 and eyes set on the  
 road ahead,  
 thinking his Dad  
 would not like  
 the decision  
 he has come to  
 about what  
 his future  
 might  
 look  
 like.

Fields of View

Soft Procedures



↑  
 Hiroshi Sugimoto,  
*Regency, San Francisco, Theaters*  
 series (1992),  
 Gelatin silver print  
 • Sugimoto captures  
 an entire length of  
 a film in a photo-  
 graph by opening the  
 camera's aperture  
 at the beginning of  
 the screening and  
 not closing it until  
 the very end—an  
 experience of cine-  
 matic time and  
 its duration through  
 the brilliance of  
 light extending out  
 of the screen.

↑  
 Tsai Ming-Liang,  
*Goodbye, Dragon  
 Inn* (2003), Drama,  
 82 min.

↩  
 [12-a]

The old, and  
 abandoned Bichara  
 Cinema in Naga  
 City, Philippines.  
 Efforts are being  
 made to declare  
 the theater as a  
 cultural heritage  
 in the city.

# 13

The softness that emerges around a crisp subject captured through a soft focus lens is said to be an imitation of how the human eye sees the world, with the 50-mm lens often considered as the closest approximation. This occurrence is a result of a shallow depth of field, which means only a small area in the image is in focus—a sharply defined subject brought to the foreground against a fuzzy background, or vice versa. Although there is no lens that really matches complex human vision, camera lens manufacturers have been interested in capturing the “normal” view—the blurring between the technology of looking and natural ways of seeing.

→  
Yasujirō Ozu, *Good Morning* (1959), Comedy, Drama, 94 min • Ozu almost exclusively uses the 50-mm lens in his films to portray real life and the Japanese quotidian.



The documentary film *The Man with Moving Camera* (1929) by Dziga Vertov<sup>[11-a]</sup> depicts 24 hours in the life of three cities in 1920s Soviet Union. It opens with a self-referential shot of a man with a camera climbing on top of another. The film employs a range of cinematic techniques—split-screens, superimpositions, speed ramps, slow motions, freeze frames—to play with Eisenstein’s montage, and deconstruct the very nature of filmmaking itself. Vertov freed himself from Eisenstein’s definition of the montage to create his own,



opening the medium to his own formalistic, existential and also political ideals. Where Eisenstein adopted the acted narrative film, Vertov believed that the truth is found in the documentary form and objectivity. Where the former made use of the montage to arrive at a systemic narrative whole, the latter intentionally fragmented his images and narrative to reveal that cinema is a matter of manipulation, reconstructions, and geometry. Where one portrayed an authoritative past, the other shaped a socialist utopia.

→  
Dziga Vertov, *The Man with a Moving Camera* (1929), Documentary, 68 mins.



[11-a]

Dziga Vertov is a Soviet filmmaker and film theorist who pioneered the Kino-Eye movement as an attempt to break away from the narrative and ‘acted’ film, and to champion experimental non-fiction filmmaking. He believes in the strict objectivity of the camera to capture the objective reality, specifically Soviet society, in order to rally with the industrial working class. Vertov writes in his manifesto *We: Variant of a Manifesto* (1922), “In revealing the machine’s soul, in causing the worker to love his workbench, the peasant his tractor, the engineer his engine, we introduce creative joy into all mechanical labor, we bring people into closer kinship with machines.”

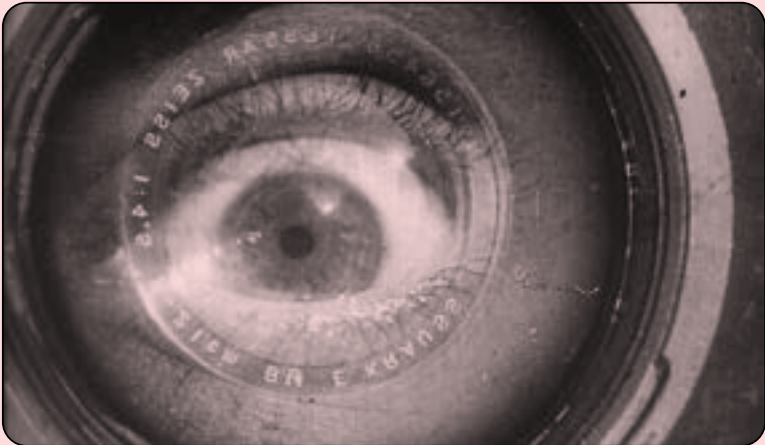


However, despite their differences, the two filmmakers nonetheless employed filmmaking as a tool to extend not just their artistic sensibilities but also their political ideals, including those of the Soviet government at that time. Eisenstein and Vertov were both making films to express their own versions of the truth and reality but filtered through the lens of Socialist realism<sup>[11-b]</sup>—the state-endorsed artistic movement that idealizes life under socialism. The two auteurs understood the spectator-author relationship in cinema, and used the power of cinema to exert a particular rhetoric to influence the mass audience. Via Eisenstein and Vertov’s lens, the third meaning that arises from the juxtaposition of two images is as complete, coherent, clear, and crisp as the propaganda that is being imposed on the audience.

[11-b]

The artistic doctrine mandated by Stalin during his rise to power following the death of Lenin in the Soviet Union. Formally approved in 1934, any artistic or literary works that are critical and do not adhere to the positive portrayal of Soviet life is prohibited. Social realism in art and media, on the other hand, depicts social, economic, racial and political truths or conditions that criticizes power structures and institutions.

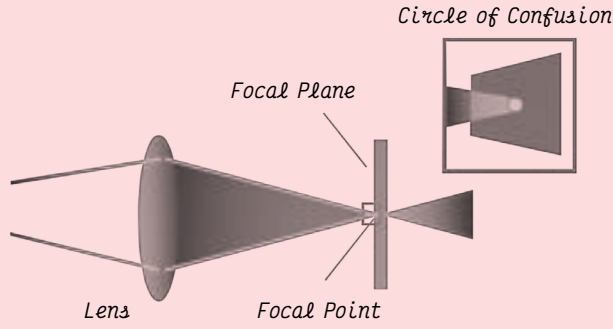
→ Dziga Vertov, *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Documentary, 68 mins.



15

In optics, when a point of light within the field of view enters through the lens, it bends and converges into a focal point. When this point lands exactly on the focal plane, the image sensor of the camera behind the lens, it is considered in sharp focus. This is often visualized as a cone where the tip, or vertex is precisely touching the focal plane. As one adjusts the focus ring on the lens to focus on a subject, the focal point subsequently shifts backwards and forwards until a perceivably in-focus subject is achieved, where the vertex falls roughly close to the plane. This point of light and its measurement is called the “circle of confusion”. The smallest point the lens can produce is often referred to as the “circle of least confusion”. So, the wider the diameter of the point, the blurrier the focus becomes.

→ A diagram that depicts the occurrence of the circle of confusion when a point of light enters the camera lens.



But the focal point is never actually a point, but a mere blurry spot, a circle of confusion. There is no real true sharpness in an image, because no camera lens can achieve absolute sharp focus. This is particularly obvious when an image is enlarged beyond a certain size. Perceived sharpness can be determined by the subject’s distance from the camera, the image resolution, and image sensor size, but even the smallest dot in an image is a mere blur of soft light that the human eye perceives as sharp dots.

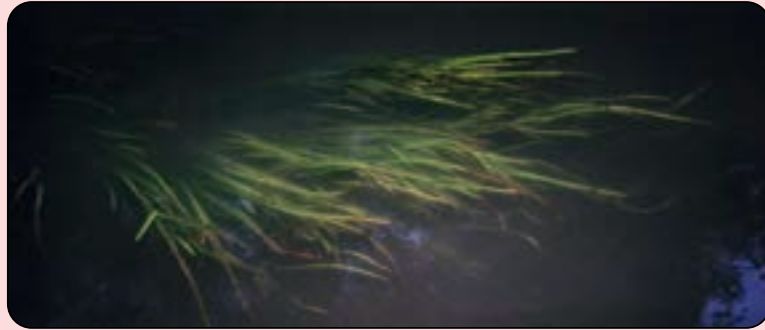
# 16

Andrei Tarkovsky, in his book *Sculpting in Time* (1985), rejects the principles of Eisenstein's Soviet Montage Theory because "... they do not allow the film to continue beyond the edges of the screen: they do not allow the audience to bring personal experience to bear upon what is in front of them on film. 'Montage cinema' presents the audience with puzzles and riddles, makes them decipher symbols, wonder at allegories, appealing all the time to their intellectual experience."

<\*>

→

Andrei Tarkovsky,  
*Solaris* (1972),  
Drama, Sci-Fi,  
167 min.



# SWIMMING LESSONS



Fields of Focus



Video, 16-mm film,  
In progress

What narrative readings can be gleaned when the moving image is oriented in a strata, subjected to weight and gravity; released into a cascade of water?

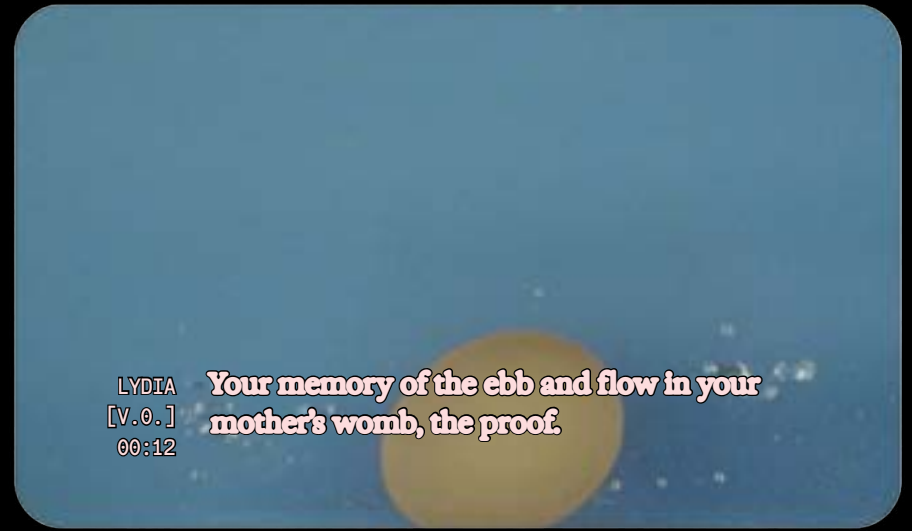
*Swimming Lessons*, a collaborative video work with Lydia Chodosh, is an approach to upturn the narrative, a layering of personal histories, and a portrait of the analogue film medium itself. Shot using the 16-mm camera, along with personal 8-mm archive footage, and underpinned by a narrational exchange of throw and catch, this piece takes the image and the narrative for a swim—the vertical format acting as a buoyant force to give rise to three-tiered poetic and formal possibilities and multitudes, of the visual and spoken.



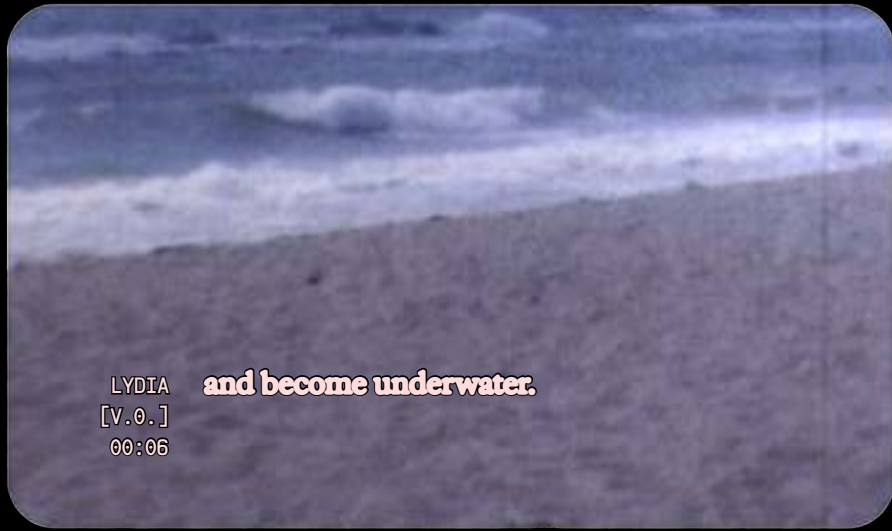
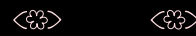


00:02

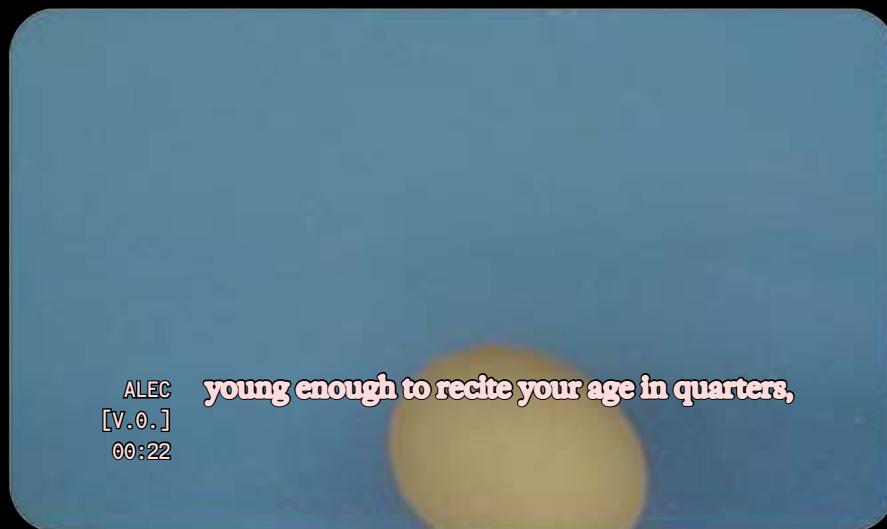
LYDIA **You begin**  
[V.0.]  
00:04

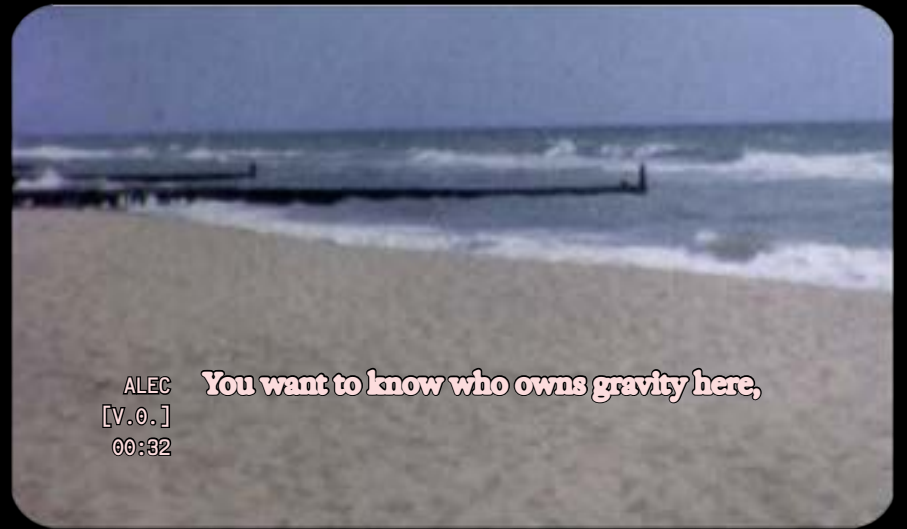


LYDIA **Your memory of the ebb and flow in your mother's womb, the proof.**  
[V.0.]  
00:12

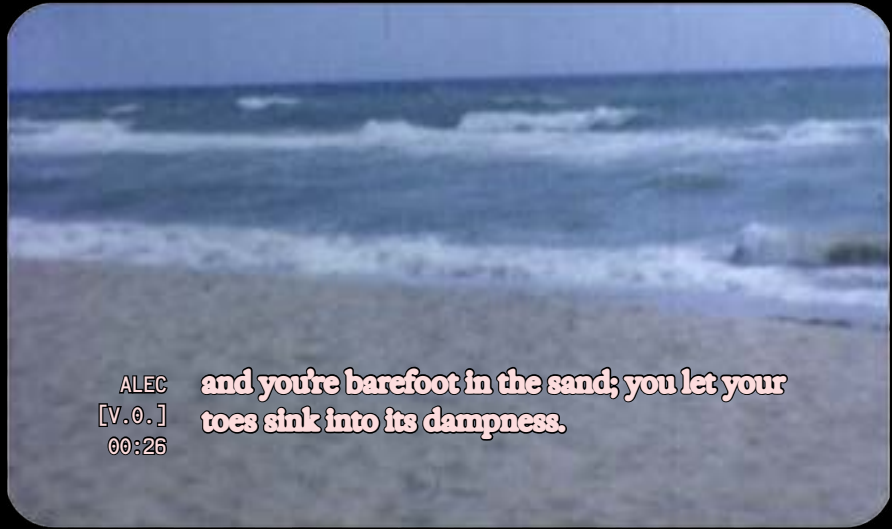
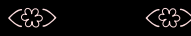


LYDIA **and become underwater.**  
[V.0.]  
00:06





ALEC [V.0.] 00:32 **You want to know who owns gravity here,**



ALEC [V.0.] 00:26 **and you're barefoot in the sand; you let your toes sink into its dampness.**

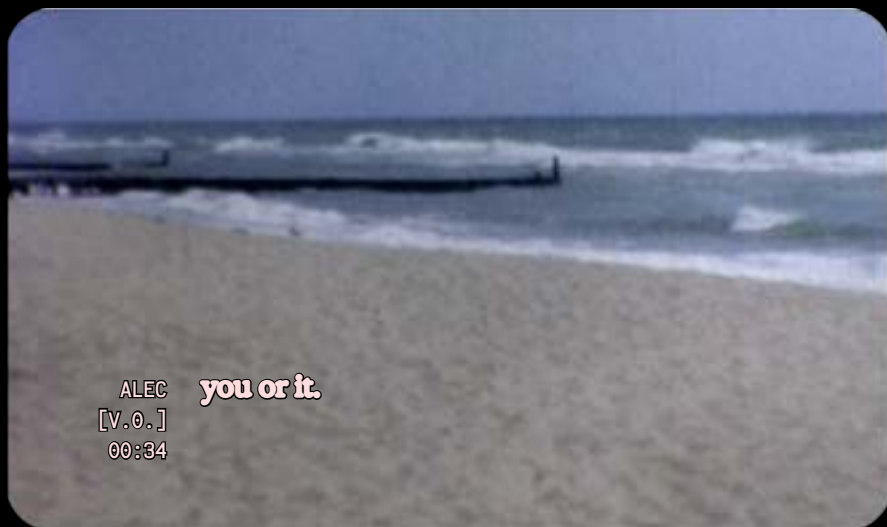
**Gravity. You say it once.**

ALEC  
[V.0.]  
00:37



LYDIA  
[V.0.]  
00:41

**Gravity. And twice out loud.**



ALEC  
[V.0.]  
00:34  
**you or it.**





LYDIA & ALEC  
[V.0.]  
01:17

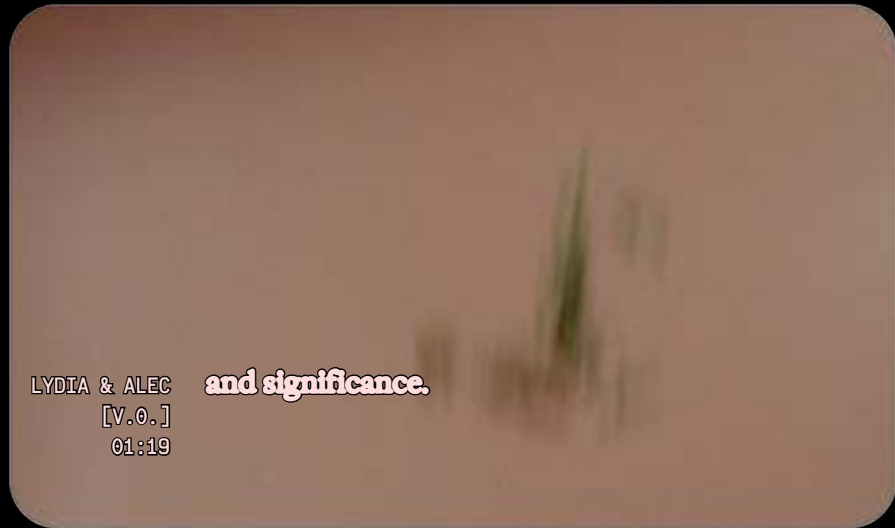
**Gravity:**



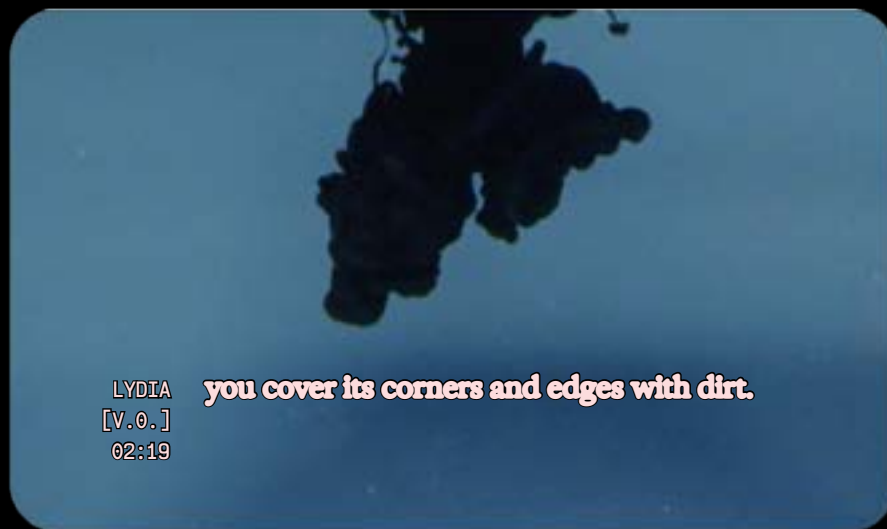
00:45



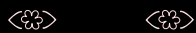
LYDIA & ALEC **the state of bearing heft**  
[V.0.]  
01:19



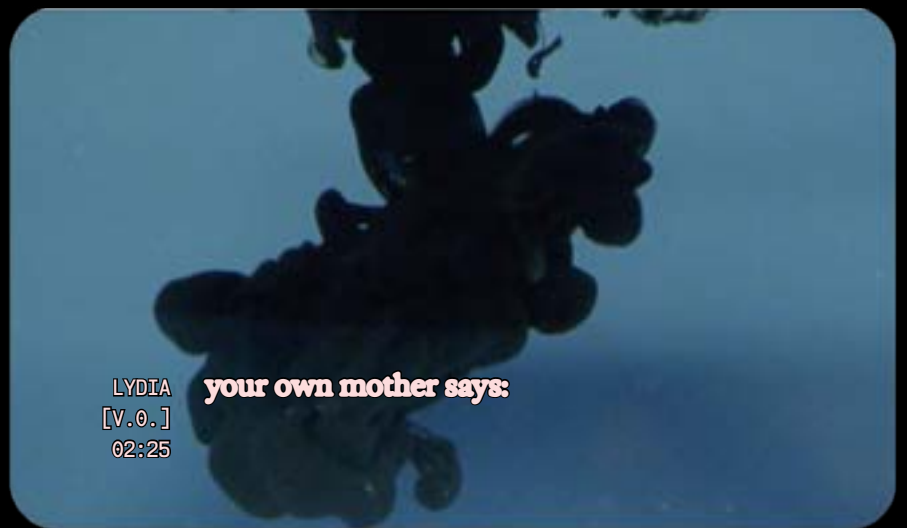
LYDIA & ALEC **and significance.**  
[V.0.]  
01:19



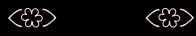
LYDIA [V.0.] 02:19 **you cover its corners and edges with dirt.**



LYDIA [V.0.] 02:17 **One by one, hand by hand,**



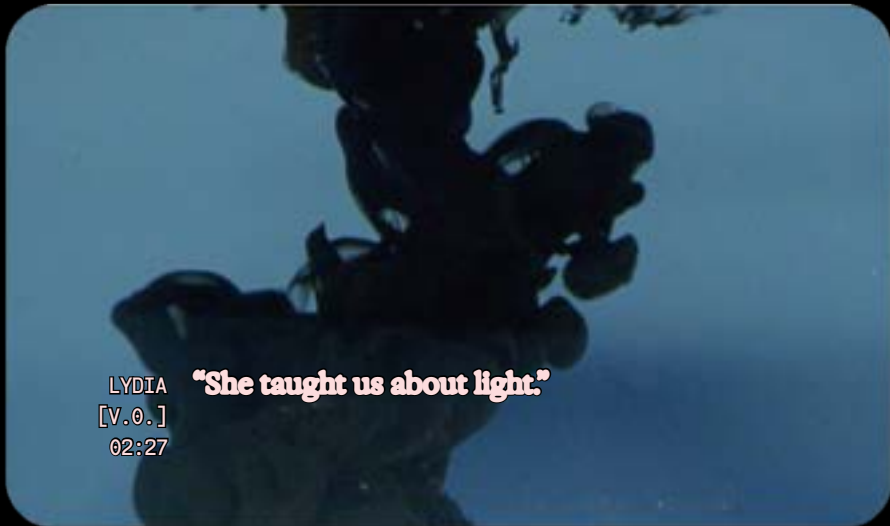
LYDIA [V.0.] 02:25 **your own mother says:**



LYDIA [V.0.] 02:22 **As darkness closes in on her mother,**

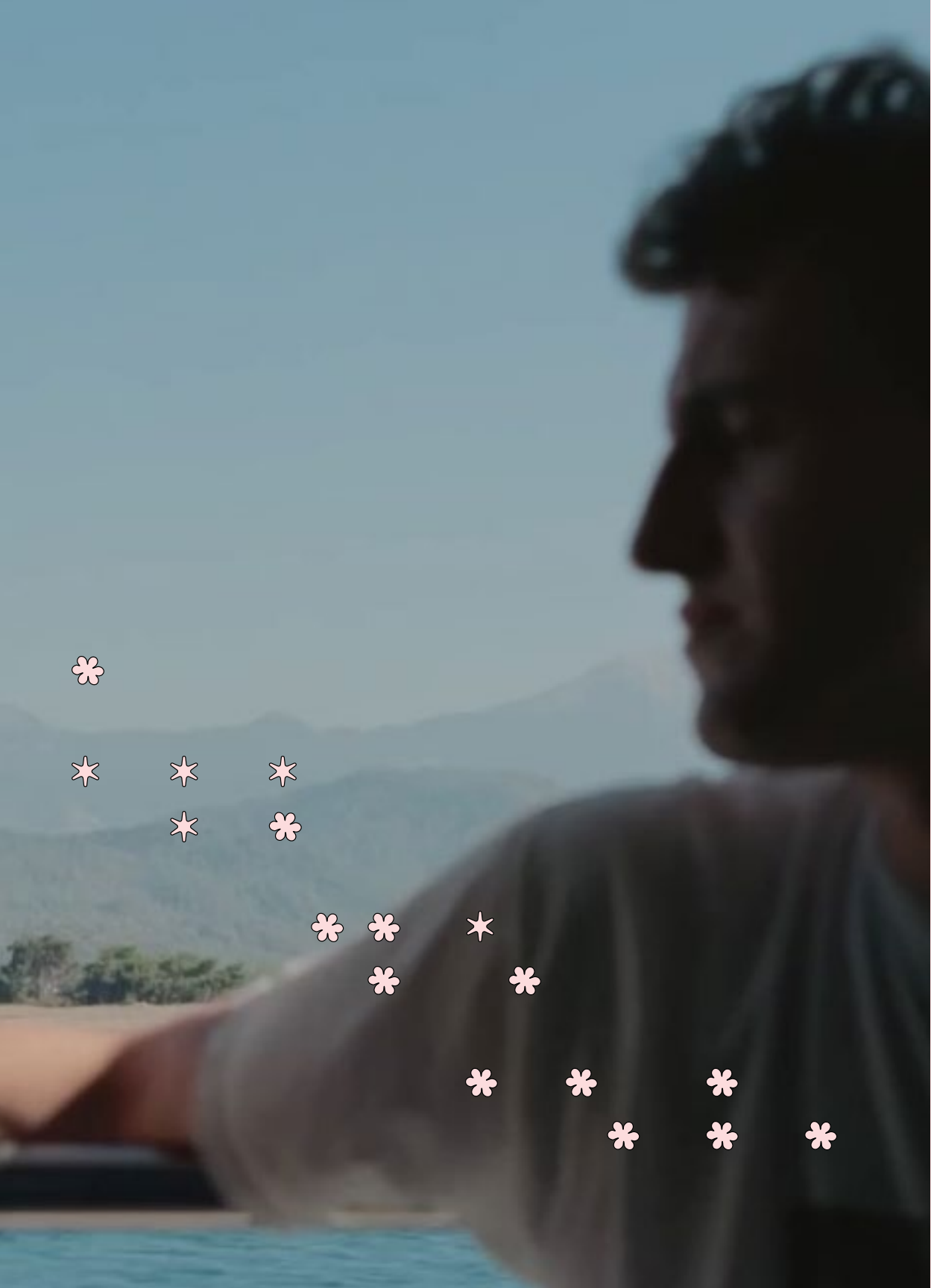


Charlotte Wells,  
*Aftersun* (2022),  
Drama, 102 min.



LYDIA  
[V.O.]  
02:27  
**"She taught us about light."**





<\*>

# 17

He and his Dad  
 rented a  
 DVD copy  
 of  
*Pan's Labyrinth* at  
 Video City, and  
 brought  
 it home  
 to watch  
 on a  
 hot  
 summer  
 afternoon,  
 the  
 kind where the  
 asphalt road  
 turns  
 into  
 a sea of heat  
 mirage  
 and the  
 buzzing of the  
 fan turned all the  
 way up  
 drowns  
 in everything else  
 the house.

It was  
 a  
 ritual  
 between him and his Dad  
 to rent  
 out DVDs,  
 mostly  
 of  
 Hollywood blockbusters.  
 So, a film in  
 another language,  
 subtitled,

Fields of View

and debatably removed <\*> <\*>  
of the typical  
Hollywood  
spectacle  
was new to them.

His Dad  
loaded the CD into the player,  
and they  
surrendered  
themselves  
to the screen  
for an  
hour and a half.

Quietly, they watched  
the film.  
Every  
so often,  
he would  
turn up  
the volume to  
bury  
the fan's  
loud hum.  
The  
subtitles helped.

Near the end,  
during  
the most emotional  
scene,  
he caught  
a glimpse  
of his Dad,  
and noticed his red,  
watery  
eyes.

He realized  
they were always  
in the dark  
when  
they saw  
movies together  
in the theater.

Did his  
Dad  
always  
get emotional?

Did he  
also  
try to hold  
back  
his tears  
during  
Rose's dream  
sequence  
in Titanic?

He  
returned his attention  
to the screen.

The credits  
started  
rolling.

It was  
beautiful, and  
devastating,  
and haunting,  
and up until  
that point,  
he had never  
seen his  
Dad's  
eyes  
well up.

## Soft·ness NOUN

[and a day at the beach]

- a. **It is the quality of being tender, mild, or having lack of force, and a surrendering to some kind of internal or external physical pressure.**  
e.g., *At the beach, he feels the soft stinging of the heat coming from the afternoon sun on the skin on his back.*
- b. **It means the attribute of being easy to mold, cut, press, or fold. It is a soft object or material: a pillow<sup>[14-a]</sup>.**  
e.g., *He sculpts a castle from soft, wet sand; grains collecting under his fingernails.*
- c. **Its contours are round or curved. It does not have sharp angles, or hard edges.**  
e.g., *His vision glared by the sun, half-naked bodies turn into soft outlines as if dissolving into memory.*
- d. **It moves at a slow, leisurely, deliberate pace to avoid impact or destruction. It is also quiet and a gradual rise to something.**  
e.g., *An Australian Shepherd, stick in his mouth, darts across his sightline. He puts down his small yellow plastic shovel, and watches the dog do circles around the beach. It finally disappears behind the soft slopes of the sand dunes.*
- e. **It is based on interpretive or speculative data. It is, for the most part, usually uncountable.**  
e.g., *He returns to his castle. As he carves, he wonders about how his hands are also much like water. The hands that make, and the hands that also destroy. The water that sculpts, and the water that erodes. The only difference, he supposes, is time. His hands are nimble, and immediate. The water takes its time, epochs even.*

*The sun is lower now. The shadow of the cliff to his right looms over his castle. How little he feels. How minor his creation seems. He knows his castle will eventually collapse and return to the sand, or perhaps maybe the seabed. The time it would have briefly stood, a soft evidence of the hands that momentarily became water.*



[14-a]

A “pillow shot” is a term coined by American film theorist and critic Noël Burch in his book *To the Distant Observer—Form and Meaning in Japanese Cinema* (1979) that refers to Yasujirō Ozu Ozu's trademark of cutting away to brief, floating, almost suspended shots of everyday life, sceneries or objects: a red pot in a room, laundry billowing in the wind. It is a break from the narrative, and a yielding towards stillness, or stasis.

→

Yasujirō Ozu,  
*Equinox Flower* (1958),  
Drama, 118 min.



→

Yasujirō Ozu,  
*Good Morning* (1959),  
Comedy, Drama,  
94 min.





19

To *soften*, the verb, according to Oxford Languages, is to become or make something less hard. To soften butter. To soften hardened sugar. To take out dough resting in the fridge overnight to let it soften, so it could be worked and kneaded. To gently brush the surface of the loaf with the same softened butter. To take a bite out of a soft loaf of bread.



23

“When a man is born, he is soft and pliable...” Babies are born with two major soft spots on their heads called the fontanelles, with the bigger one located near the front of the head, the smaller one near the back. They are the gaps in the skull made of connective tissues that form and fill up during the developmental process of an infant. These allow the brain to grow in the first years of a person’s life.

20

To *soften*, the verb, according to Oxford Languages is to become or make less severe. To soften the blow, for example. Or to be asked over the phone by your father to take a seat before delivering the news that your grandmother is gone. To be cushioned by the bed when your heart drops upon hearing the weight of the news. To be told everything’s going to be okay so as to ease into the inevitable, subsequent grief.

24

To have a soft spot is to have a strong, particular liking to someone or something; a sentimental weakness, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. It is the admission, the laying bare, the surrender of one’s vulnerability towards a particular person or thing with all its fallibilities, and imperfections. It is the unabashed exhibition of great affection and care towards a particular person or thing in spite of assuming a position of defenselessness and weakness.

21

*Softly*, to deliver bad news. Softly, to whisper a secret to a trusted friend. Softly, to apply liniment to relieve somebody’s bodily pain. Softly, to get out of bed so as to not wake up a companion. Softly, to kiss a loved one. Softly, to fall and be caught—a trust fall. Softly, to laugh with others. Softly, to cry along with others. Softly, to care.

25

When a moving story is told, the listener is sometimes moved to reach out to touch the storyteller, perhaps a hand on a shoulder, or maybe an embrace. This gentle gesture becomes a reassurance that there is company, and it could be a little less lonely in a world that has so much sharp edges. Here, to tell a story is a yearning for linkage, an asking to be tended for, and perhaps a pining for somebody else’s skin. To listen and to pay attention to somebody else’s story is then an act of showing care.

22

*Softly* as to handle with care, to gather, or collect, or assemble with attention and caution. Such as the way an archivist delicately holds an artifact with their hands, or the way a film editor wears gloves to edit rolls of film, or the way a collector gently tucks their collectible cards in plastic sleeves. To handle with care, and to extend affection or empathy not just towards the work, craft, or practice, but also towards its subject matter—whether it’s about people, places, things, or histories.

26

*Softness. Soften. Softly.* To bake bread. To soften the blow. To handle with care. To be born with soft spots. To have a soft spot for. To listen to, to pay attention to, and to be moved by stories.

He realizes now that this movie-watching ritual between himself and his Dad was a soft act all along.

All the bangs, and explosions, and stingers, and dramatic hits and whoosh almost seemed so quiet now, but the silence and stillness they shared in those dim movie theaters and lazy summer afternoons sound so loud, like the buzzing of the fan.

But he doesn't want to drown it out.



Wong Kar Wai,  
*Happy Together* (1997),  
 Drama, 96 min.





# KRISTIAN SENDON CORDERO



Fields of Depth

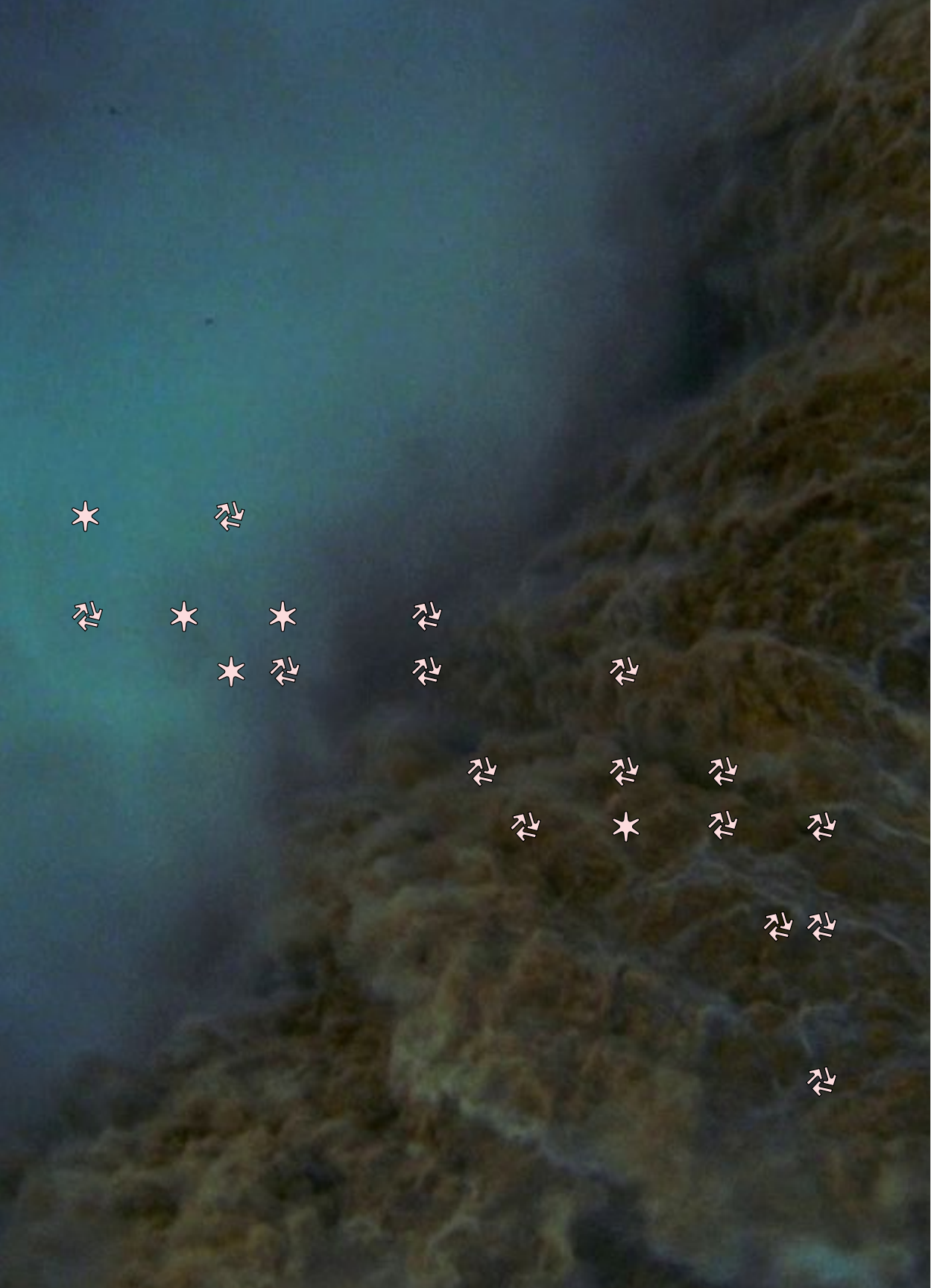
Interview conducted on Thursday, 04-04-24 over Zoom.



Kristian Sendon Cordero is a poet, translator and filmmaker from Bikol, Philippines. He has translated the works of Borges, Rilke, Wilde, and Kafka into Tagalog, Bikol, and Rinconada, his mother tongue. He won the Madrigal-Gonzales Best First Book Award, and the Philippine National Book Awards, among others. In 2017, he represented the Philippines in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. He serves as the deputy director of the Ateneo de Naga University Press, and runs Savage Mind, an independent bookshop and art space in his home city.



In this conversation, we talk about the multiple and layered meanings of softness in language, specifically within the languages of our home province,



Bikol. From queerness, religion, to colonization, we consider how words can be permeable, and malleable—language as inherently soft. We also talk about our hopes for our locality alongside our dreams of future works.

This conversation was conducted using our native tongue, *Bikol* and *Rinconada*, and is frequently interjected with English. Taglish is the code-switching use of *Tagalog*, or other Filipino languages, and English.

AF  
00:04 *Okay! I guess mapuon ako sa very general question: ano ang softness para saimo?*

*Okay! I guess I will start with a very general question: what is softness for you?*

KC  
00:26 Softness... Kang nagdadakula ako, ang pagiging soft is seen as feminine, as queer. Bakla. Malambot sa Tagalog. Malumok sa Rinconada. Lumhok sa Bikol. Associated siya sa gender identity, sa sexual identity kang sarong tao. Young boys would be seen as malambot to mean that the boy is not growing up in the normal way.

Softness... When I was growing up, being soft was seen as feminine, as queer. *Bakla*. Softness is *malambot* in Tagalog; *malumok* in Rinconada; and *lumhok* in Bicol. It's associated with gender identity, with the sexuality of a person. Young boys would be seen as soft to mean that the boy is not growing up in a normal way.

Nai-encounter mo man siya kung paano si language nagta-transcend, nagkakaigwa ning other meaning. Malambot is malambot yung unan. Malambot yung karne. Malambot yung pagkain. It's something desirable for food. May mga pagkaun na gusto mo malumhok, like karne. Sa texture, gusto mong malumhok ang bed mo. Until gamiton na siya as something to refer to a young boy that is not supposed to be growing up in a particular way. Mababayad mo sadi kung pauno a language—the same word that could best describe a very good experience of sensuality, or sensibility is the same word that

&lt; 2 &gt;

&lt; 2 &gt;

could used against you. Nawi-weaponize talaga nga-ngabilon. So, sari na ika san mig lugar? How do you place yourself in that kind of meaning?

So, you encounter how language transcends and could take other meanings. Soft is a pillow. Soft is the meat. Soft is the bread. There are certain foods you want soft, and there are textures you desire to be soft, like your bed. Until it's used as something to refer to a young boy that is not supposed to be growing up in this particular way. You can see here how language—the same word that could best describe a very good experience of sensuality or sensibility is the same word that is used against you. The tongue becomes a weapon. So, where do you place yourself in that kind of meaning?

Well, ako bilang parasurat, sadto na ako sa multiplicities of meaning. Amu nayan power ka language. It's very specific, noh? May specific time and usage. Igwa kita kayan sa Philippine language na kaipuhan mong mahiling su sitwasyon, su context, nganing maintindihan mo su tataramon.

As a writer, I look into the multiplicity of meaning. There's always a specific time and usage. We have that in the Philippine language where you have to look at the situation—the context—so you could understand what is being said.

AF  
03:44 *As in a specific word in the Filipino language?*

KC  
03:45 Amu, dakul kita sa Philippine languages. Na ngunyan nakukuwa kadi social media, because when you read text via social media, you tend to impose your sound on it. You create your own meaning to that text. You read it the way you want to read it. So nagbabago experience ta ka language sa social media, kaining sinasabing digital age.

Yes, we have a lot of that in the Philippine languages that now social media has sort of taken hold of. When you read text via social media, you tend to impose your sound on it. You create your own meaning to that

text. You read it the way you want to read it. So our experience of the language is changing within social media, or what they say as the digital age.

AF 04:15 *In a way garu nasu-soften language, nafi-filter language.*  
*In a way it's like softening the language I suppose, or filtering the language.*

KC 04:20 **Bago yan—ang softening is filtering.**  
 Yes, that's also interesting: this softening as also filtering.

AF 04:45 *Nasimbag mo na mostly ining iba kong questions...*  
*You might have tackled this question in your previous answer...*

*but maybe you could further unpack softness within our Filipino society and culture, or maybe even Bicolano culture? What are our notions of the word that might be specific to us Filipinos?*

KC 05:08 **Again, it's a feminine thing. May mga opposites kaya yan. Garo arog kang sinasabi na “naghahalo ang balat sa tinalupan”. Nagkakaigwang inversion. What appears to be a soft spoken person could be actually a very dangerous person. Our valuations in terms of character is yung soft spoken is generally a nice person. In a culture that is oragon; in a culture that venerates and celebrates some kind of sexual machismo. Orag is some kind of virtue, a strong value identified to males. Pero su soft spoken pwede man siyang maging value sa sarong sosyodad na nagtatao ning mas preferred value duman sa orag.**

Again, it's a feminine thing, but there's always the opposite, just like how the saying goes, “*naghahalo ang balat sa tinalupan*,” or literally “don't to mix up the peelings and the parings with whatever has been peeled or pared [REFERRING TO THE SKIN OF FRUITS].” There's an inversion that is happening. What appears to be a soft

&lt; 24 &gt;

&lt; 24 &gt;

spoken person could actually be a very dangerous person. Our valuations in terms of character is that a soft spoken person is generally a nice person. At the same time, our [BIKOLANO] culture venerates and celebrates the oragon [MEANING STRONG, BRAVE, OR TOUGH], a kind of virtue, or strong value identified to males and sexual machismo. But the soft spoken could also become valuable within a culture that prefers the strong, the oragon.

→

Plaze de Nueva Cacaress, or more commonly referred to as Oragon monuments in Naga City, Camarines Sur, Philippines.



**Sabi kayan ang religion has something to do with why we value softness, which can be seen as some kind of humility; as some kind of docility. Pagiging mapagpakumbaba ang buot, malumok ang puso. “Mapalumok mo ngaya ang puso ka’yan”. You soften the heart. So, may reading kaini na it has something to do with how the colonizers tried to introduce religious images that we venerate some kind of value. Itong softness ni Virgin Mary. Pagnahiling mo si mga imahe ni ina, ang mari-reinforce na value is itong pagiging woman, pagiging soft.**

They say that religion has something to do with why we also value softness, which can be seen as some kind of humility; as some kind of docility. To be “*mapagpakumbaba ang buot*”, to be “*malumok ang puso*”.

“To soften someone’s heart,” they say. This could have something to do with how the colonizers tried to introduce religious images that we venerate with some kind of value—the softness of the Virgin Mary, for example. This particular image of Mary reinforces this value of womanhood, of being soft.

**Interesting na sarong sanaman yan na pagbasa. Kaya daa dikit si rebolusyon igdi sa Bikol ta tiggamit kang mga firiars su image kang Virgin Mary as a soft power. Dae kitang gayo sa Christ the King, mga resurrected Christ. Yaun kita duman sa suffering Christ, Nazareno, Sto. Nino, aki, and then the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

That’s just one way of reading it. They also say that there are not many revolutions that transpired here in Bikol, because the [SPANISH] friars used the image of the Virgin Mary as some sort of soft power. In Bikolano culture, we don’t really venerate Christ the King, or variations of the resurrected Christ. We do have the suffering Christ, Nazareno [BLACK NAZARENE], Sto. Nino, which is a child, and then the Blessed Virgin Mary.



**Arog kayan ginibo kang mga friars, su pag orchestrate ninda ning value system sa mga converts, sa mga nasasakupan ninda. Pero pwede mo siyang hilingun na, iyo, soft si image kang Virgin Mary, Nazareno, Hinulid, suffering Christ, but also there’s power within it.**

→ Thousands of devotees gathered during the Traslación procession, an act of transferring the image of the Our Lady of Peñafrancia, the patroness of the Bicol region, from one church to another. It is set during the Peñafrancia festival in September in Naga City, regarded as the biggest Marian event in Asia.

&lt; 24 &gt;

&lt; 24 &gt;

→

Kristian Cordero, *Hinulid* (2016), Drama, 120 min • In Kristian’s second film, the title refers to the pilgrimage site of a miraculous wooden figure of the dead Christ in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, Philippines.

**Yung kalooban na maaring tingnan na bilang soft, bilang malambot. The opposite of tigas, the opposite of that hard power.**

That’s what the friars did: they orchestrated a value system to [FILIPINO] converts, to those they conquered. Yes, the image of the Virgin Mary, the Black Nazarene, *Hinulid*<sup>[1]</sup>, and the suffering Christ are soft images, but there’s also power within them—within the core, or the heart that is soft. The power that is the opposite of *tigas* [HARDNESS], or the opposite of that hard power.

[1]



**So, garu ang softness is a layer that covers the power within. Ang puso kang batag, garu ka naghiling ning layers upon layers upon layers. And then ang defense na mahiling mo is kalumhokan. Because softness is one way of attracting, diba? Ang ibang mga politiko baga pirming may “po”. They sometimes articulate this personality that is approachable, cordial, soft. But you see how powerful this softness is also. Sa hiling ko, layers sana siya, covering sana siya ning sarong bagay na yaun sa laog kayan. Kung hihilingun ta ang softness as a cultural value system.**

You can say that softness could be a layer that covers the power within, much like the heart blossom of

a banana tree where it's hidden inside layers upon layers upon layers of petals. Here, the defense of the heart heart is softness. Because softness, apart from its purpose to protect, is a way to attract as well. Look at some of the politicians we have who say “po”<sup>[2]</sup> every time. They sometimes articulate this personality that is approachable, cordial, soft. You come to see how powerful softness is. Softness as a cultural value system, I think is a matter of layers—a covering of something that is inside.

[2]

“Po” is a contraction of “opo”. It is a sign of courtesy and respect to the elderly, or someone with authority.

[ABRIDGED...]

KC 12:06 It's [SOFTNESS] a quality. Layer talaga siya. Garu, ang power dapat bako siyang hardcore. Dapat within—loob. Ang kalaboon ang dapat matigas. May lakas ng loob. May tigas ng loob. Pero ang outliers mo, ang physique, ang pangluwas na kaanyuan mo is dapat accessible. Paryo man yan sa prutas. Ang prutas pag malumhok na, it's a sign of kahinugan. The fruit is ready for harvest. The fruit is now ready to be eaten.

It's [SOFTNESS] a quality. It's a layering. Power should not be hardcore. Power is supposed to be within, “loob”. The *kalooban* [THE DEEPEST SELF] is the one that is hard. “*May lakas ng loob* [HAS INNER COURAGE AND STRENGTH].” However, your outliers, your physique, or your outer self should also be accessible, like the fruit. The fruit when it's soft is a sign of ripeness. The fruit is ready for harvest. The fruit is now ready to be eaten.

AF 13:18 *I guess in relation to that, what do you think it means to write about softness in a country that has gone through so much—hardships and pains? How do you think the poet's voice holds up in this context?*

<2>

<2>

KC 13:45

Yeah, pinagiisipan ko ngunyan kung paano ko ini nailaog sa poetry ko. Siguro duman sa third collection ko, *Pusúánon*. I was looking into many, many things. Su first two collections ko, I was trying to find my voice. I was trying to locate my place in literature, in writing, and so on. Pag abot kang third collection ko, mas pronounced na sakuya su pagiging Bikolnon writer ko—that I am writing in Bikol.

Yeah, I'm trying to recall how I talk about that in my poetry. Perhaps, in my third collection, *Pusúánon*, where I was looking into many, many things. My first two collections, I was trying to find my voice. I was trying to locate my place in literature, in writing, and so on. But when I wrote and finished my third collection, my being a Bikolnon writer is certainly more pronounced—that I am really writing in Bicol.

I kind of discovered Bikol as a very soft language. May certain softness siya because of the way it would come to your ears, the way it would remind me of prayers, of liturgical gatherings, of peace. Marhay ang memorya ko sa Bikol. It's a language that I used to hear from adults, and from my elders. Naa-associate ko siya duman sa kalumhokan kang tataramun, the softness of the language.

I kind of discovered Bikol as a very soft language. There's a certain softness to it because of the way it would come to our ears, the way it reminds me of prayers, of liturgical gatherings, of peace. I have very good memories of Bikol. It's a language that I used to hear from adults, my elders. I associate it with the softness of utterance, the softness of language.

I think saro yan sa tig describe satuya in relation digdi sa Rinconada tsaka Bikol Naga, na ang Bikol Iriga, lang kusa. Ang Bikol Naga, malumhok na garu singsong. Igwa sindang arog kaiyan na quality. It's probably because the Bikol Naga that we know is a language that had been constructed and engineered by the Catholic Church. Su Bikol rinconada, diri pigpakialaman

ta that's the older language. That's the language untouched by colonialism. So, *igwa pa siya katong residue kang violence*.

I think one thing that has been noted between Rinconada<sup>[3]</sup>, specifically Bikol Iriga<sup>[4]</sup>, and Bikol Naga<sup>[5]</sup> is that the former is a strong, hard-sounding language, while the latter is soft like singsong. It's probably because the Bikol Naga that we know is a language that had been constructed, engineered by the Catholic Church. Bikol Rinconada, on the other hand, was not interfered with because that's the older language. That's the language untouched by colonialism. So, it [BIKOL NAGA] has some residue of violence.

[3] [4]

Rinconada, or Bikol Rinconada, is the spoken language in the 5th Congressional district in the province of Camarines Sur, Philippines. This district is composed of Nabua, the town I grew up in, Iriga City, where Kristian was born and raised, Bato, Baao, Bula, and Buhi.

[5]

Bikol Naga, sometimes referred to as Central Bikol or simply Bikol, is the majority language spoken by most Bicolano people. Naga City is considered as the "Heart of Bikol", and the home to the shrine of The Our Lady of Peñafrancia, one of the country's most venerated image of devotion.

**Pag sinasabi na makusog ang speech, matagas, no? Na kung hihilingun mo ang language ta, ang vocabulary, or ang vowels ta rather, yaun sa naman sa *a, i, u*. Su nag-introduce ku e tsaka *o*, itong soft vowels, are actually the Spaniards, the colonial masters. Very interesting, ta ang pig-introduce satuyang softness, yaun sa language. Yaun sa letters. Yaun sa vowels. Na baka ito su paagi ninda to soften us; to soften our speech; to render our speech docile.**

If we say that speech is strong, it's hard-sounding, right? So, if you look at our language, our vowels more specifically, we should only have *a, i*, and *u*. It was the Spaniards, the colonial masters, who introduced the soft vowels to us—*e* and *o*. It's very interesting,

< 24 >

< 24 >

because softness was introduced to use via language. It's in our letters, and our vowels. Perhaps it was their way to soften us; to soften our speech; to render our speech docile.

**Kang naglaog ako sa poetry, I decided to write in Rinconada and in Bikol, and these are languages that I am navigating in terms of colonial history. May consciousness ka na arog kaini na bagahe kang sarong pagbasa, saimong agi-agi, saimong colonial history. Pero sahiling ko dae naman yan concern kang mga Bicolano. It's the concern of the poets, who think of language as a way of expressing their thoughts.**

When I began with poetry, I decided to write in Rinconada and in Bikol, and these are languages that I am navigating in terms of their colonial history. You're conscious about this baggage of reading—its colonial history. But I think that's not the concern of our fellow Bicolanos. It's the concern of the poets, who think of language as a way of expressing their thoughts.

**It could be because I am locating myself in history. Ta pirmi kitang pigsasabi na, "people without history." So, kang nag-decide ako magsurat sa Bikol, it's because I want to historicize myself, and makakalaog lang ako sa arog kayan na proseso kung mabalik ako, if I return. Because pighahali kita kaining education system, where our very first experience is to remove ourselves from our local realities, kaya "a is for apple", "b is for ball", "c is for cat". So poetry becomes a way of defense. Well, poets inspire revolutions. They can make things happen. Only that they don't win battles. So Bonifacio ay isang makata na hindi lamang nanalo ng kahit anong digmaan. He wrote beautiful love poems for the country.**

It could be because I am locating myself in history. Some would often refer to us as "people without history". So, when I decided to write in Bikol, it's because I want to historicize myself. For me to actually exercise that process, I would need to return [TO HISTORY]. Because even in our education system, our very first experi-



ence is to remove ourselves from our local realities. That's why they teach us "a is for apple", "b is for ball", "c is for cat". So, poetry becomes a way of defense. Well, poets inspire revolutions. They can make things happen. Only that they don't win battles. Bonifacio<sup>[6]</sup> is a poet who never won any of his incited revolutions. He wrote beautiful love poems for the country.

[6]

Andres Bonifacio is a national hero of the Philippines, often called "The Father of the Philippine Revolution", and the leader of the revolutionary movement Katipunan that launched the revolution against the Spanish colonial rule in 1896.

[ABRIDGED...]

AF 23:34 *Since we're talking about poetry and you are also a filmmaker, I am curious about your process of translation. What's the difference between translating one language to another versus translating text to the moving image? What do you find interesting in these two different kinds of translation?*

KC 24:17 Well, I'm just restless, you know? I just try to fit in in the usual categories we have. That's why I move around writing my own stuff, doing translation, and doing film.

**Siguro, I'm just willing to explore more mediums, or media in a very limited kind of space. Nahihiling ko kaya Bikol sa diskurso kang radyo, sa diskurso kang pulpito. Yaun sana diyan nagiiikot. So, I think we have to carry on kung paano siya dadarahun to. Garu kaya ang language specimen yan. Garu yan something you put in a petri dish, in this new medium, and it will seek its own form.**

Perhaps because I am just willing to explore other mediums, or media, in a very limited kind of space. I always see Bikol through the discourse of the radio, or even the church. I think we have to carry on and see how we can take it somewhere. Language, anyway, is like a specimen you put in a petri dish, in a new medium, where it will seek its own form.

&lt; 23 &gt;

&lt; 24 &gt;

When I do films, I think of the language used in the film as some kind of new invention. Hilingun ta man daw kung ano mangyayari kung ang Bikol gigibuhon ta mang pelikula. What would that mean to us?

When I do films, I think of the language used in the film as some kind of new invention. What happens when we make films about Bikol. What would that mean to us?

[ABRIDGED...]

KC 26:31 **Siguro may certain... bakong softness. I'm trying to look for that word na pwede mong hulmahin.**

I think there's this certain... Not softness. I'm trying to look for that word that means *hulmahin*.

AF 26:40 **Malleable?**

KC 26:41 Yes, yung malleability. Ang language arog kayan sakuya. Hilingun ko siya sa poetry. Hilingun ko siya sa nobela. Hilingun ko sa kung ano pang medium. It's a living organism. It has a life of its own. It shapes the seemingly incoherent sense of space ta.

Yes, that malleability. That's language for me. It's malleable. I will look at it through the lens of poetry. I will look at it through the lens of the novel. I will look at it through the lens of other mediums. It's a living organism. It has a life of its own. It shapes our seemingly incoherent sense of space.

**So ako talaga, ang dream ko, Alec... I'd like to make a film using the Bikol language, and the setting is in Switzerland, for instance. Where the location is so strange—**

So, my dream, Alec, is to make a film using the Bikol language, and the setting is in Switzerland, for instance. Where the location is so strange—

AF 27:38 **Oh! That's nice. Like in a snowy mountain setting?**

KC  
27:45

Yes, tapos nagbi-Bikol, ta pirmi kitang nagbi-Bikol. There is always the Mayon Volcano, for example. Nagibo ko na yan sa Hinulid. I'd also like to do a *Noli Me Tangere* version but set in Rinconada, for instance. You see, pighahanap ko sa tataramon ta sa Bikol kung ano iyang malleable. Ito bagang si Kurosawa nagibo niya si mga pelikula base sa mga plays ni Shakespeare. Ginibo niya sa konteksto kang buhay asin estroya kang Hapon.

Yes, and the language is Bikol. Because we always stay in Bikol. There's always the Mayon Volcano<sup>[7]</sup>, for example. I did that in my film, *Hinulid*. I'd also like to do a *Noli Me Tangere*<sup>[8]</sup> version but set in Rinconada, for instance. You see, I always try to see how our language could be malleable and live like an organism in a different space, not just our own. Kurosawa made films based on Shakespeare's plays, but he placed it in the context of Japanese life and stories.

[7]



[8]

*Noli me Tangere* (1887), or “Touch Me Not”, is the Philippine national hero Jose Rizal's first novel published during the Spanish colonization of the country. It was written in Spanish, and a sprawling epic that critiques the colonial rule of the Spanish government and Catholic friars. It is a required reading in elementary schools, and have been adapted numerous times into plays, films, and TV shows.

→ Mayon Volcano is the most active volcano in the Philippines, located in the province of Albay in Bicol. It is renowned for its “Perfect Cone” shape.

&lt; 24 &gt;

&lt; 24 &gt;

AF  
29:11

*And it's always set in the specific time period.*

KC  
29:15

Baka arog na challenge satuya, na i-set up ta. Sa hiling ko yan ang saro kong proseso na hinihiling ko ang language as malleable. But you also have to be responsible for it. Like in *The Little Prince* [1943], “You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed.”

Maybe that's the challenge for us—to set this up. I think this process of making language malleable is something that I try to do. But you also have to be responsible for it. Like in *The Little Prince* [1943], “You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed.”

AF  
33:34

*Yeah! I'm also just really curious about this since you're a translator—what kind of joy do you find in translating as a process, compared to writing poetry where you come up with your own words? In translation, you're borrowing words and making them your own.*

KC  
33:55

When I do translation, I make it a point that I hear it first before I translate. Pag binibasa ko siya sa Ingles, nada-dangog ko na siya Bikol. So it comes like a soft whisper, or a soft wind. But it's also so powerful that you could almost lose your breath. That was my experience writing Rilke, for example.

When I do translation, I make it a point that I hear it first before I translate. When I read works in English, I already hear it in Bikol. So it comes like a soft whisper, or a soft wind. But it's also so powerful that you could almost lose your breath. That was my experience writing Rilke, for example.

And I like to come up with projects that will give Bikol another way of seeing the world. Because our writing is limited to a particular kind of tradition that we don't even bother to articulate. Dae gayo naghi-histo-

ricize igdi, or nagfi-philosophize kang mga sinurat kang nakaaging panahon—1930’s, 1940’s. Mayong comprehensive Bicol studies programs, in other words.



And I like to come up with projects that will give Bikol another way of seeing the world. Because our writing is limited to a particular kind of tradition that we don’t even bother to articulate. We don’t historicize, or philosophize here the writings of the past—the 1930’s, 1940’s, and so on. We don’t have comprehensive Bicol studies programs, in other words.

AF 35:51 *I like that. Access to the world through translating.*

KC 36:58 Yeah, actually interesado ngunyan na mag-translate paluwas na sa local languages—Bikol works translated into English, or maybe Spanish.

Yeah, actually I’m interested right now in translating outwards from our local languages—Bikol works translated into English, or maybe Spanish.



[ABRIDGED...]



Sarah Polley, *Stories We Tell* (2012), Documentary, 109 min.





## <> SUGAR GLASS



Video, 5 mins,  
Fall 2022

What could be more fuzzy than memories? How often do recollections get distorted every time they are remembered and retold?

*Sugar Glass* is a split-screen short film that adopts the technique of the Kuleshov Effect experiment and projects third meanings from side-by-side juxtapositions of images, but through poetic linkage and affective articulations rather than impose some sort of narrative causality or linear logic.

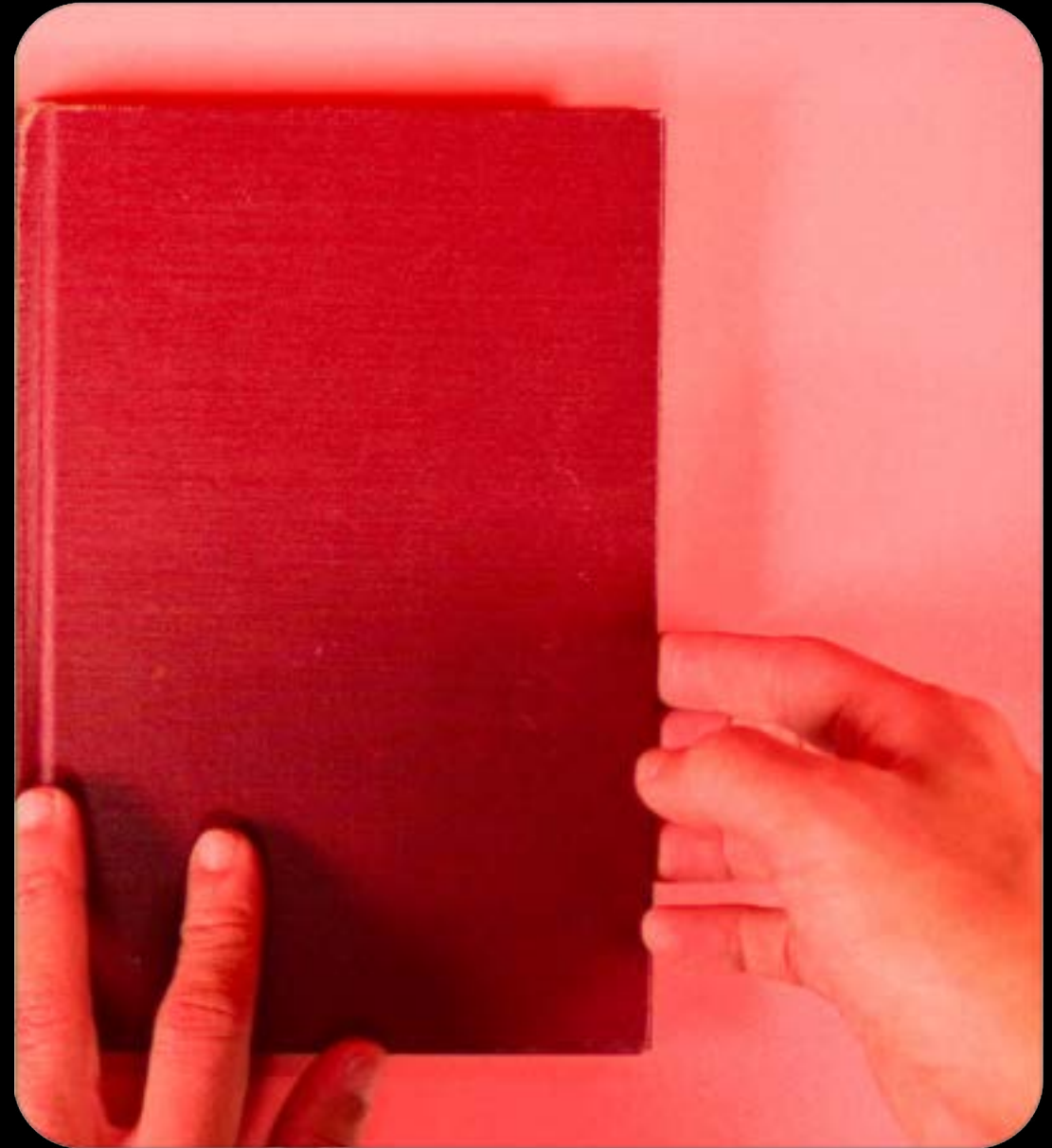
Somewhere between a biographical documentary and a video essay, this film puts back together shards that have become fuzzy—the hazy memories left by my grandmother, and the inexact accounts of the stories she used to tell. Using archival clips, family photographs, and studio footage, this film is a narrated retelling by

myself and my father of recollections, and passed down stories relating to the personal, and to *Bicolano*<sup>[a]</sup> myths, lores and legends.

By utilizing the poetic and formal possibilities of the split-screen format, the stories and memories retold in this film are tugged, shaped, expanded, and complicated by way of associative editing, formal visual rhyming, and multiple metaphors. *Sugar Glass* hopes to present that the memories we frequently revisit and the iterations of the stories we tell ourselves and each other are always in states of malleability. This film aims to depict the nature of memories and stories—constantly being remembered, reconstructed, and retold.

[a]

*Bicolano* refers to the native inhabitants of and things of relation to the Bicol Region, which is comprised of four provinces, in the Philippines.



00:01



00:05

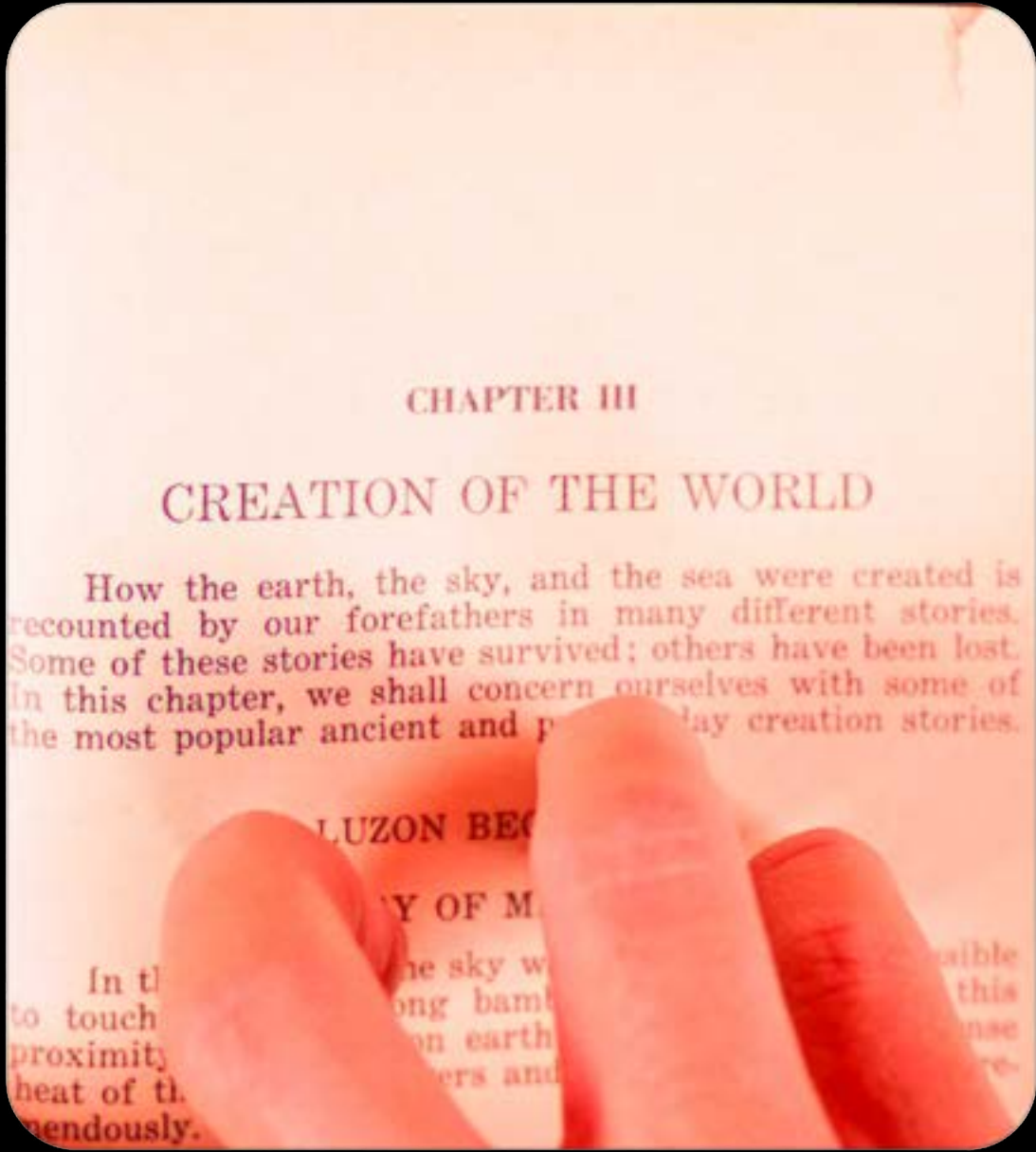


00:07



00:09





00:12



00:18





MYSELF  
[V.O.]  
00:20

**Lola** [grandmother] **told me stories, and fed me sweets.**



MYSELF  
[V.0.]  
00:26 **When I was little, she would take me to the "sari-sari" [sundry] store in front of our house**

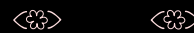


MYSELF  
[V.O.]  
00:29

**then I would point at something I like from the selection of sweet, sugary junk.**

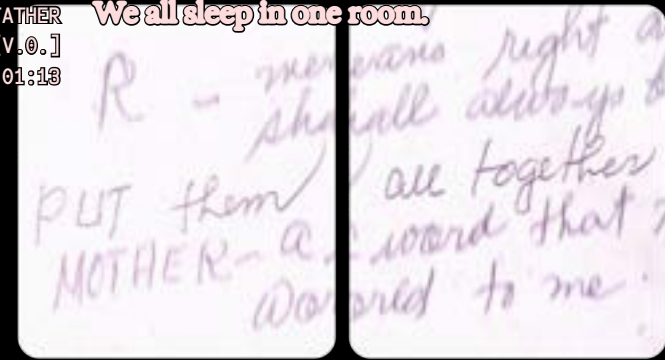
MY FATHER  
[V.0.]  
00:52

**What I remember most about Mom**



MY FATHER  
[V.0.]  
01:18

**We all sleep in one room,**



MY FATHER  
[V.0.]  
01:02

**is that she was a public school teacher.**



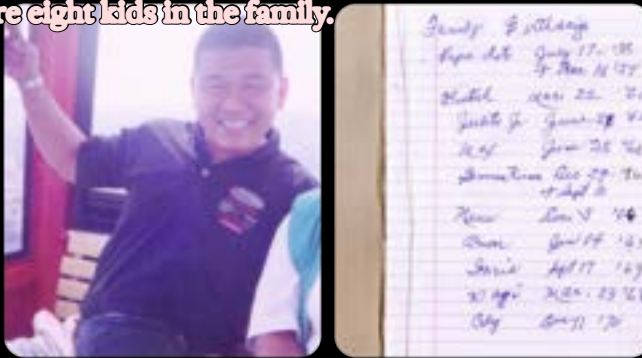
MY FATHER  
[V.0.]  
01:18

**Mom and Dad would be in one bed,**



MY FATHER  
[V.0.]  
01:06

**We were eight kids in the family.**



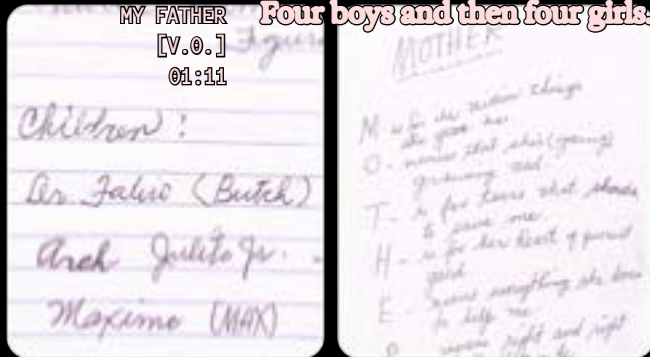
MY FATHER  
[V.0.]  
01:21

**then all the kids would huddle in the sleeping mat on the floor.**



MY FATHER  
[V.0.]  
01:11

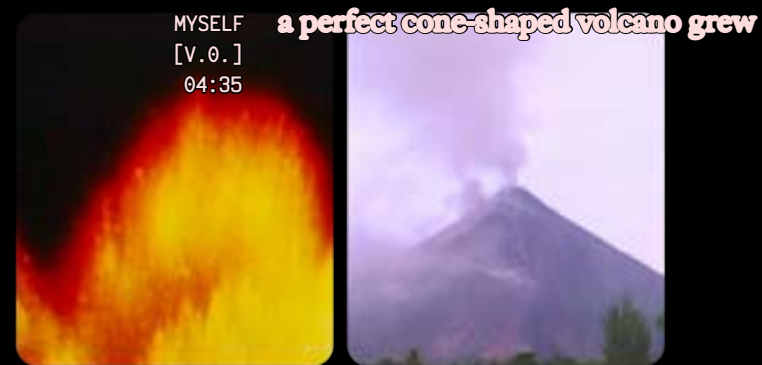
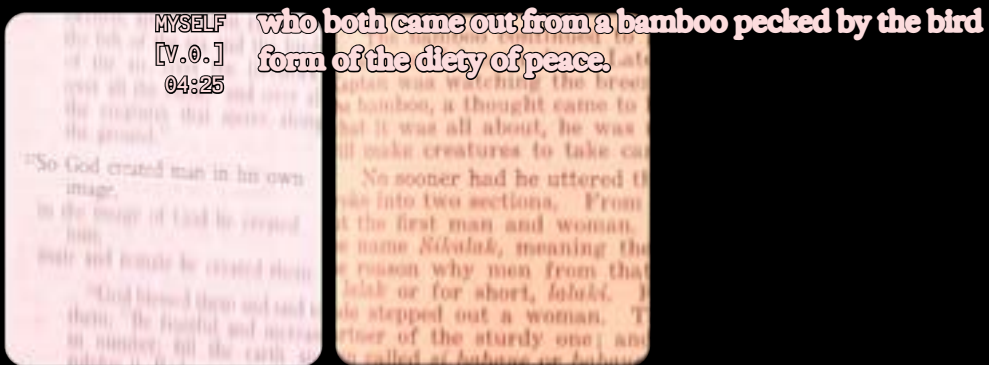
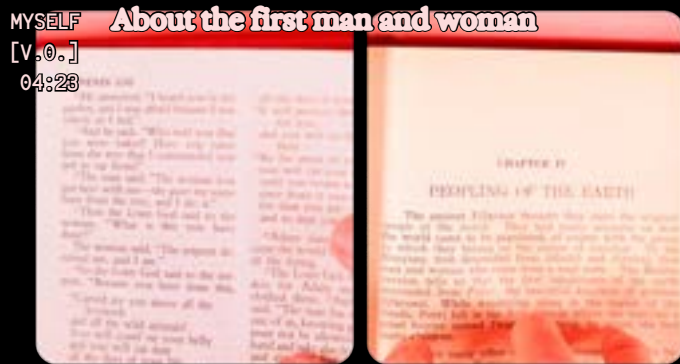
**Four boys and then four girls. I'm the eldest.**



MY FATHER  
[V.0.]  
01:25

**Every night, we pray the rosary.**







MYSELF [V.0.] 004:47 **But what are stories, particularly those not set in stone, if not to be retold over and over.**



Rea Tajiri, *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (1991), Documentary, 32 min.





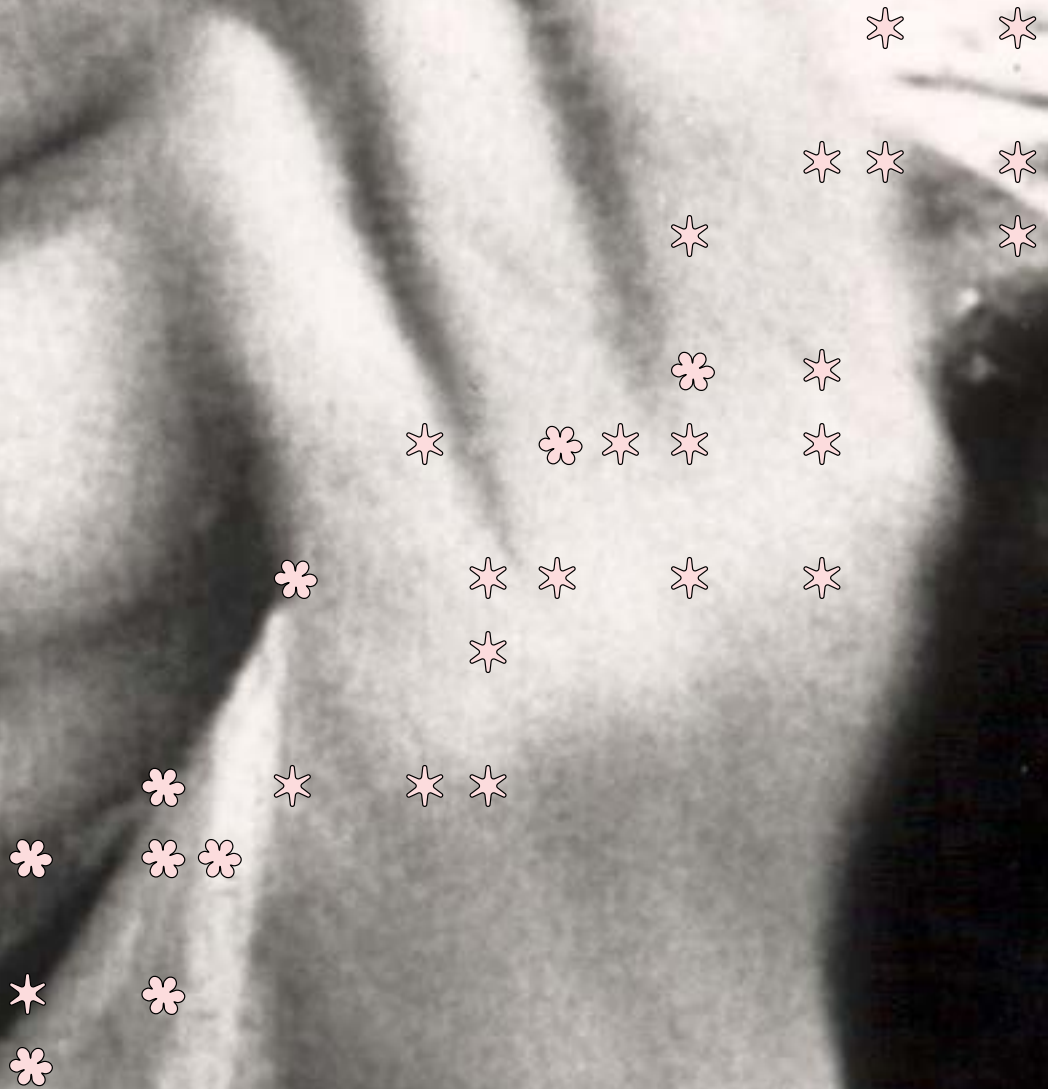
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# 28

Scholar of film and new media Laura U. Mark's *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (1999) looks into the role of the senses in relation to intercultural cinema, which encompasses films and filmmakers that occupy the in-between of cultures, specifically people of diaspora.

→

Rea Tajiri, *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (1991), Documentary, 32 min.



In the book, which borrows from Deleuze's thinking, Marks talks about the condition and searching of intercultural filmmakers for new forms of cinematic expressions to represent their native culture and histories. In contrast to Western ocularcentrism, which is the bias ranking of vision as the primary way to acquire knowledge, truth, and experience over the other senses, Marks proposes that intercultural cinema is instead interested in the proximal senses—taste, smell, and touch—and the memories that are encoded in them. Senses which are particularly often left out of the Euro-American visual hegemony. To Marks, these films “call upon memories of the senses in order to represent the experiences of people living in Diaspora.” In intercultural cinema, the physical and multisensory embody cultural experience and memory, not just visual representation of the image. Marks summarizes these concepts into a term she calls “haptic visuality”.

“Haptic visuality” in film, for Marks, often contains all kinds of cinematic flaws that intercultural cinema embraces. These take the form of some textural qualities, including grainy, or ill-defined, or unfocused images; dense imagery that capture the visual language of non-Western cultures, images that depict sensorial evocations, such as water, or nature, or a ritual; and also characters performing a sensory activity, such as smelling or tasting. Echoing Deleuze again, Marks sees the haptic image as not complete. Because of this, the viewer is then forced to engage with the cinematic image in its material form, with all its defects or weak points, rather than the completeness of the imagery and narrative. Haptic visuality also embodies the blurring of the geographical distance and the murkiness of the emotional experience of filmmakers in diaspora. In this way, the image becomes not just a cathartic release for the viewer, but also for the filmmaker<sup>[28-a]</sup>.



# 29

Deleuze mentions that, "The affection-image is the close-up, and the close-up is the face..." (p. 32). These images could also take the form of the spaces around the character, the location, or even a shot devoid of any human presence or affect. An example would be the opening scene of Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972), where the viewer watches weeds moving along with the ripples of pond water. Here, the space becomes a vehicle for the affect, embodying a state of sensorial, or visceral, or poetic quality.

*Hugot* is a particular genre of Philippine cinema. These films take the shape of the quintessential romantic or romantic-comedy films, but the Filipino audience has reclaimed the genre for themselves and has given it its own name. Films like *That Thing Called Tadhana* (2014), and the cult classic, *One More Chance* (2007), typically employ quotable dramatic punchlines of dialogue—through sharp wit, earnest monologues, and oftentimes relatable comedy—to appeal to an audience that is collectively yearning for, experiencing, and losing some sort of love, in whichever form it might take.

→  
Rea Tajiri, *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (1991), Documentary, 32 min.



[28-a]

In *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983), Gilles Deleuze describes three kinds of the 'image-movement', which is the experience of cinematic images in motion. These are the perception-image; the action-image, and the affection-image. The affection-image in particular simply pertains to the foregrounding of emotions in film. The close-up shot is the most obvious type of the affective image.

→  
Antoinette Jadaone, *That Thing Called Tadhana* (1991), Romance, Comedy, 110 min.

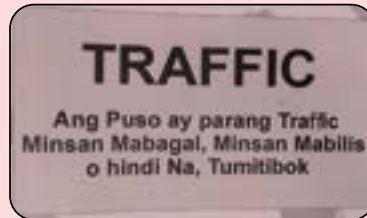
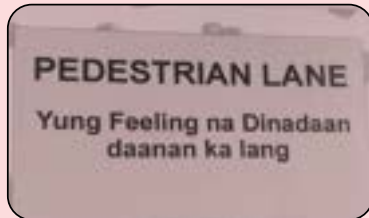


The genre comes from the Tagalog word *hugot*, which literally means to pull or to tug. Around the second decade of the 21st century, the word has proliferated the language of the youth at that time and eventually consumer art in the Philippines, from local pop music, spoken-word poetry, to cinema. Perhaps originating from *kundiman*<sup>[29-a]</sup>, the country's traditional genre of love songs, *Hugot*—co-opted by the millennial

generation—now mostly means to draw out feelings, to rip the heart out, and lay it bare for everyone else to witness and share. It usually comes from a place of romantic heartbreak brought out with desperation, unapologetic honesty, and the grandest of gestures. *Hugot* became a unique phenomenon in the entertainment culture and eventually a subset of the country's culture itself, turned into memes and sneaked into the everyday Filipino conversations. *Hugot* punchlines were even employed in a local government campaign to educate millennials on traffic rules and regulations.

[29-a]

*Kundiman*, which means "*Kung Hindi Man*" in Tagalog and translates to "if ever not" or "if it's not meant to be" in English, is a kind of traditional Filipino music that began during the Spanish colonization of the Philippines. It is typically characterized by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  time signature, with the song beginning with a minor key and progressing into major chords, and by its melancholic melodies and affecting lyrics. Alongside depicting romantic love or longing, it sometimes also expresses fervor for the country, especially during the Spanish rule. It is different from another Tagalog term, *Harana*, which is a traditional serenade. It is a vocal performance usually sung under the window of the girl of which the boy is attempting to woo. *Kundiman*, however, refers to the genre of music itself that is being sung during the *Harana*.



Gideon Lasco, a Filipino medical anthropologist and writer, in his essay *The art of hugot in our republic of sawi* (2017) suggests that this collective predisposition perhaps could also come from the country's tragic and ill-fated relationships with those who have ruled over it. Such as with Spain, and the United States showing up to serenade a nation with promises and care, but only leaving it in heartbreaking ruins—to woo, but ultimately



inflict violence instead. Ever since, the people of the Philippines have been in collective recovery, but to move on is not an option, because one could never just forget the cruelty embedded in colonial relationships.

→

A stereograph card showing the act of *Harana*, or the traditional serenade in the Philippines. Here, a suitor, accompanied by his friends, is singing courtship music to woo a love interest.



→

A stereograph card originally captioned "*Quanto Valo* scene in camp of the 10th Infantry, P.I." It depicts American soldiers buying fruits and produce from a group of native Filipinas.



It is unclear how *Hugot* has shaped the contemporary culture of the nation. This possibly stems from the country's many myths and lores about tragic love, or love being a mere universal language, or perhaps the word itself has been shaped into a container to gather a nation's collective heartache—over romantic love, or over the hurts and pains inflicted by its past.

→

Some examples of *hugot* lines being used for traffic signs. The former loosely translate to, "*That feeling when they* [a romantic crush] *just pass you by.*" The latter, "*The heart is like traffic, sometimes slow, sometimes fast, sometimes at a standstill.*"

A

blank paper  
 and a pencil  
 in one hand  
 and a book about  
 dinosaurs  
 in the other,  
 he recalls  
 some time  
 one afternoon  
 running  
 down the stairs  
 to the  
 living room  
 where he was  
 expecting to find  
 his  
 uncle  
 watching  
 the television.  
 He  
 jumped  
 onto the couch  
 next  
 to  
 his uncle,  
 plopped the things  
 in his hands  
 onto his lap,  
 opened the book  
 to the  
 Brontosaurus page,  
 and  
 asked him  
 to replicate it  
 as a drawing.

<\*>

<\*>

His uncle  
 was an architect,  
 and  
 he  
 was  
 still  
 writing letters  
 on  
 handwriting workbooks.  
 His uncle  
 draws the Brontosaurus  
 pencil's as if the  
 not touching the  
 surface  
 of the paper,  
 as if hovering.  
 He  
 draws  
 with  
 force;  
 his  
 uncle  
 does  
 it with  
 gentleness.  
 His  
 uncle's  
 lines  
 are  
 soft and  
 thin, but  
 decisive.  
 Occasionally,  
 his uncle would  
 flick  
 the pencil away

from the paper into the air as if he had just punctured a period to a sentence, a gesture of finality and a refusal to start over. Meanwhile, he would constantly erase the point of destroying the paper.

His uncle finishes the drawing, and hands it over to him.

He held it up to his face, and admired a craftsman's work. He ran back up to his room, and attempted to draw the Brontosaurus himself.

Already making a mistake, he crumpled the paper and started over. ☆

Bouchra Khalili,  
*The Mapping Journey*  
 Project (9 Apr-10  
 Oct 2016), MoMA,  
 New York City.



# SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE WALKING



Video  
9 min.  
Fall 2023

To go for a walk is to take the body outside and retreat from the mind. To walk is to momentarily lead oneself astray—to be excised from the objective of a destination. For someone in a foreign place, it can be a moment to get lost in the memories of home. For that someone, taking a walk through Google Street View is an opportunity to be reminded of that home.

*Sometimes I Feel Like Walking* is part video essay, and part counter-map of a hometown. Using archival footage, personal and archival images, and text superimposed on a Google Street View walkthrough, this film tells a brief biography of a place framed through the lens of the personal narrative. By excavating recollections and disorientations from within a tool or technology that

is used to survey and objectify, this work—or this walk—presents an uncertain, fragmented, and hazy personal cartography of a home against the fidelity of maps, digital or otherwise. This work explores the tensions that arise between the instability of memories and narrativization imposed by maps; between our eye-level perception of the world and the view of it from above.

It is said that every time a memory is recalled, it changes—the mind distorting the image with each remembering and retelling. How can the memories of a place be reconstructed and rewritten against the narratives imposed by some sort of power and system? How can the complex and ever-evolving notions of a home be reclaimed from the exactness and resolution of our maps?



00:17

**The first recollections I conjure when I think of home are fragments of dreams.**





00:44 In one dream, I stand frozen in the middle of the road along with my neighbors

00:50 and watch an impossibly giant wild boar run amok in the streets.

00:54 In another, I hide as the wild boar snatches my neighbor one by one with its mouth and tusks.





**Jose Rizal, Jabali (1894)**  
a sculpture made by the national hero of the Philippines during his exile ordered by the Spaniards because of suspicions in his involvement in the rebellion

00:01:27

I

wonder

how  
many  
us

of

can  
recall

what  
this

land

was  
called

before  
the  
retellings

and  
blurings

of

its  
origins;

00:01:38

Before

the

ravaging

of

wild  
boars.



01:39 I imagine that this is the same panoramic view the wild bear possesses—

01:43 from this overreaching, towering height that peers down and lord over so as to lay claim to people and territories.



01:55

Are we supposed to be looking down when we want to look at the world and its people?



02:06

Beyond this

archived

map  
data

and  
personal  
memories

is  
the  
etymological

origins  
of a place.



Don Roberto Escamela (1974)

04:07 **to plant seeds of stories about living and achieving the "American Dream."**



04:22 **and dreaming in this place called home.**



04:04 **It's ultimately moving upwards—to leave and then return**



04:20 **and has incepted the collective memory**



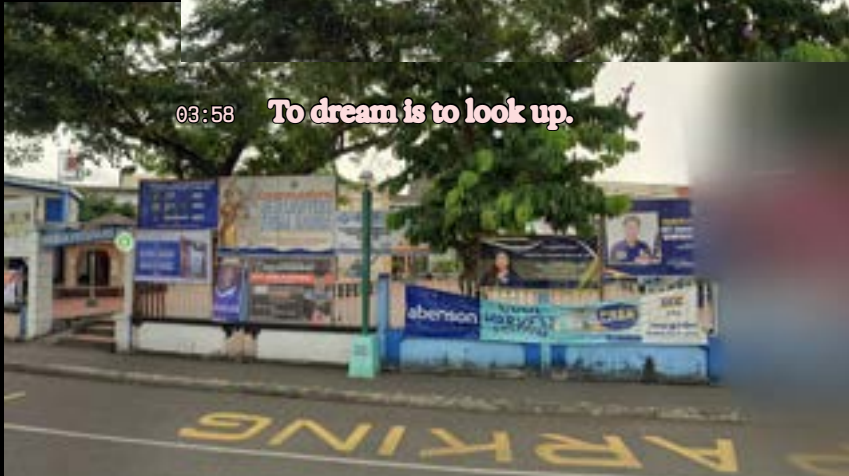
04:00 **But here, it's not merely about looking up.**



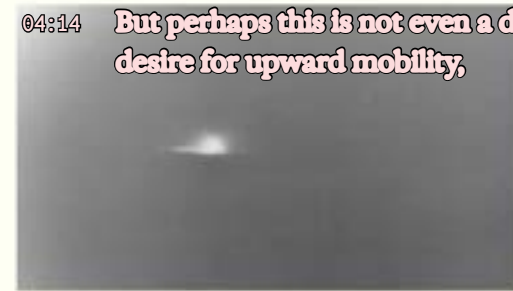
04:18 **which is deeply rooted in the colonial past**



03:58 **To dream is to look up.**



04:14 **But perhaps this is not even a dream, but the strongest of desire for upward mobility,**





07:44 But perhaps

this dreamy  
and dramatic  
image  
is mere  
exaggeration—  
the mind filling  
in the  
gaps  
in memory  
with  
embellishments  
and errors  
to  
make them whole,  
to  
construct  
a  
version  
of the  
truth.



08:07 **It is said that every time a memory is recalled, it changes.**

08:14 **Perhaps this is what home is**

08:19 **a cartography of the uncertainties and failibilities of memory**

08:22 **Unlike the exactness and resolution of this panoramic view of a place,**

08:26 **perhaps home is mere gooey, mushy murk**

08:31 **Like memory itself, perhaps home is supposed to be uncharted and unsurveyed**

08:36 **and is always in an unstable state.**

08:40 **Unlike maps, perhaps home should noy be oriented and narrativized by some sort of power,**

08:48 **but should be constantly reconstructed and rewritten.**



09:58 Perhaps to reclaim home from this power is to trust our memories more than the map.

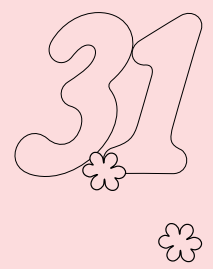


Lav Diaz,  
*Season of the Devil*  
(2018), Musical,  
234 min.





<\*>



In 1986, over two million Filipinos gathered and marched along the stretch of Epifanio delos Santos Avenue, EDSA—the so-called main artery of Metro Manila—to end the dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos<sup>[31-a]</sup>. Propelled by the assassination of a revered political opponent, electoral fraud, along with violent and abusive rule, the four-day peaceful mass resistance successfully ousted the dictator, ending his two-decade regime, and the nine-year martial law in the country. The protest was unique in itself as it had managed to gather different sectors of civil society, the Church, people from all levels of economic classes, and even the military. This pivotal period in the country’s history is referred to as the EDSA Revolution, or the People Power Revolution, or the Bloodless Revolution, where tanks were met by prayers, guns by outstretched hands and flowers.

→

Roger Buendia, *A girl gives a daisy to a marine, People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986* (1986), Presidential Museum and Library.



Fields of View

[31-a]

Ferdinand E. Marcos was the 10th president of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986. He is also a dictator, kleptocrat, and human rights abuser. He left the country billions in debt and committed 2,326 killings and disappearances, 11,103 documented tortures and abuses, and 50,000 incarcerations under Martial Law.

The EDSA Revolution offered a glimpse into the prospect that it does not take violence on violence to overthrow powerful systems. It had inspired other peaceful revolutions around the world, such as the Velvet

Revolution in Czechoslovakia, the Singing Revolution in Estonia, and the Tiananmen Square protests in China. The lack of force, it turns out, could topple a rigid military rule and a strongman. But only on the surface.



→

Catholic nuns and supporters greet a soldier on his V-150 armored tank with outstretched hands during the EDSA People Power Revolution in 1986 in Manila, Philippines.



On the last night of the revolution, Ferdinand Marcos, his family, and allies finally accepted defeat, and fled the Malacanang Palace, the official residence of the Philippine president, aboard a US Air Force helicopter to Guam, and then Hawaii, where they began a life in exile, and continued their extravagant lifestyle. They lived in an expensive estate in Makiki Heights, hosted lavish weekly gatherings, and reportedly owned an armored Mercedes Benz limousine. Ferdinand Marcos and his family had dreams of reclaiming their power back, but he died in the island in 1989 at the age of 72 of cardiac arrest before even stepping foot in the Philippines again.

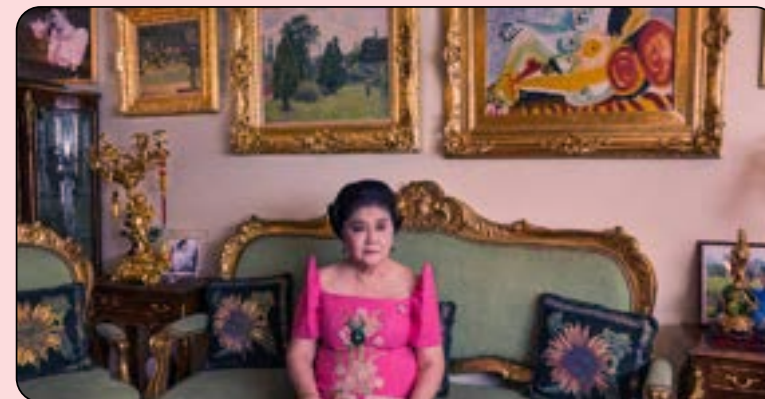
Meanwhile, the Philippine's transition into democracy after the revolution under Cory Aquino's [31-b] new government was not smooth, and a lot of the same political and social ills persist today in the country: poverty, inequality, corruption, cronyism, just to name a few. Under the rubbles of the Marcos regime collapse, the institution and system underneath continue to rot.

[31-b]

Cory Aquino, the eleventh president of the Philippines, was also the wife of Ninoy Aquino, who was a senator during the time of Martial Law, and was a vocal critic of the Marcos regime. On August 21, 1983, he was assassinated on the tarmac of the Manila International Airport, which is now called Ninoy Aquino International Airport after his name. Cory Aquino herself was born into a wealthy, influential, and political family, the Cojuangcos, who owns so much land in Central Luzon, including the 6,453 hectares of agricultural land called Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac, Philippines. On November 16, 2004, seven farmers were murdered in the estate during a protest to fight for land redistribution against political dynasties and their greedy ownership of land. Philippine tycoon and politician Danding Cojuangco, Cory's first cousin, is also one of Marcos' close allies, and part of the "Rolex 12", which is the moniker named after the twelve cronies who advised Ferdinand Marcos, and helped him enforce Martial Law in the country.

→

Laureen Greenfield, *The Kingmaker* (2019), Documentary, 100 min  
 • The film centers on the life of Imelda Marcos, former first lady to dictator Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines. In this film still, one could clearly spot the possible missing Picasso piece, *Reclining Woman VI*, displayed in her mansion in San Juan, Metro Manila. It is one of the stolen assets the government marked for seizure in 2014.



In fact, during the time of this writing and publication of this book, Ferdinand Marcos' son, Bongbong Marcos [31-c], sits as the current president of the Philippines. He persistently denies his father's atrocities, and has been reaping the ill-gotten wealth [31-d] acquired by the First Family. They carry on unpunished to this day, and their cronies continue to cling to positions of wealth and power. On November 18, 2016, Ferdinand Marcos' corpse was buried at the *Libingan ng mga Bayani*, or the Hero's Cemetery. The imagined revolution was never achieved. The sweeping changes needed by the nation were merely swept under the rug. Violence prevails by way of historical recurrence.

[31-c]

Bongbong Marcos is the 17th president of the Philippines. He ran a well-oiled political campaign of historical distortion and revision, which led him to win the seat of power. He lied about his educational background, indicating he graduated from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and Oxford University. Records show he did not finish his courses in these schools.

[31-d]

Perhaps one of the most sinister strategies the Marcos regime had employed to steal from the people was the coconut levy fund, which was tax collected from coconut farmers that was supposedly be used for the development of the coconut industry and the benefit of the farmers. Instead, the collected fund was pocketed by Marcos' cronies and used for their own business interests. According to Rappler (2020), the stolen money amounted to P9.7 billion at that time, and now worth around P76 billion.



The EDSA Revolution then was not a revolution, but a revolt. According to the Martial Law Museum, “It is not a revolution along the lines of Marxism-Leninism, or a horizontal revolution wherein the oppressed classes overthrow the elite. Be that as it may, EDSA 1986 was revolutionary, a novelty because it demonstrated that overwhelming popular support can now cancel out the coercive powers of the military. We cannot measure and judge EDSA 1986 for what it is not.”

<\*

\*>

→

Ferdinand Marcos, along with wife Imelda Marcos and son Bongbong Marcos [far right], during his oath-taking as president of the Philippines for his second term of office at Malacañang Palace on Feb. 25, 1986.



→

Bongbong Marcos, along with mother and former first lady Imelda and wife Louise Marcos, during his inauguration as the 17th president of the Philippines in June 30, 2022.



The EDSA Revolution also remains an unfinished revolution, because the atrocities persist, they just take on different forms and bear numerous names. For instance, in 2001, a second EDSA Revolution transpired that overthrew the 13th president of the country, Joseph Estrada, after allegations and investigations of corruption and fraud. Ousted, he was then succeeded by Gloria-Macapagal Arroyo, who pushed for the change of the Philippine constitution in order to extend her term in office, just like Marcos' scheme to remain in power. And there's the country's sixteenth president, Rodrigo Duterte and his murderous War on Drugs<sup>[31-e]</sup>, but that is another long story. The former and latter mentioned presidents respectively have also imposed Martial Law in the island of Mindanao, overridden

→

Joey De Vera, Feb. 23, 1986, early afternoon: Thousands of citizens in the streets. (1986), Presidential Museum and Library.

by a five-decade long armed conflict between multiple armed groups and the Philippine government.

[31-e]

A month after he was elected president in 2016, the foul-mouthed Rodrigo Duterte exclaims in his speech that, “All of you who are into drugs, you sons of bitches, I will really kill you,” According to the United Nations Office of Higher Commission for Human Rights, Duterte’s drug war has claimed over 8,000 lives from 2016-2020. The extrajudicial killings and this heinous act of crimes against humanity are often executed by vigilantes, hired gunmen, and the Philippine National Police. Her daughter, Sarah Duterte, sits as the vice president of Philippines and Bongbong Marcos as his president during the time of this writing.

**A country that has been beaten down to a pulp. A history that has been mangled and twisted by revision and distortion. A people who have been haunted by the many forms the ghosts of martial law had assumed.**

**But history is never always a story of suffering, and the Filipino culture is not forever damaged [see p. 291]. The people of the country persist. Perhaps to fight back, to untangle history, or to exorcise poltergiests is a slow processes.**

**Softness moves at a slow, leisurely, deliberate pace to avoid impact or destruction. It is also quiet and a gradual rise to something. Perhaps societal recovery proceeds in this similar stride. Deep wounds and trauma do take time to heal, and one improves faster if taken care of by another. “EDSA [revolution] was not meant to solve the nation’s problems, but made it possible again for the people to do it together,” suggests the Martial Law Museum. The revolution is unfinished because those in the present continue the responsibility of relieving the sores and pains of the past. It is unfinished because completeness is a far-fetched utopian idea, and to mend damage is a sustained process. “So long as this power remains with the people, the People Power Revolution remains unfinished because it goes on with us all—a living, breathing revolution.”**

<\*>

<\*>

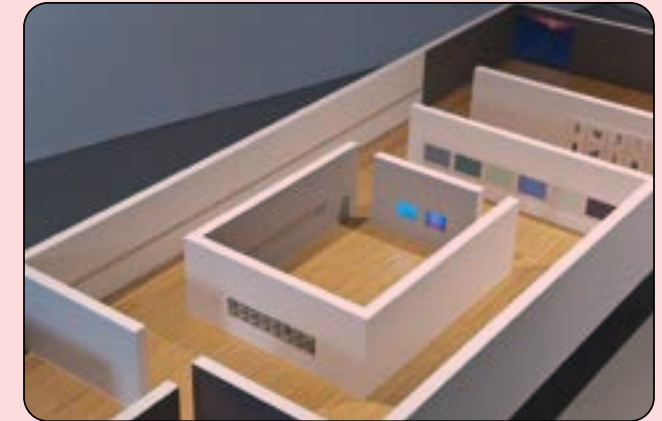
32

*“History as repair. Not restoring wholeness but saving fragments. A radical rescue of tradition. An ethical mandate of work.”*

—Susan Buck-Morss, *Seeing <-> Making Room for Thought* (2024)

→

Walid Raad, *Section 139: The Atlas Group* (1989-2004), Various.



→

Stephanie Syjuco, *Stephanie Syjuco: The Unruly Archive*, (2024), Book.



Fields of View



↑  
Imelda Marcos kissing  
the glass casket  
of embalmed husband,  
Ferdinand Marcos.

➤  
The bust of Ferdinand  
Marcos in Benguet,  
Philippines bombed  
and defaced in 2002.  
“When anything that  
symbolizes something  
positive, something  
beautiful, something  
right, is destroyed,  
it is always very  
sad,” said Imelda  
over the phone to  
the Associated Press  
(2002).



*Fields of View*

↑  
Alyx Ayn G. Arumpac,  
*Azwang* (2019),  
Documentary, 85 min.

He and his friend  
 stumbled into  
 their second bar of  
 the night on  
 Halloween.

<\*> <\*>

The place was surprisingly empty,  
 but predictably over-priced.  
 They were inebriated  
 themselves but satiated with sushi  
 and edamame from the  
 previous bar.

New York was a sensory  
 overload particularly at  
 that time of the  
 year—

They proceeded to drown  
 themselves with craft beer,  
 their nth drinks of the night,  
 and continued catching up  
 about what they've missed  
 from each other's life.

inebriated bodies,  
 pop culture references,  
 angel wings and devil  
 horns,

wet sidewalks and  
 a pizza on the  
 concrete.

His friend was visiting  
 from the Philippines  
 and he himself was  
 on Thanksgiving break.



He babbled about school, rambled about his projects, engaged with his friend on discourse he would have not learned if not for attending graduate school in the west, and romanticized New York in between.

He must have been talking for so long—exacerbated by alcohol and what's left of his graduate-art-school-student ego—that his friend cut him off mid-sentence.

His friend scoffed and then said, "Well, knowledge is economic."

<\*>

Mike De Leon,  
*Batch '81* (1982),  
 Drama, 100 min.



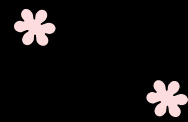


# THE FORGETTING SYLLABUS



Fields of Focus

Installation,  
Objects,  
Spring 2023



*The Forgetting Syllabus* is an archival initiative undertaken by an unnamed artist investigating and then documenting what remains of Calicut Island, a small, remote island in the Philippines placed under Martial Law, and where inhabitants are afflicted with some sort of progressive amnesia.

On the 15th of March 2023, the initiative exhibited an archive of the artist's ongoing research and documentations in a small room at the Center for Integrative Technologies (CIT), Providence, RI. They presented a collection of nine found artifacts from the island—some gathered, some passed down, some materialized by speculation. The archive included redacted poetry out of the Proclamation No. 1081 document that placed the

island in Martial Law, a samizdat<sup>[a]</sup> comic book, blueprints of a memory modification device, black and white large format photographs depicting an unknown school-girl at the beach, postcards containing cryptic codes between distant lovers, a burnt book covered in sand, a map of a cartographer's effort to piece together his last memories of the island, among others. Each one a fragment of a narrative that had been erased by an atrocity; each one a reminder of a brutal history thrown in a violent cycle of revision and distortion.

In the crackly audio recording that looped in the space during the one-day exhibition, the artist claims that, "... memory is a form of resistance and remembering is radical."

[a]

Oxford Languages Dictionary defines "Samizdat" as the clandestine copying and distribution of literature banned by the state, especially formerly in the communist countries of eastern Europe.

The following is a transcript of the unnamed artist's audio recording that played and looped throughout the *The Forgetting Syllabus* exhibition on the 15th of March 2023 at Center for Integrative Technologies (CIT), Providence RI. Here, the artist enumerates and describes each item in the archive. Images during the show have been provided alongside the transcription.



AUDIO LENGTH 00:04:59

DATE TRANSCRIBED January 24, 2023

SPEAKER N/A

UNNAMED

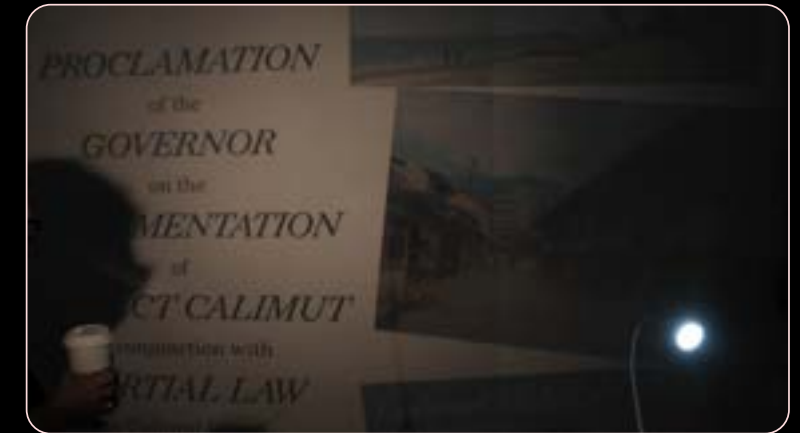
ARTIST

00:00:01

June 30, 2022: An update on an archive of found artifacts from and about Calimut Island around the time of Martial Law and Project Calimut.



Image projected using a overhead projector captioned, "Proclamation of the governor and on the implementation of Project Calimut in conjunction with Martial Law in Calimut Island."



00:00:09

Artifact No. 1: *Redacted Documents on the Implementation of Project Calimut and Martial Law [Proclamation No. 1081] in Calimut Island.*

*Recovered on April 7, 2002*

*Attributed to: Anonymous*

Two artifacts were anonymously mailed to my home on the said recovered date. The three distinct legal documents were wrapped in old newspaper and contained in a corrugated cardboard box, where a note written with black marker reads, "NEVER FORGET". This particular set of documents, a stack of the Proclamation No. 1081 that sanctioned Martial Law in the island, has been heavily redacted, revealing verses that seem to read like poems.

*Recovered on August 23, 2004*  
*Attributed to: Tina Hilao*

Tina Hilao was an activist and teacher at Calimut Science High School, where *Project Calimut*—a memory modification and controlling program was implemented and subjected to students. These postcards are addressed to Noel Benedicto, an unidentified individual. The letters on the backside of the postcards contain basic code, with every fifth word spelling out a secret message. She remains on the island, have never left, and perhaps has no memory of the island, her own past, and self, like most Calimut’s residents. Some sources say that once amnesia took over, she would visit the beach every morning and whisper secrets to conch shell trumpets.



*Recovered on February 15, 2005*  
*Attributed to: Artist*

*Turbo Genesis* was a censored comic book series during Martial Law in the island. The artifact is a set of

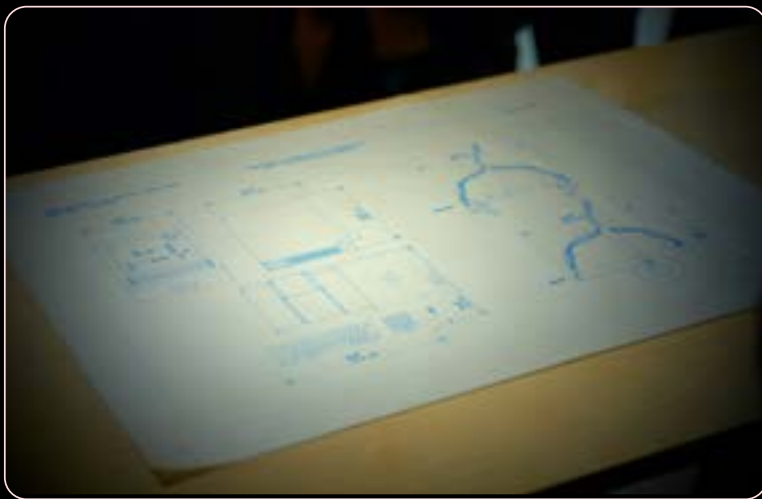
carbon copies of a single page from issue five of the said title. The artifact is recovered from the now rubbles of Calimut Science High School. The banned title was about resistance and rebellion. I believe that an unidentified student of the school may have clandestinely reproduced and distributed these copies to pass down to the student population. Perhaps even selling them.

→  
A spread from a vintage issue of the comic book *Turbo Genesis*, originally from Japan.



*Recovered on August 11, 2009*  
*Attributed to: Juan Enrique Ponce*

Juan Enrique Ponce was the Minister of the Department of Armed Services, the research and implementation body of *Project Calimut*. During a joint hearing, Ponce surrendered documents, including this blueprint of the device intended to gradually erase the memories of students at Calimut National High School during their *Araling Panlipunan*, or Social Studies class. After being convicted of human rights violations, Ponce administered the device on himself. He continues to live without any memory of his own atrocities.



00:02:52 **Artifact No. 6: 4x5" Black & White Negative Films (Series of 9)**

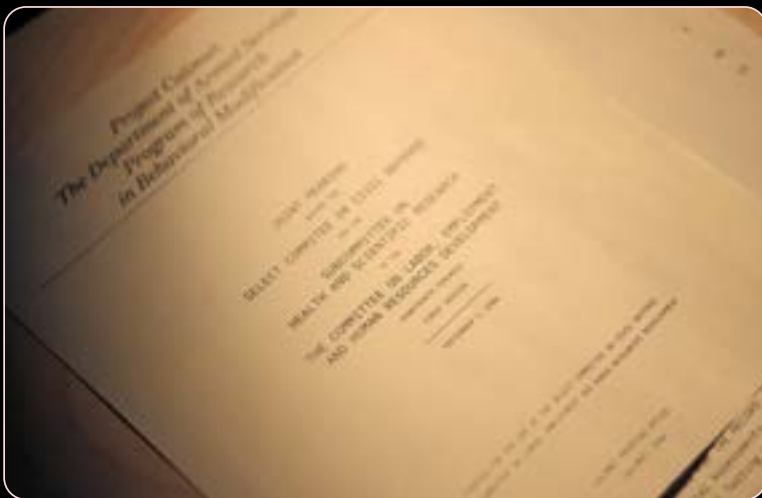
*Recovered on September 5, 2010  
Attributed to: Anonymous*

This artifact, consisting of nine 4x5" black and white negative films, was recovered tucked in three plastic film negative sleeves buried in the sand at Calimut South Beach. I developed and printed the photographs myself, revealing hazy images of the beach and depicting abstracted images of a girl, presumably a student of Calimut Science High School.

00:02:27 **Artifact No. 5: Joint Hearing Report on Project Calimut**

*Recovered on April 7, 2022  
Attributed to: Anonymous*

The other set of legal documents anonymously mailed to me on said recovered date, this artifact contains ghostly images of cropped faces, presumably students of Calimut Science High School, printed on the redacted files of the 1986 Joint Hearing Report on *Project Calimut*.



A photo of Calimut South Beach taken on 1982 recovered by the Presidential Commission on Good Governance (PGCC), an agency specifically developed by the Philippine government tasked to investigate *Project Calimut* and the crimes during Martial Law in the island.



00:03:22 **Artifact No. 7: Developed and printed 4x5" Black & White Films (Series of 9)**

*Recovered on November 21, 2012  
Attributed to: Artist*

The resulting prints of the recovered 9 4x5 black and white negative films on Calimut South Beach.



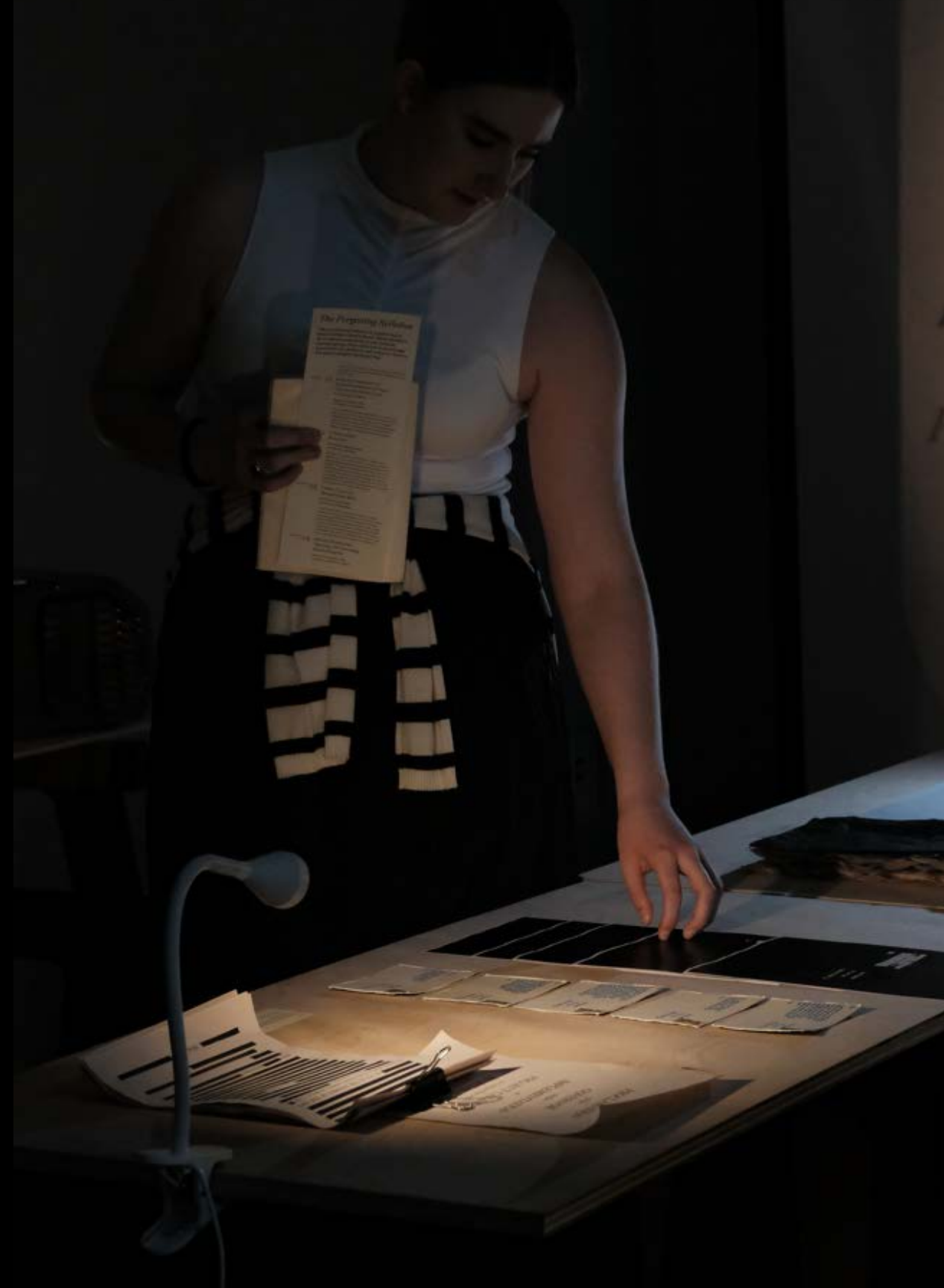
*Recovered on January 19, 2013*  
*Attributed to: Artist*

This artifact was recovered on Calimut Town Proper Beach, where banned books were regularly piled and burnt after being confiscated by the state. It said that the light emitted by the blaze can be seen in space, a flicker in the darkness of the Celebes Sea.



*Recovered on June 8, 2014*  
*Attributed to: Archimedes Trajano*

This artifact belongs to a local cartographer, Archimedes Trajano. Like most of the aging inhabitants of the island, he resides in a hospice care established in the later years of Martial Law to accommodate the growing population plagued with collective dementia. Recovered in his house after being placed in care and his death in 1985, this personal map is presumably his attempt to piece together the shape and the contour of a home that once was committed to memory.



DECLARATION  
of the  
GOVERNOR  
on the  
IMPLEMENTATION  
of  
MARTIAL LAW  
in Calicut Island

MY ISLANDMEN:

AT 9:00 IN THE EVENING OF THE 22ND  
OF SEPTEMBER, I HAVE PROCLAIMED MARTIAL LAW

WITH POWERS

THIS POWER

AND POWERS

SHALL BE

CONTROL  
MEDIA AND INFORMATION

DEATH CURFEW

ARREST

VIOLENCE

NECESSARY  
ARMED FORCE  
VIOLENCE

MILITARY TAKEOVER

CORRUPTION  
ARROGANCE

I AM DIRECTING

AGAIN I REPEAT

THERE IS NO DOUBT

THE GOVERNMENT

IS

THE DANGER

TIVE OR ALLY  
IF HE OFFENDS  
HE SHALL BE PUNISHED

THE

NEW AND REFORMED SOCIETY.

CORRUPTION

OF THE POLICE AND

CONTINUES

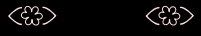
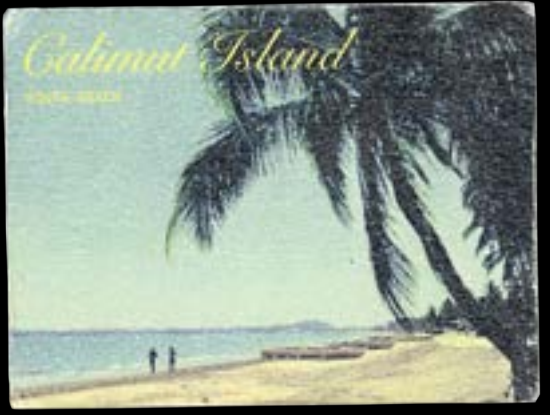
MAN,

A FRIEND, RELA-

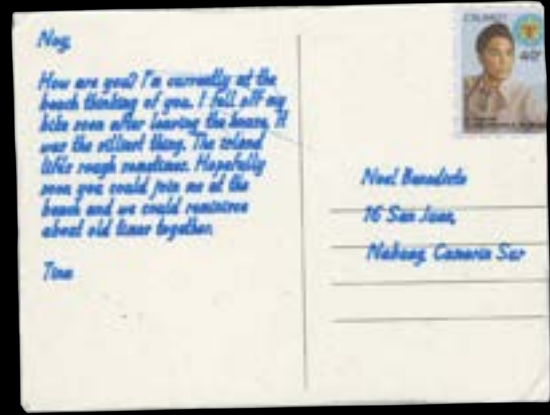
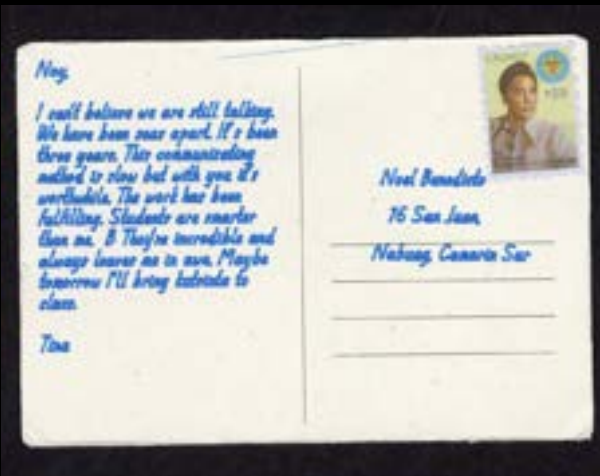
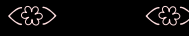
IF HE OFFENDS THE NEW SOCIETY,

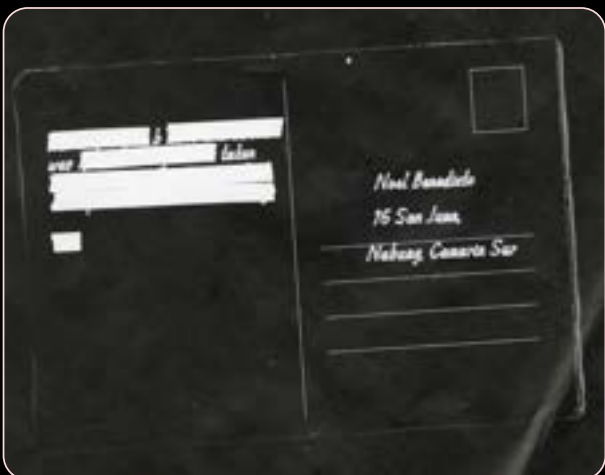
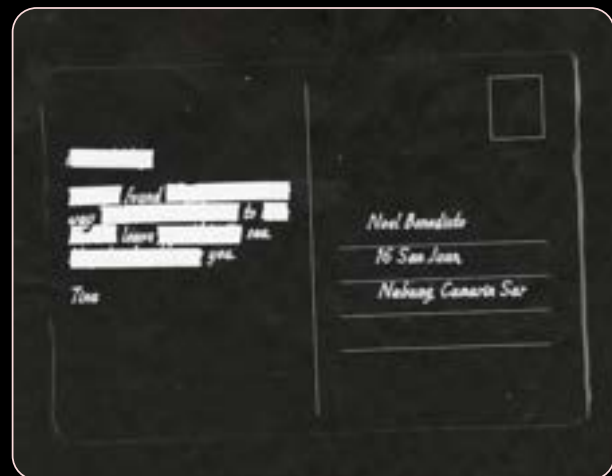
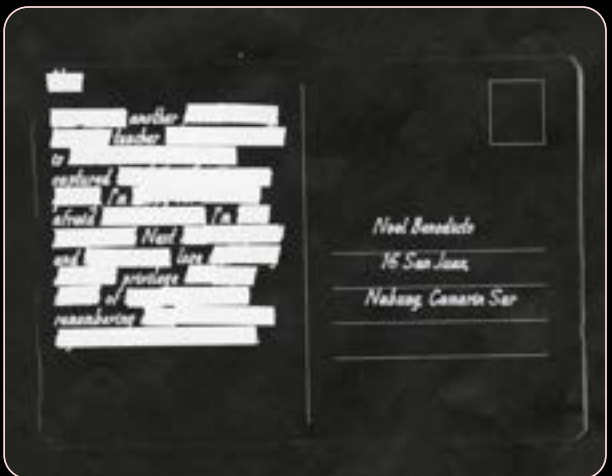
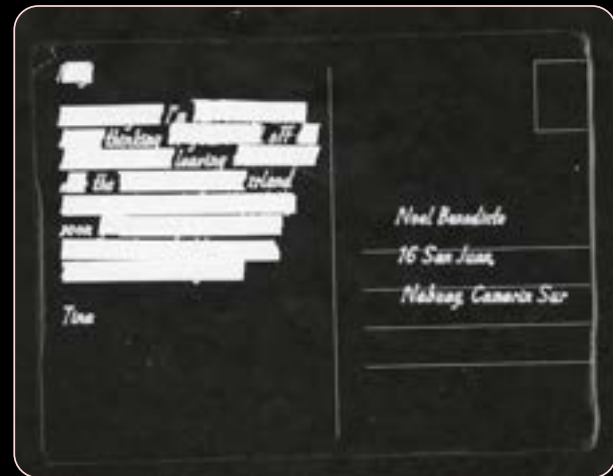
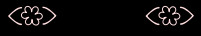
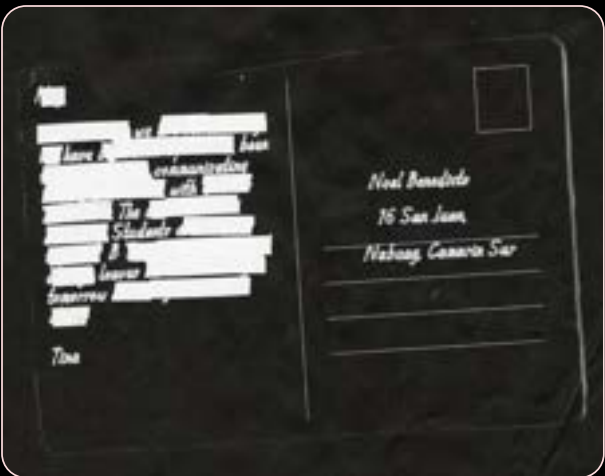
FEAR

IED SOCIETY.







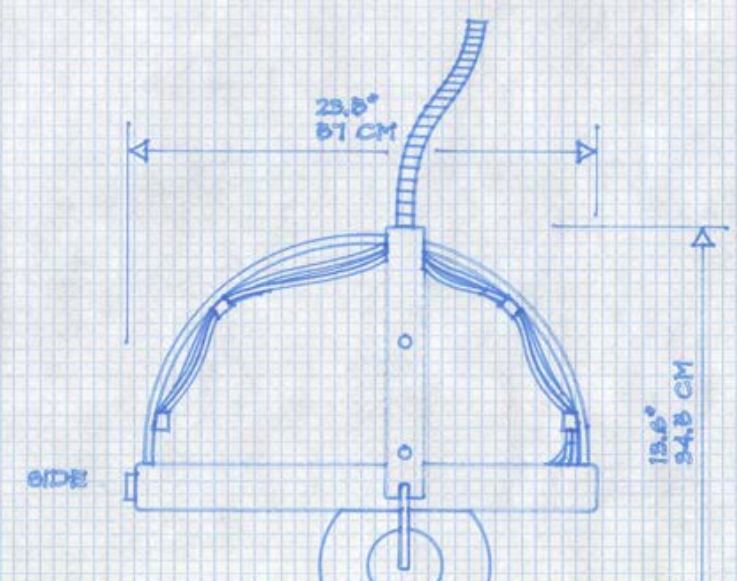
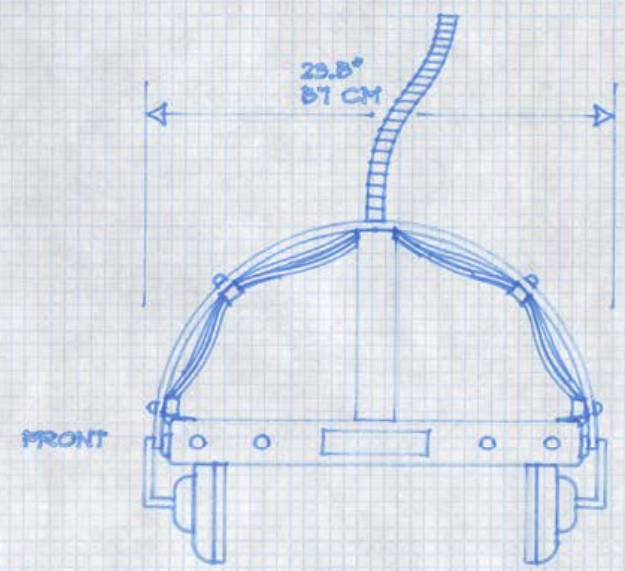
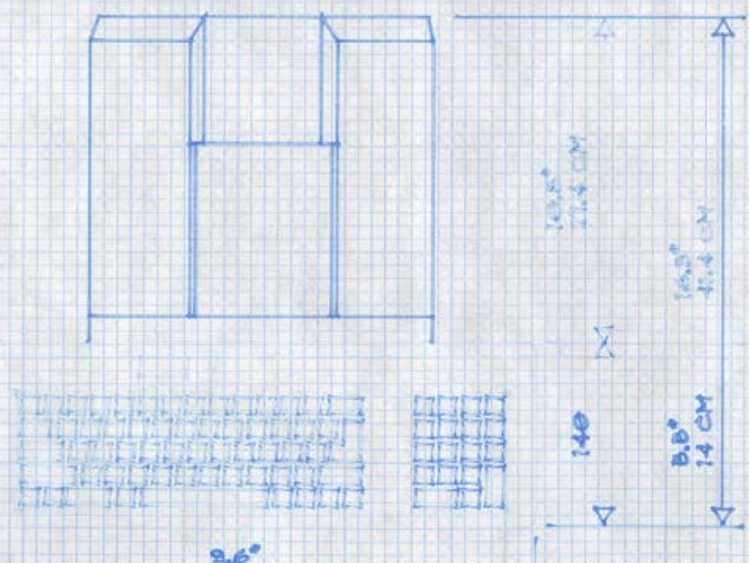
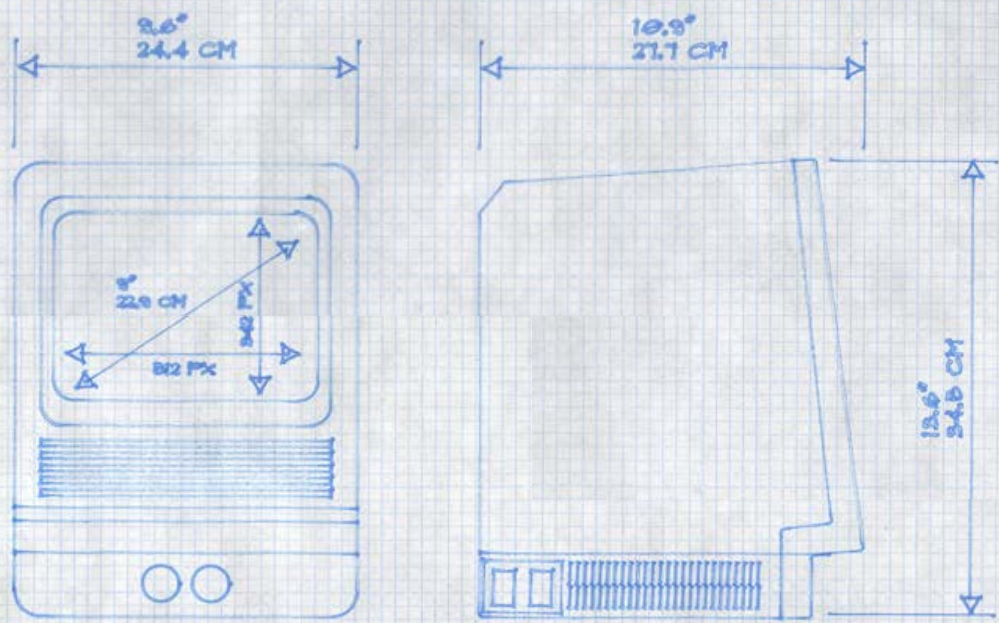




DEPARTMENT OF ARMED SERVICES  
PROJECT CALIMUT

MEMORY MODIFICATION SIGNALING  
AND CONTROLLING SYSTEM

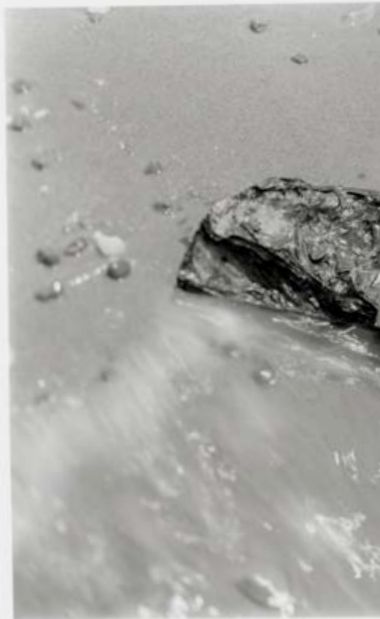
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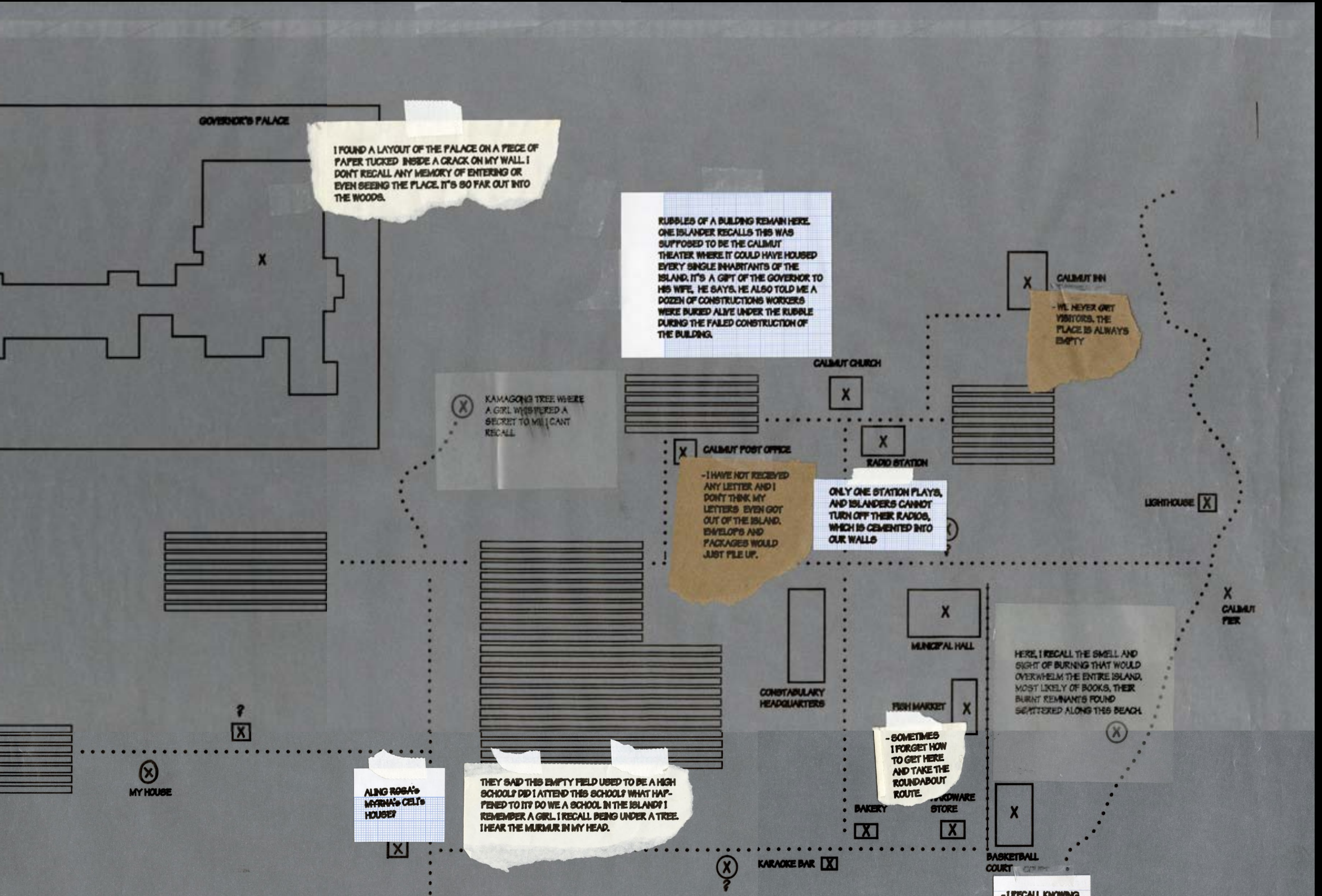


SEPTEMBER 3, 1966









I FOUND A LAYOUT OF THE PALACE ON A PIECE OF PAPER TUCKED INSIDE A CRACK ON MY WALL. I DONT RECALL ANY MEMORY OF ENTERING OR EVEN SEEING THE PLACE. IT'S SO FAR OUT INTO THE WOODS.

RUBBLES OF A BUILDING REMAIN HERE. ONE ISLANDER RECALLS THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE CALMUT THEATER WHERE IT COULD HAVE HOUSED EVERY SINGLE INHABITANTS OF THE ISLAND. IT'S A GIFT OF THE GOVERNOR TO HIS WIFE, HE SAYS. HE ALSO TOLD ME A DOZEN OF CONSTRUCTIONS WORKERS WERE BURIED ALIVE UNDER THE RUBBLE DURING THE FAILED CONSTRUCTION OF THE BUILDING.

CALMUT INN  
- WE NEVER GET VISITORS. THE PLACE IS ALWAYS EMPTY

(X) KAMAGONG TREE WHERE A GIRL WHISPERED A SECRET TO ME I CANT RECALL

(X) CALMUT POST OFFICE  
- I HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY LETTER AND I DONT THINK MY LETTERS EVEN GOT OUT OF THE ISLAND. ENVELOPS AND PACKAGES WOULD JUST PILE UP.

(X) RADIO STATION  
ONLY ONE STATION PLAYS, AND ISLANDERS CANNOT TURN OFF THEIR RADIOS, WHICH IS CEMENTED INTO OUR WALLS

(X) LIGHTHOUSE  
HERE, I RECALL THE SMELL AND SIGHT OF BURNING THAT WOULD OVERWHELM THE ENTIRE ISLAND. MOST LIKELY OF BOOKS, THEIR BURNT REMNANTS FOUND SCATTERED ALONG THIS BEACH.

(X) ?

(X) MUNICIPAL HALL

(X) CONSTABULARY HEADQUARTERS

(X) FISH MARKET  
- SOMETIMES I FORGET HOW TO GET HERE AND TAKE THE ROUNDABOUT ROUTE.

(X) BAKERY (X) HARDWARE STORE

(X) MY HOUSE  
ALING ROSA'S HOUSE  
MYRNA'S CEL'S HOUSE

(X) ?  
THEY SAID THIS EMPTY FIELD USED TO BE A HIGH SCHOOL. DID I ATTEND THIS SCHOOL? WHAT HAPPENED TO IT? DO WE A SCHOOL IN THE ISLAND? I REMEMBER A GIRL. I RECALL BEING UNDER A TREE. I HEAR THE MURMUR IN MY HEAD.

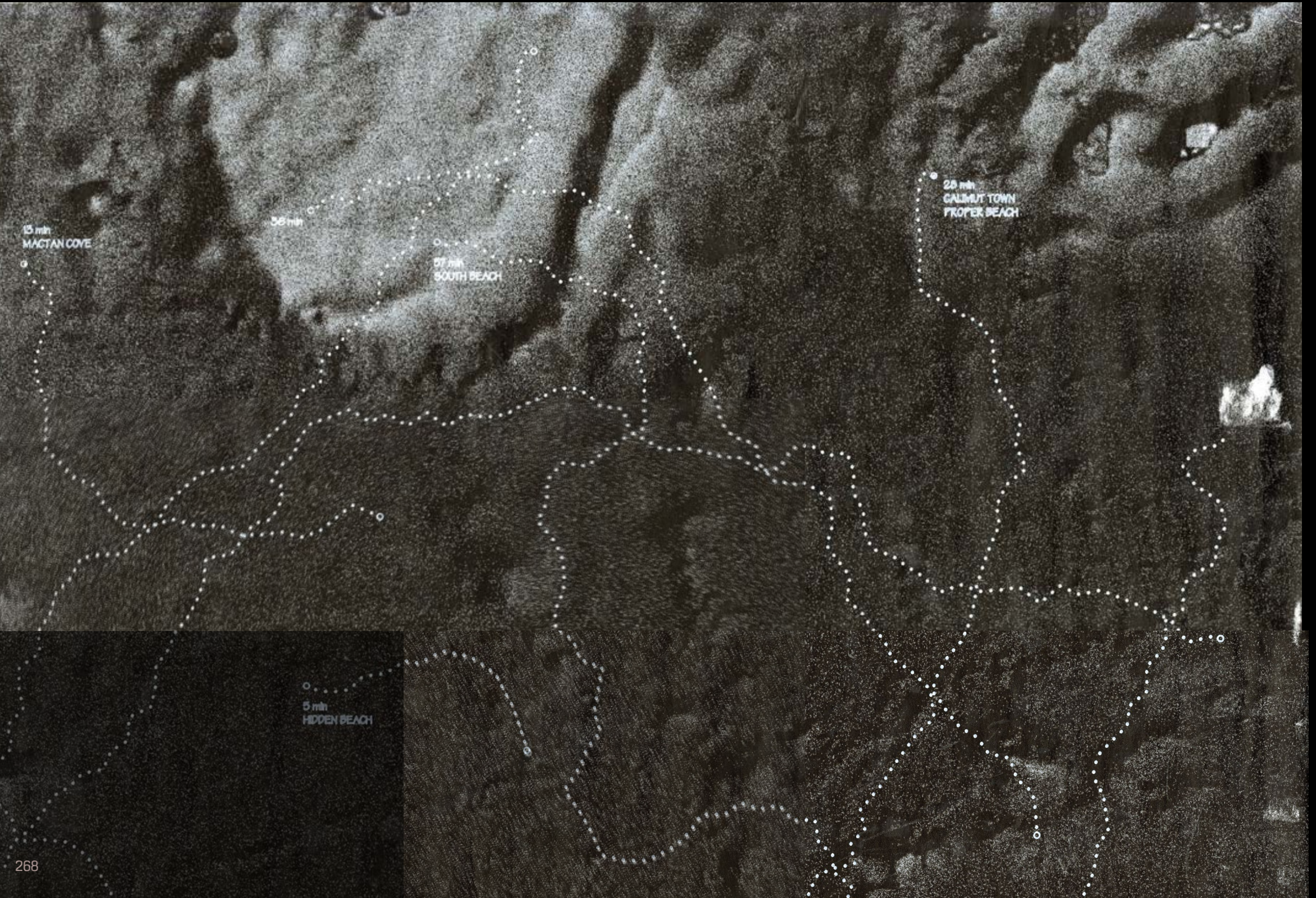
(X) KARAOKE BAR (X) ?

(X)

(X) BASKETBALL COURT

(X) - I RECALL KNOWING







## PHILIPPINE INTERNET ARCHIVE



Object  
[24x16" acrylic frame,  
16 4.75" lasercut  
Baltic Birch Plywood,  
3 8x6" acrylic plates,  
4.5x6" stapled book,  
5.5x8" spiral-bound,  
book, 6x71" organza  
fabric], Spring 2023

Bongbong Marcos, 17th president of the Philippines and son of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, won partly if not mostly because of the whitewashing of history that has proliferated around the internet during his presidential campaign.

*Philippine Internet Archive* is a recollection and archiving of some fragments of the early Philippine internet culture and experience in this age of disinformation and revisionism. Using some fab lab fabrication methods, this work hopes to materialize, preserve, shape into form, and portray the collective and individual narratives within the Filipino digital landscape, where historical narratives are relentlessly being distorted and revised.





ANGEL  
 1. OVER - LINDSAY LOHAN  
 2. SLAVE 4U - BRITNEY SPEARS  
 3. WARNING - INCUBUS  
 4. MAN, I FEEL LIKE A WOMAN - SHANIA TWAIN  
 5. MANEATER - NELLY FURTADO  
 6. I'M WITH YOU - AVOL LAVIGNE  
 7. STAN - ENTRO  
 8. HOW COULD I ASK FOR MORE  
 9. I COULD NOT ASK FOR MORE  
 10. I'LL BE THERE  
 11. I KNEW I LOVED YOU  
 12. OUT OF MY LEAGUE  
 13. FAST CAR

KIM  
 1. SIMPLE PLAN  
 2. BROKEN WINGS  
 3. VAL SOTTO  
 4. TARESHI'S CASTLE  
 5. BOLD STAR  
 6. GARRET  
 7. BEAST OF BLOOD  
 8. NALICE RIZER  
 9. GET DOWN WITH THE SICKNESS

DREYLO  
 1. NAME  
 2. WARNING  
 3. WHERE IS THE LOVE  
 4. MY DREAM  
 5. MY SUBSTITUTE  
 6. HANDS TO HEAVEN  
 7. COLOR EVERYWHERE  
 8. THE WAY YOU LOOK AT ME  
 9. WITH

DANIE  
 1. ALWAYS BEEN YOU - DAMAGE  
 2. LOVE IT LOVE IT LOVE IT - DAMAGE  
 3. LOVE IT LOVE IT LOVE IT - INDI  
 4. LOVE YOU DOWN NEXT - FATMAN  
 5. IT SEEM AFTER TIME - INDI  
 6. DO YOU REALLY WANT ME - ROBIN  
 7. I DO YOU REALLY WANT ME - INDI  
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 13. FAST CAR

QUINCY  
 1. SHIPS I DID IT AGAIN - BRITNEY  
 2. TONKIE - BRITNEY  
 3. LET IT RAIN - MONIE  
 4. EYE THE EYE - MONIE  
 5. KISS ME - MONIE  
 6. THE REAL SLEEP - MONIE  
 7. YELLOW - COLDFEAT  
 8. HANGING BY A MOMENT - JOHN MEYER  
 9. WHEN WE'RE GOING DOWN - FALL OUT BOY

JENNY  
 1. I WANT YOU TO WANT ME - LETTERS TO CLEO  
 2. CRASH - THE PRETENDERS  
 3. SAY YOU'LL BE SAFE - SPICE GIRLS  
 4. BARE OF LOVE - MITCHELL BRANCH + SANTANA  
 5. CLOSING TIME - SERISONIC  
 6. WHEN I COME AROUND - GREENOVY  
 7. WONDERBALL - CASIS  
 8. I TRY - RACY GRAY

DANIE  
 1. DO YOU REALLY WANT ME - ROBIN  
 2. I DO YOU REALLY WANT ME - INDI  
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 4. LOVE IT LOVE IT LOVE IT - INDI  
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 7. I DO YOU REALLY WANT ME - ROBIN  
 8. ALWAYS BEEN YOU - DAMAGE  
 9. LOVE IT LOVE IT LOVE IT - INDI

1. THE LIGHT  
 2. TRAVELING MAN - MOS DEF  
 3. EVERYTHING - MARY J BLIGE  
 4. WHAT'S COME OVER - MARY J BLIGE  
 5. FOR REAL - AMEL LARR  
 6. NAKEDA - LES NU  
 7. LITTLE THING - LES NU  
 8. BREAK YOU  
 9. SAY YES - F

EERO  
 1. FALL FOR YOU  
 2. GUARDIAN ANGEL  
 3. INSOMNIA  
 4. SWING SWING  
 5. GIVES YOU HELL

HAUI  
 1. TONIGHT  
 2. MOMENT OF TRUTH  
 3. THERE'S  
 4. SUPERMAN  
 5. LIFE OF AN ANGEL  
 6. PHOTOGRAPH  
 7. I'LL BE  
 8. COLLIDE  
 9. IT RAINS TONIGHT

ALEC  
 1. HEAR YOU ME - JINNY EAT WORLD  
 2. THE KOOKS  
 3. SUOH GREAT HEIGHTS - THE POSTAL SERVICE  
 4. DREAMS - THE COMBERBERTI  
 5. CHARIOT - GAVIN DEGRAN  
 6. LET DOWN - RADTONE

1. HEAR YOU ME - JINNY EAT WORLD  
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 4. DREAMS - THE COMBERBERTI  
 5. CHARIOT - GAVIN DEGRAN  
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↑ ↗  
 Early 2000s playlists for friends burned and laser-cut into Birch plywood.

Three Facebook Testimonials for Adrian Pontanial

*Carl Decloedt Posted on Dec 10, 2004*

Men are born as raw ore. We are gathered, blasted in a furnace, melted until we can no longer hold our own shape and heated to the point where our impurities are burned away. Then we are shaped anew into wonderful creations.

Leaders are not born, they are made. Adrian has been through the fire and has allowed God to shape his life. He is a great leader and a faithful servant.

Adrian, you call yourself Superman. I say you are more than super. You are a mighty man of God, and Superman doesn't hold a candle to you.

Keep walking with God, bro.

*Chingz Alvarez Posted on February 3, 2004*

Hahaha! I get to be the second one to do the testimonial for you. So I guess I have to be serious about it then..OK. So this guy looks so snobby to me the first time I saw him at work but you know what? Looks can really be deceiving 'coz he happens to be one of the nicest person I have met at work.

So helpful and so thoughtful. (Todo na 'to) I also found out that he likes to laugh also, in other words, pag tumawa ang tao na ito kita ang gums. Hehehe! Anyway, I guess I'm just lucky to have met this guy, or he might have done something really, really, really bad before that he is being punished by having to know me. Mwahaha-ha...Ingatz, Pare ;)

*Abel Pas*

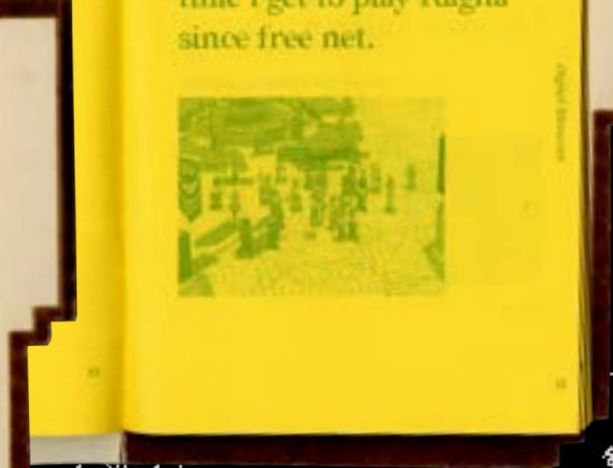
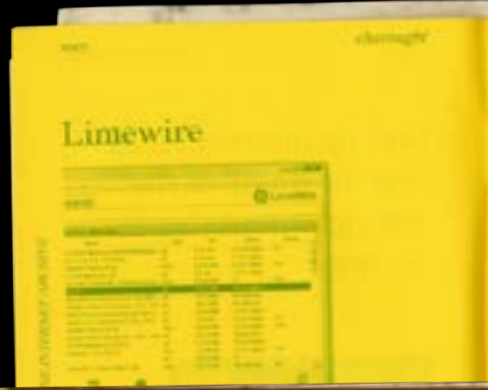
Finally, I got my attention used to be my common (fail

I do remember when alam kung ano gagawin... big problem with your heart-to-heart. Grabe, 'kain ko talaga di mo na makakayanan lahat. Thank God He helped you. And now..look at you! Natupad mo na halos ang mga pangarap mo..Congratulations and good luck, bro. God Bless!

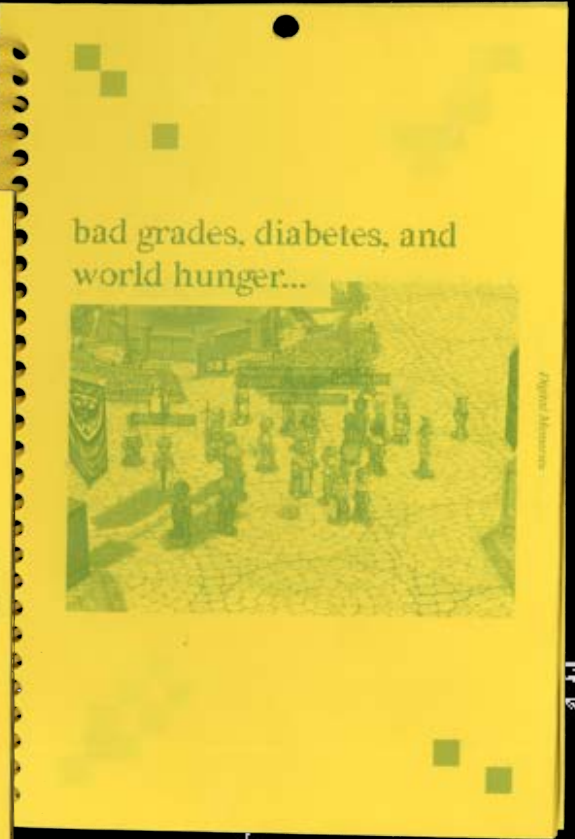
Hey, before I forget. Pakilala mo naman ako sa girlfriend mo...and don't even tell me na wala pa. Hummm..Hehehe!

THANKS FOR BEING MY FRIEND

Friendster testimonials posted on one Adrian Pontanial's profile laser-cut into dyed acrylic.



Some spreads from a book compiling the 49 responses on a thread I posted on the subreddit r/Philippines, where I asked users about their personal and collective memories of the early, 2000s internet in the Philippines.



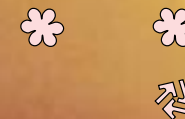
↵ ↖ ↗  
 Some spreads from a book that attempts to unpack the phrase Filipino parents would usually berate to their children: "Kaka-kompyuter mo yan!", or "It's because you spend too much time on your computer!"

ILOVEYOU

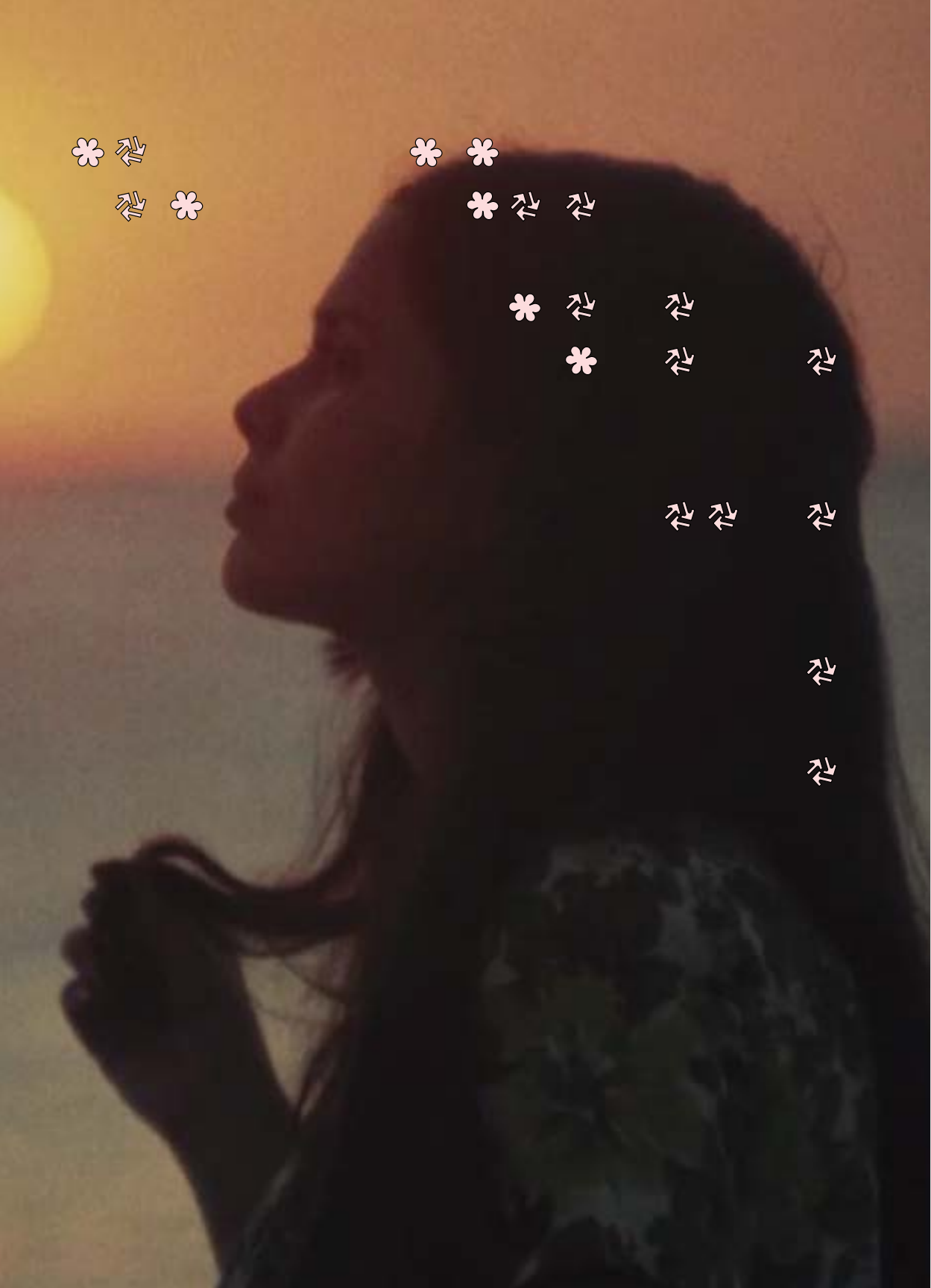
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→ The formatted code, printed on a long fabric scroll, of the ILOVEYOU worm released by two Filipino college students on the 5th of May, 2000. It started spreading as an email message with the subject line "ILOVEYOU," and affected tens of millions of Windows users around the world.

Lino Brocka,  
Maynila sa Kuko  
ng Liwanag (1975),  
Drama, 126 min.







< >  
**CARL LORENZ  
CERVANTEZ  
(@SIKODIWA)**



Fields of Depth



Interview conducted  
on Sunday, 04-14-24  
over Zoom.

Carl Lorenz Cervantes, MA, RPsy is a Filipino psychologist, and researcher. He is interested in the Filipino spirituality and parapsychology. *Sikodiwa* (@sikodiwa), a portmanteau of the words *Sikolohiya* (Psychology) and *Diwa* (Consciousness), is an extension of his research on digital platforms. Here, he shares to his audience investigations of pre-colonial and modern Filipino psyche and spirituality.

In this conversation, we peeled the layers of *kalambutan*, or softness within the context of the Filipino identity, culture, psyche, and language. We later on delved into the meanings and implications of the Filipino resilience within the context of tragedies and traumas.

This conversation also includes many words, or terms in Tagalog, one of the main languages spoken in the Philippines. Below is a glossary of terms, translated in English, of these words, which are taken from the website Tagalog Dictionary [TAGALOG.PINOYDICTIONARY.COM], unless otherwise indicated.

*Astig* ADJ. [SLANG, BACKSLANG]

unique; cool, or fashionable

*Diskarte* N.

FROM TAGALOG.COM

resourcefulness; hustle; determination to thrive

*Kalakasan* N.

vitality; strength; virility

*Kalooban* N.

a. will, or volition; b. mood; b. interior, or interiority

*Kanya-kanya* PRON.

FROM TAGALOG.COM

a. his or her own; b. each, or each one;  
c. individually; d. each their own

*Katatagan* N.

a. solidarity, or stability; b. endurance; c. poise, or balance

*Katawan* N.

body; figure; fuselage; stem; shaft

*Kinabukasan* N.

the day after; the next day; the future

&lt; 24 &gt;

&lt; 24 &gt;

*Malambot* ADJ.

a. soft, or tender; b. merciful; c. flabby, or weak;  
d. pliant; e. supple

*Malumanay* ADJ.

mild; gentle (in speech); restrained in action

*Matibay* ADJ.

a. strong (morally, or materially); b. firm; c. stable;  
d. solid; e. durable

*Matigas* ADJ.

hard; strong; tough; inflexible; inexorable

*Pagkatotoo* N.

truthfulness; authenticity

*Pagtitiiis* N.

a. suffering, or bearing hardships; b. endurance

*Pagtitimpi* N.

temperance; self-control

AF  
01:43

*I guess I could start with a very basic question: what is the definition of softness— “lambot”, “malambot”, “kalambutan”— in the Filipino language [TAGALOG]?*

CLC  
02:06

It depends, I think, in what context. *Malambot* it has a lot of implications depending on context. So a thing can be *malambot*. A person can be *malambot*. Usually, when we say that a person is *malambot* it usually refers to being effeminate, or a lot of feminine qualities. But, I think when it comes to relationships, I think, the word is not actually *malambot*, it's loving. *Malumanay* is another one. *Malamunay* is soft, but it means gentle. In terms of active words, I would prefer *lambing* when it comes to softness and also *pagkamalumanay* [NOUN FORM OF *MALUMANAY*], which refers to that gentleness.

AF 03:25 *Yeah, and also there are connotations people attach to the word which can be seen as sort of a negative—especially in terms of queerness. But for material things like food and things, the word is also associated with the quality of being good, or desirable.*

CLC 03:56 I want to add to that, actually, it's interesting that you mentioned queerness, because now it adds a layer to that. So, I did mention, usually people say *malambot* to a person referring to them being a feminine. Well, *matigas* also implies a lot of things, because *matigas*, *tigas* [NOUN FORM OF *MATIGAS*], *astig* [BACKSLANG OF *TIGAS*] implies someone who is cool, who is strong. Someone who can handle difficulty. Someone who is impressive. If we want to reframe it in the best way possible. We could have *tibay*, rather than *tigas*. So, *malambot* and *tigas* can have gendered implications. It can objectify things as well. And they're kind of surface level as concepts, but we can probably use *malambing* and *matibay* to refer to a person. A person who can be soft, and a person who can be reliable, and fortified in their inner strength.

[ABRIDGED...]

AF 05:51 *Since you've mentioned the word "matibay", I want to ask you about the concept of Filipino resiliency in the context of tragedy and trauma. The word is glorified and romanticized now. I'm wondering if you could talk about what you think are the positive and negative implications of this trait in terms of recovering from trauma, or tragedy or suffering.*

CLC 06:33 Yeah, we do have a local term, because resiliency is imposed on us. I mean, we're forced to be resilient. So if you look at it in the local language, two things come up. It's *diskarte*, and *katatagan*. *Katatagan*, which is also *matatag*, is something that's also strong. Its strength. It's something that can't be pushed down. So, if a monument is *matatag*, it's foundational, it's strong, and it can withstands pressure. When you put something on a

&lt;2&gt;

&lt;2&gt;

strong foundation, we say *tinatatag*. When an organization is founded in this year. So we say, "tinatag noong 2014." So, yeah, *katatagan* is something that comes up with strength amidst that adversity.

*Diskarte* is more active, and it's more amoral, or immoral, right? It's an immoral activity, for example. A person has *diskarte*, meaning that they can navigate systems, especially red tape, so it involves a lot of connections. It's actually interesting, because it kind of weaponizes Filipino social dynamics into something that is self-serving. So, if a person has *diskarte*, it operates in a *kanya-kanya* worldview—to each their own. You need this character to survive as an individual in a society that is incredibly hierarchical. That makes it difficult for most people. So, I think, these two concepts can also help in terms of strength.

I'm also taking notes, because these are just coming up for me just now. I'm writing them, so they might be posted eventually.

AF 05:51 *Yeah, of course! What you said about resiliency as something that is being weaponized against us is interesting. But the word itself is supposed to be a positive, and desirable trait, or quality as well. It's something that is inspiring, brings hope, and people together. How do you think we could reclaim the word resiliency from this idea of imposition by powers and systems? Are there any strategies that we could employ so that the Filipino people could take back this word?*

CLC 09:46 That's an important question. Because it [RESILIENCY] becomes a way for people to "*hugas kamay*"—to wash their hands—so that they don't have to have to help you. And like I said, it comes from a worldview that is *kanya-kanya*. So we want to reclaim this, we have to move from that *kanya-kanya* worldview to a *tayo* worldview, or a together worldview. Actually, there's a recent study about *katatagan*. It showed that resilience among Filipinos is communal. It's not individual.

[CLC RETRIEVES A BOOK...]

&lt;2&gt;

&lt;2&gt;

CLC 10:46 I have this book on Filipino psychology.

CLC 10:51 *Is this your book?*

CLC 10:53 No, it's a collection of essays from *Sikolohiyang Filipino* [FILIPINO PSYCHOLOGY]. I wish I could make something this grand. It's really massive. It's from the 70's.

Here, *katatagan* is used as a framework in disaster management. It's a resilience intervention, and it was led by Dr. Maira Regina Hechanova-Alampay. She's from Ateneo. Some of them have actually become my professors. But yeah, so it's very important to look at. This was during Typhoon Haiyan<sup>[1]</sup>. So they did a study there and the *katatagan* framework involves six factors, as I'm seeing here. I'll just read them out to you. Yeah, you have *kalakasan*, which is strength. *Katawanan*, which is managing physical reactions. *Kalooban*—managing thoughts and emotions. *Kaagapay*, which is seeking solutions. *Kapakipakinabang na gawain*, which is positive activities, and *kinabukasan*—moving forward. So how do you move forward with this? It's really interesting. So, it's multi-dimensional, not just something that is one thing you know—you're resilient, so deal with it yourself. That comes very much from *kanya-kanya* perspective. Most of the individualists that I talk to are very much in the *kanya-kanya* perspective, and they have difficulty grasping the intuitive empathy that comes with Filipino social dynamics.

[1]

Typhoon Haiyan, or Super Typhoon Yolanda, is tropical cyclone that hit the Philippines in early hours of November 8, 2013. It is one of the most powerful tropical storms ever recorded in history, and it affected more than 16 million people, leaving millions homeless, and thousands of casualties, billions of damage.

AF 13:02 *Yeah, it's interesting that you've mentioned kanya-kanya in the Filipino context, because the Philippines, among with other Asian countries and culture, is usually considered as a collectivist nation.*

CLC 13:13 Oh, everyone has *kanya-kanya*. It's not just because people like saying Western is individualistic, and the East is collective. We have a lot of individualists here.

[ABRIDGED...]

AF 14:08 *I guess along the lines of resilience. I'm just wondering about the Philippines as a country where its people have gone through so much—martial law, colonization, among other things. What does it mean to be soft in a country where the spirit of the people has been brutalized and traumatized by the past?*

CLC 14:39 Okay, I want to point out something about the way that you framed the question.

AF 14:43 Yeah, of course!

CLC 14:45 The way that you framed the question implies a linear version of history, which is that something that was once virginal or untainted, when it was touched, became forever tainted or damaged. So now, it implies that we have a damaged culture, which is actually a form of denigrating our culture. Because it says that all Filipino culture is damaged, which is kind of a mean thing to say.

But the Filipino culture persists, despite the things that you mentioned—colonization, Martial Law, extrajudicial killings, the War on Drugs, and so on. In a lot of these things we persisted, and the way that we've persisted has been through assimilation, soft power, revolutions that were peaceful, like the people power revolution. Which was one of a kind, and it overthrew the dictatorship that went on for 20 years. So we Filipinos, a huge part of our psychology is we'll

take it as much as we can—this is the *pagtitiis*, and *pagitimpi*. <2> <2>

There’s an assumption—that is very colonial—that we are passive, and submissive. But we do have many confrontative values. This is what Virgilio Enriquez<sup>[2]</sup> wanted to point out when the movement for indigenization<sup>[3]</sup> started in the 60s—that they were not passive. We have our own ways of expressing ourselves. This is the *pagkatotoo*, authenticity, right? So when you confront a person, we say, “*Alam mo sa totoo lang.*” And then you say your piece. I mean, being truthful to you is something that comes from a depth of relationship. So, there’s a huge aspect to us—*pagtitiis*, *pagitimpi*. When we can’t take it anymore, we fight back. This then becomes bodily now. And this is what we hear when we say, “*nasisikmura mo pa ba?*” Can you still hold it down in your stomach? “*Kung hindi mo na masikmura, iluwal mo.*” You puke it out, right? And that’s what we’ve been doing.

[2]

Virgilio Enriquez is known as the “*Ama ng Sikolohiyang Pilipino*,” or “Father of Philippine Psychology”. He introduced and formalized the field of study himself in 1975. In “*Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino psychology): A legacy of Virgilio G. Enriquez*” (2002), Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino mentions that Filipino psychology “is based on assessing historical and socio-cultural realities, understanding the local language, unraveling Filipino characteristics and explaining them through the eyes of the native Filipino (p. 51).”

[3]

Indigenous psychology, as defined by Uichol Kim and John Berry in *Indigenous psychologies: Research and Experience in Cultural Context*, is “the scientific study of human behavior or mind that is native, that is not transported from other regions, and that is designed for its people” (p. 2).

Because people look at our surface level things and aesthetics—we’re a majority Catholic country, we speak in English, this and that. It implies that colonialism is still something that affects us deeply. Which is true. Because deep in our minds, we still have that sense of cultural inferiority. This is something that even us Filipinos don’t really notice all the time. The way that we

express these supposedly colonial symbols are actually from a cultural perspective. So Christianity is used only as a language to express animist values. You will see the animist practices of people still persist despite colonialism, despite capitalism. I mean, you see it in the practice of *Hesus Nazareno* [JESUS THE BLACK NAZARENE], or the *Traslacion*. You see it in the practice of people having their cars blessed with the Our Lady of Good voyage. Sounds kind of very superstitious, if you think about it, but people do that. So, these are animist practices under the Christian language. This is what Fr. Bulatao<sup>[4]</sup> called “Split-Level Christianity.” On the top level, you’re accommodating the Western perspective, but underneath that you’re still following a deeper cultural perspective.

[4]

Fr. Jaime Bulatao was a Filipino Jesuit priest and psychologist who established Ateneo de Manila University’s Psychology department, and co-founded the Psychological Association of the Philippines. He was interested in parapsychology, and studied the Filipino psyche as they manifested in paranormal phenomena.

We take in what needs to be taken in, but we use it to express our own perspective. Take language, for example. Words in English are used so differently here—words are Philippinized, like comfort room, or commute. You know, these terms have become so specifically Filipino. Recently, I just found out that “rubber shoes” is a Filipino thing. It means sneakers, but we call it “rubber shoes.” I don’t even know where that came from.

So, we take in what we can. We’re very adaptive, and that I think comes from our general resilience. Even our cuisine—do you know where *sisig* comes from? I don’t know how true this is, but *sisig* is made from the face of the pig. They said that it started in Pampanga, near the American military bases. The Americans would eat the pig but throw out its face. Now, some really crafty Filipinos took the face and turned it into *sisig*. Also the banana ketchup is an example of our resilience. When there were no more supplies of tomatoes here, we

used bananas, which is ridiculous, but it tastes good.

So, that's our resilience. It's not that we are a culture that is damaged perpetually. It has just been misinterpreted.

A lot of people, even online, like to call our cultural values toxic. They're using the cultural values in the context of a *kanya-kanya* worldview, which is why it becomes toxic. It [FILIPINO VALUES] just doesn't thrive in that kind of environment. Because a to-each-their-own environment is an individualist environment. Cultural values that promote gratitude, that promote feeling with other people, and that promote social sensitivity are not the things that the *kanya-kanya* person would appreciate. To them relationships are transactional.

Which is why *utang-na-loob* has become so controversial to people, precisely because we've gotten used to the transactional way of interacting, when in fact, what don't you owe to the people that you love? What don't you owe to your parents who took care of you? What don't you owe to your friends who are there for you all the time? What do we owe people? We owe a lot to people, but if you see it from a debt and collection kind of thing, from an investment and interest kind of thing, then it's going to be toxic for sure. It's how it's interpreted.



Hu Bo, An  
*Elephant Sitting Still* (2018), Drama,  
234 min.





# BODIES, WAITING



Website,  
16-mm film  
photography,  
Winter 2023

*Bodies, Waiting* is a website that contains 16-mm color, and black and white film photos taken at Kennedy Plaza—Providence, RI's main transportation hub—and depicts people who wait.

The bus station functions as a place where people pass through, a temporary stop before arriving at a destination. By presenting this project in the medium of a website, this work illustrates the concept of a place of transience into form.

In these liminal spaces, where people are subjected to wait, the awareness of the body's autonomy and endurance is heightened. The body contorts, assumes a position in a standstill, and becomes an immobile object. But time is usually synchronized only for those with power, who can generate vectors of velocities

and motion. As emphasized by excerpts from Simon Armitage's satirical poem, *Thank You for Waiting*, this website depicts how rigid powers and structures can impose a stiffening on the body and spirit so as to be unfit to move forward, to be unable to attain societal horizontality. This website attempts to present waiting as more often than not assigned to the powerless as a means to reinforce social and political demarcations by those who don't have to wait.





# BODIES, *Waiting*



*At this moment in time,  
we'd like to invite  
First Class passengers only  
to board the aircraft.*

“  
*Thank you  
for waiting.*



**About**



# BODIES,

*At this moment in time,  
I'd like to invite  
passengers only  
to board the aircraft.*



*Thank you for waiting.*

About





# BODIES, *Waiting*

*Thank you for waiting.*



*We now invite Meteorite customers,  
and passengers enrolled in our  
Rare Earth, Metals points and  
rewards scheme and thank you  
for waiting...*

*ire, Ruby  
t this time,  
Onyx, Obsidian,  
members...*



**About**

Excerpts from Simon Armitage's poem,  
*"Thank You for Waiting"*

# BODIES, *Waiting*

*talking loudly to cell phone newasers about recently completed property acquisitions, share deals and aggressive takeovers, plus hedge fund managers with proven track records in the undermining of small to medium-sized ambitions.*



*We now invite Meteorite customers and passengers enrolled in Rare Earth, Metals points a rewards scheme and thank you for waiting...*

*We also welcome Sapphire, Ruby and Emerald members at this time, followed by Amethyst, Onyx, Obsidian, Jet, Topaz and Quartz members...*

**About**

Excerpts from Simon Armitage's poem "Thank You for Waiting"

*for waiting.*  
**BODIES**, *Waiting*



*Thank you for waiting.* ”

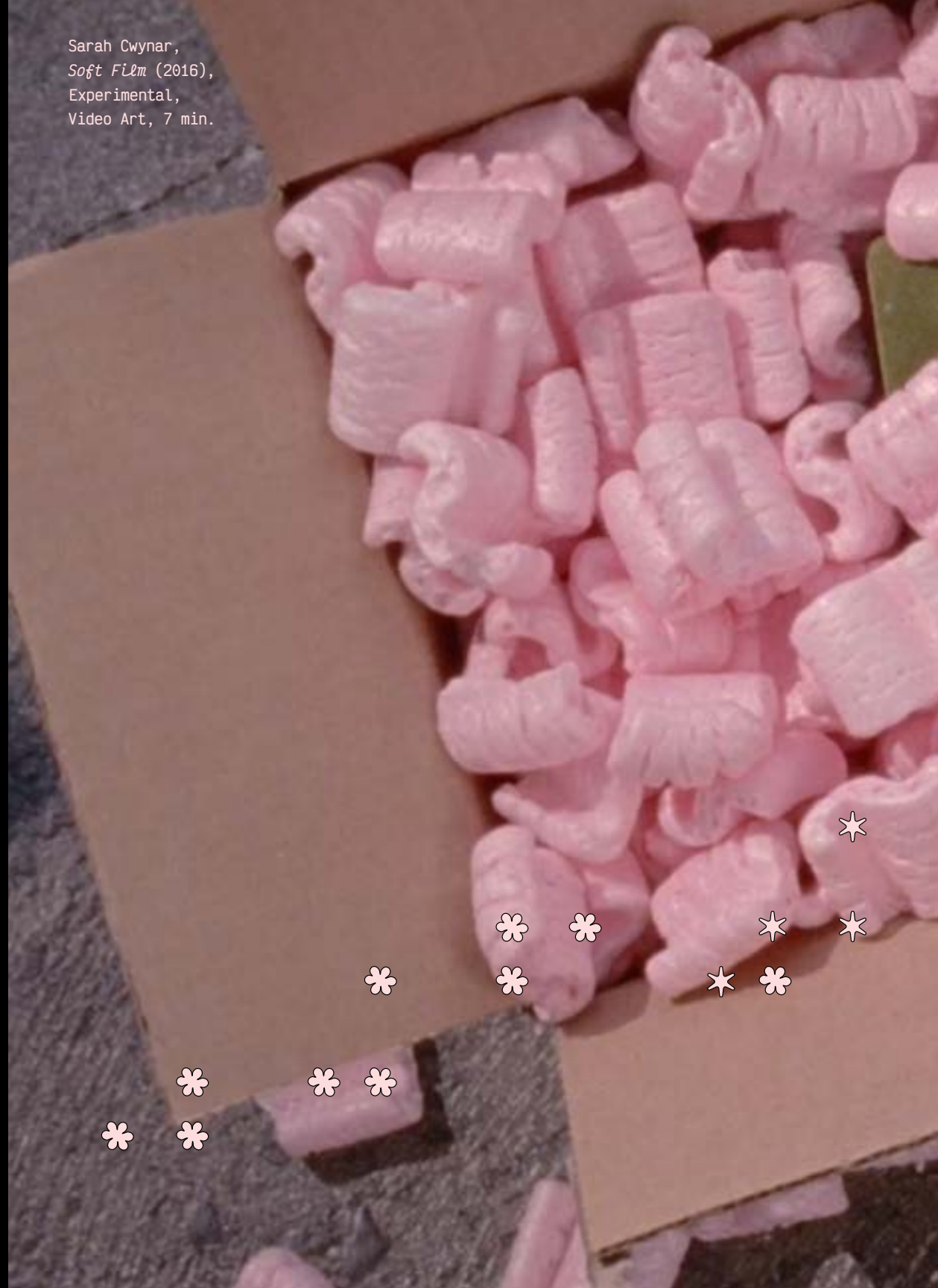


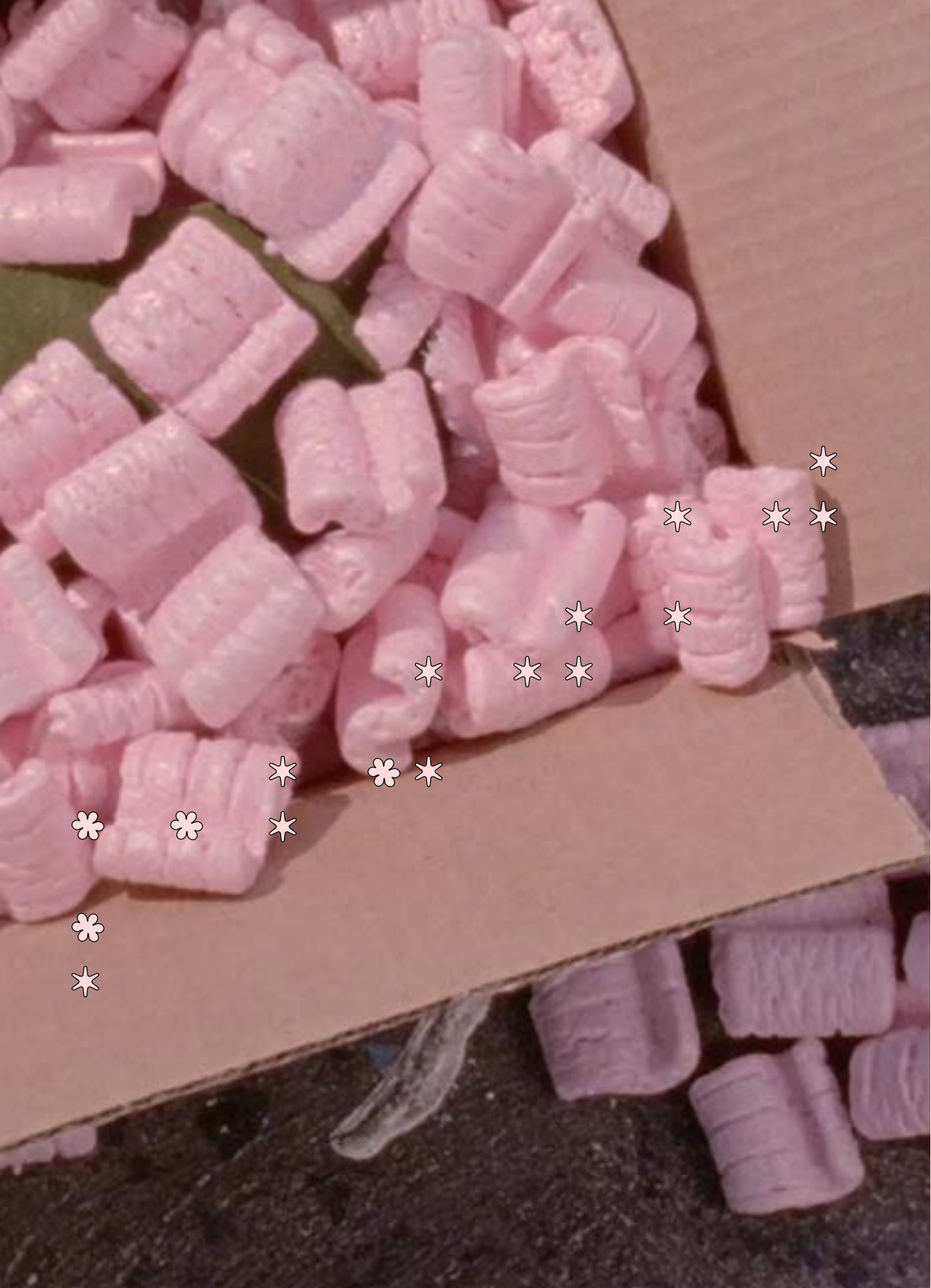
**About**

*We now extend our invitation to  
Exclusive, Superior, Privilege  
and Excelsior members...*



Sarah Cwynar,  
*Soft Film* (2016),  
Experimental,  
Video Art, 7 min.





<\*>

34

To recognize softness as many-sided also means grappling with its undersides—soft as to the body being beaten to a pulp; soft as to speech being rendered mute; soft as to the spirit being dimmed towards oblivion.

35

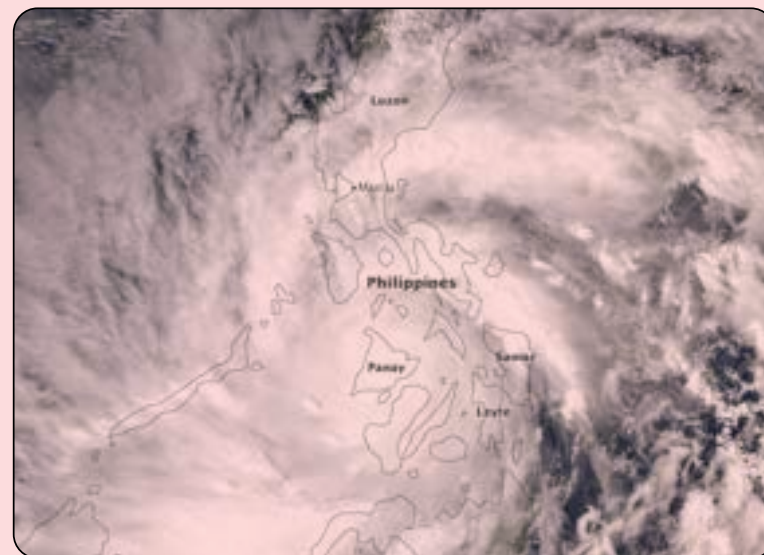
To be told to man up when one can't stop crying. To be hardheaded when emotions get in the way. To be counseled to carry on when one is in a vulnerable state. To be strong when one is grieving a loss. To be resilient after experiencing trauma.

36

The Philippines endure an average of 20 tropical cyclones, or typhoons every year, sometimes four in a mere month. This number is more than anywhere else in the world, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA). This vulnerability to natural disasters, compounded by poor healthcare, infrastructure, social services, and disaster prevention and response, leaves many individuals and communities in a vicious cycle of loss: of lives, of homes, and of livelihoods.

→

Satellite image of Typhoon Haiyan, or Super Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines. It is one of the most powerful tropical storm ever recorded in history. It hit the country in the early hours of November 8, 2013, and affected more than 16 million people, leaving 4 million homeless.



But as the resilience narrative goes, Filipinos are ready to smile no matter what, even when the roofs of their houses have been torn off their homes. To wade through waist-deep flood and debris is a mere inconvenience. “*Ganun talaga*,” as one would say, which means “It’s just the way it is.” In this glorified and romanticized narrative, even the most devastating of calamities won’t falter the common Filipino. Here, resiliency means being invincible from the wrath of the world.

→ Google search the words “Filipino” and “Resilience,” and one would find images of people smiling and even playing sports in floods.



But how much longer do the Filipino people have to lick their own wounds? How many more times should they rebuild their houses disaster after disaster? How many more times are they going to be displaced after losing their homes? How much more accountability can be passed on to the victims, when institutions should be shouldering the burden? The resiliency narrative cruelly demands acceptance of trauma from victims. To ask them to be tough, because the system meant to support is a failure. To ask them to fend for themselves, because no help will come. To ask them to incessantly smile, because it’s the only option.

How does the collective reclaim resilience from its current glorified and romanticized narrative? What does it really mean to be a “resilient Filipino”?

<\*>

<\*>

37

... He

mumbles,  
eat his words,  
and  
heaves up tangles  
of doubts

... He

wishes  
his words  
could be as  
straight  
as  
shrapnels,  
burying  
their way through  
walls  
and  
people’s  
skin

... How

must  
it be easier  
to take up space  
and be  
violent  
and loud

... But

he  
carries on tongue-tied,  
tending to the knots  
in his belly

... With

stillness,  
he marks a  
meager territory

... He

also  
takes  
up  
space





↑  
Yuyan Wang, *One Thousand and One Attempts to Be an Ocean* (2020),  
Experimental, Video  
Art, 11 min.

↑  
Barry Jenkins,  
*Moonlight* (2016),  
Drama, 111 min.

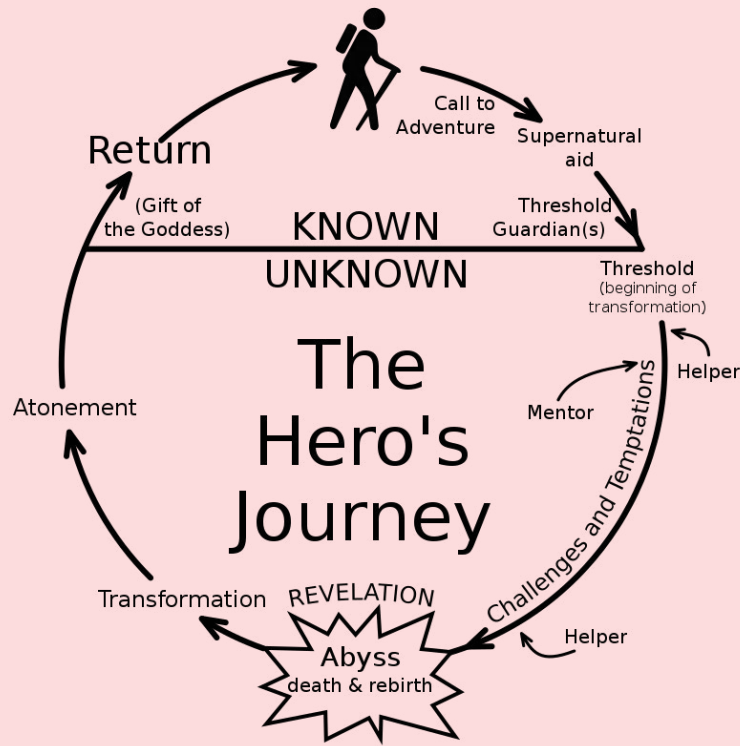
↗  
Simone Forti,  
*Zuma News, LA* (2014),  
Dance, Performance,  
12 min.

38

The archetypal hero stands strong. He sometimes carries a spear that he throws onto a linear projectile, much like the narrative trajectory of the stories we hear all the time. With his strength, courage and brute force, the hero conquers all: ordeals, enemies, the people and their land, the whole of earth, the vastness of space. The hero kills, annihilates, and wins. He always wins, because he is strong.

<\*> <\*>

→  
An illustration of the Hero's Journey, or the monomyth.



→  
Matthaeus Greuter, *Allegory of the Twelve Labors of Hercules Statues in a Circular Garden* (mid 16th-mid 17th century), Engraving.



thrusting, stabbing, bashing and killing with phallus tools, the basket, the bag, the shell, the womb, the home, the bag of stars—each one a container—are humanity's greatest invention. For Le Guin, the container, the carrier bag, is a tool that holds the stories of creation, and the act of storytelling itself. She presents technology as something that carries life instead of a weapon of destruction, or a vessel of violence. The life story, instead of the killer story.

Fields of View

Soft Procedures

39

“It wasn't the meat that made the difference. It was the story,” writes American author Ursula K. Le Guin in her essay *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, which tells the story of how humanity and our narratives had been shaped by gathering and the vessels in which they are contained rather than the archetypal heroic acts of violence, depicted by early hunters thrusting spears into mammoths to bring home their meat for sustenance. As opposed to stories featuring heroes

40

One sometimes asks the writer of a story, “Where's the conflict?” The narrative structure must have it, they say. Conflict makes it interesting. Fighting is entertaining. It drives the question, “What happens next?” Life, however, is an assemblage of rich quotidian details. Conflict merely happens around its vicinity.

41

To graph and structure the story has been an incessant compulsion by many men. To capture, arrange into a diagram, and affix something that is inherently malleable and in flux. To smooth into a line, or render coherent and defined, like some sort of Gestalt Principle.

42

“And when you think about how people tell stories, stories are carried in the body, and it’s edited each time the person tells it. And so what you have, by the time someone tells a story, is a masterclass of form, technique, concision, imagery...”

—Ocean Vuong, *On Being with Krista Tippet* (2020)

43

### The Tale of How Story Became Water

The stories of creation come from the sky, known as God’s mouth. It is too enormous that one could look into his stomach, filled with trillions of stars; each one an echo of the same story told over and over. But not all tell stories of the beginning, some are whispers of the end, which can dim and consume the brightest of light.

When God tells a story, he showers the Earth with spit. Fortunate are the mountains, for they hear His stories first. Gravity, God’s messenger, does favor those who rise above the many; those who are eager to listen to Him.

Some of His spit, each drop a chapter, would seep and saturate the dirt. The rest, gravity pushes downhill. As His spit cascades down the mountains, it gathers and collects the purring sounds and the sloughed-off skin of the Earth. Closer and closer to the ground, where mortals walk, God’s stories and Earth’s decay collect into a concoction that is life and death—neither beginning nor ending, but water. This then flows to the rest of the land, starting as streams, then rivers, then ocean, and then combining to become the circulatory system of the Earth from which people drink and get sustenance. Stories sustain life, but also extinguish light. And as God tells a new story each time, the water is refreshed. Revision is its oxygen. Story is water.

&lt;\*

&lt;\*

44

*Soft(ware) Cinema* (2003) was a project by artist and media theorist Lev Manovich and other collaborators in the artistic and academic fields. This media installation, exhibited during *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary after Film* (16 Nov, 2002 – 30 March, 2003) at Center for Art and Media, ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany explores the intersection between computers and cinema. It presented viewers with a series of narrative films made entirely from custom software, which decides what is shown and heard on the screens, but filtered through each author’s own parametric interventions. The materials are pulled from a media database, containing four hours of video, three hours of audio, and five hours of music.

The concept of “soft cinema” presents the narrative in a malleable, almost liquid state. It puts forward an alternative form of storytelling: the computer-generated, as opposed to linear methods or processes of cinema, including writing, production, and editing. With the possibilities allowed by Manovich’s custom software and its expansive database, the film narrative opens itself up to randomness and chance, sometimes even infinitely changing with each viewing. In “soft cinema”, the narrative plot is a handicap.

→

Lev Manovich,  
*Texas* (16 Nov, 2002-  
30 March 2003),  
Center for Art and  
Media, ZKM,  
Karlsruhe, Germany.



# 45

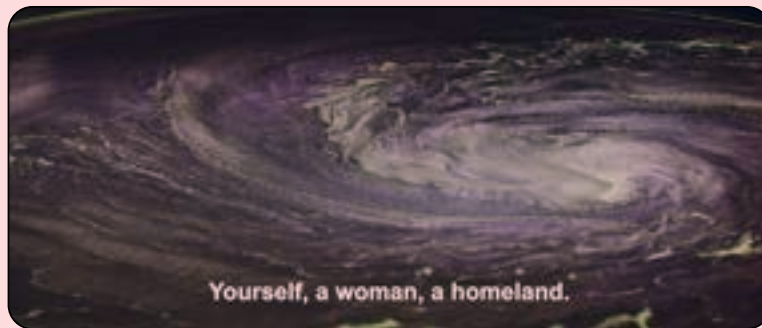
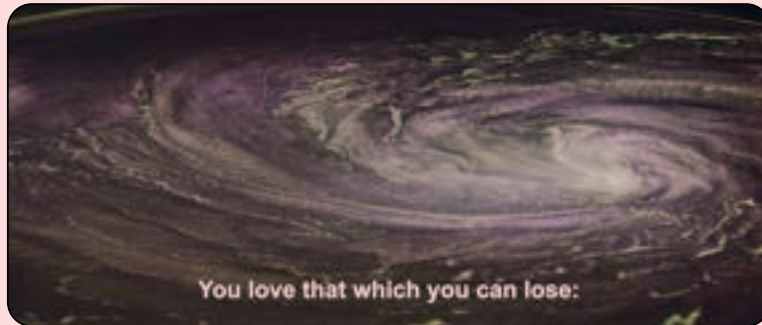
In *Sculpting in Time* (1985), Tarkovsky suggests that the film is bigger than itself, "... stretching out beyond the frame and to infinity." Once it—a material of an exposed and edited film celluloid, a story, a plot—comes in contact with an audience or a viewer, "it separates from its author, starts to live its own life, undergoes changes of form and meaning" (p. 181).

<\*

Peter Greenaway,  
*Making a Splash*  
(1984), Short,  
23 min.

→

Andrei Tarkovsky,  
*Solaris* (1972),  
Drama, Sci-Fi,  
167 min.





Fields of Focus

Website,  
Video,  
Fall 2023

*In Database as Symbolic Form* (1999), artist and author Lev Manovich argues that the database, a structured collection of information stored in a computer, and the narrative are oppositional forces. The former, in its purest form is unordered, while the latter is inherently a cause-and-effect trajectory.

Malovich proposes that the dominance of new media, beginning with the CD-ROM and the internet, introduces a new cultural form that becomes a departure from the narrative-dominated world, privileged by cinema. These new-media objects, storing collections rather than narratives, provide a new way of structuring our experiences of the world. This is especially true for websites. Again, *In Database as Symbolic Form*

(1999), Malovich articulates that:

*“The sites always grow. New links are being added to what is already there... If new elements are being added over time, the result is a collection, not a story. Indeed, how can one keep a coherent narrative or any other development trajectory through the material if it keeps changing?”* (p. 4).

*Stories* explores the architecture and interface of the website in order to execute multiple narratives through a catalog of 24 arbitrarily filmed footage: a ball bouncing down a flight of stairs; a half-eaten pizza; tumbling clothes in a washing machine; a garden washed in the warm afternoon sun. By allowing users agency to order and re-order the sequence of shots through basic web sorting functions, such as by title, length, file size, or random, this work lives at the intersection between database and narrative. Most importantly, it attempts to demonstrate that stories are liquid; that multiple “third dimensions” can also be gleaned when notions of narrative structure are abandoned; and that stories can be reconstructed, reconfigured, and reclaimed by the people who experience them.



```
index.html # style.css JS myscript.js X
Users > alecfiguracion > Documents > 24scenes > common > JS myscript.js > [originalVideoData
13
14
15
16
17 var videoPlayer = document.getElementById('videoPlayer');
18 var videoContainer = document.getElementById('videoContainer');
19
20 var originalVideoData = [
21   { title: "backyard_garden", source: "assets/backyard_garden.mp4", durations: 16.02, size: 66.15,
22     { title: "blinking_lights", source: "assets/blinking_lights.mp4", durations: 12.0, size: 4.5,
23     { title: "bouncing_ball", source: "assets/bouncing_ball.mp4", duration: 12.0, size: 4.5,
24     { title: "cctv_laundromat", source: "assets/cctv_laundromat.mp4", duration: 10.0, size: 4.5,
25     { title: "cutting_garlic", source: "assets/cutting_garlic.mp4", duration: 2.0, size: 0.75,
26     { title: "dinner_spread", source: "assets/dinner_spread.mp4", duration: 10.0, size: 4.5,
27     { title: "disturbed_water", source: "assets/disturbed_water.mp4", durations: 10.0, size: 4.5,
28     { title: "door_closing", source: "assets/door_closing.mp4", duration: 4.60, size: 1.65,
29     { title: "here_sign", source: "assets/here_sign.mp4", duration: 5.48, size: 2.07,
30     { title: "office_woman", source: "assets/office_woman.mp4", duration: 8.44, size: 3.21,
31     { title: "parking_lot", source: "assets/parking_lot.mp4", duration: 8.66, size: 3.26,
32     { title: "pen_clicking", source: "assets/pen_clicking.mp4", duration: 5.65, size: 2.12,
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40     { title: "stop_sign", source: "assets/stop_sign.mp4", duration: 7.65, size: 2.86,
41     { title: "under_highway", source: "assets/under_highway.mp4", duration: 8.4, size: 3.15,
42     { title: "washing_machine", source: "assets/washing_machine.mp4", durations: 10.0, size: 3.75,
43     { title: "wearing_sweater", source: "assets/wearing_sweater.mp4", durations: 10.0, size: 3.75,
44     { title: "word_is", source: "assets/word_is.mp4", duration: 16.02, size: 66.15,
45 ];
46 var videoData = [...originalVideoData];
47 var currentVideoIndex = 0;
48
49 let preloaded = false;
50 var nextVideo;
51 function preloadNextVideo() {
52   var nextVideoIndex = currentVideoIndex + 1;
53   if (nextVideoIndex < videoData.length) {
54     nextVideo = document.createElement('video');
55     nextVideo.className += 'add(' + 'alignVideo')';
```

PLAY

MUTE

SORT BY

CLICK PLAY BUTTON TO BEGIN.  
WHAT STORIES ARE YOU ABLE TO GLEAN?

PLAY MUTE SORT BY

- TITLE [A-Z]
- TITLE [Z-A]
- DURATION [ASCENDING]
- DURATION [DESCENDING]
- SIZE [ASCENDING]
- SIZE [DESCENDING]
- DATE FILMED [ASCENDING]
- DATE FILMED [DESCENDING]
- SHUFFLE

CLICK PLAY BUTTON TO BEGIN.  
WHAT STORIES ARE YOU ABLE TO GLEAN?

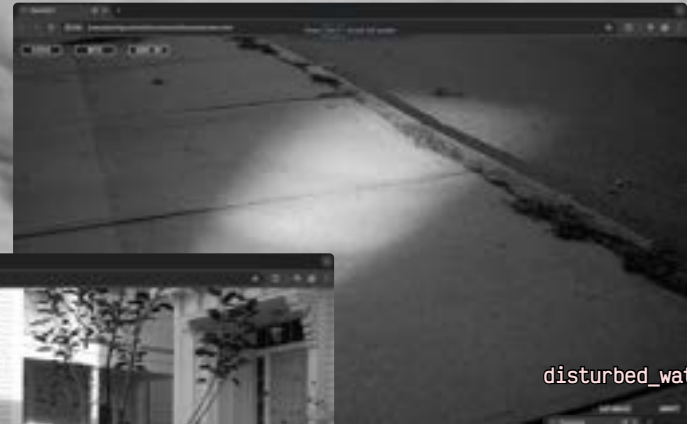


cctv\_l\_aundromat.mp4



door\_closing.mp4

blinking\_lights.mp4



backyard\_garden.mp4



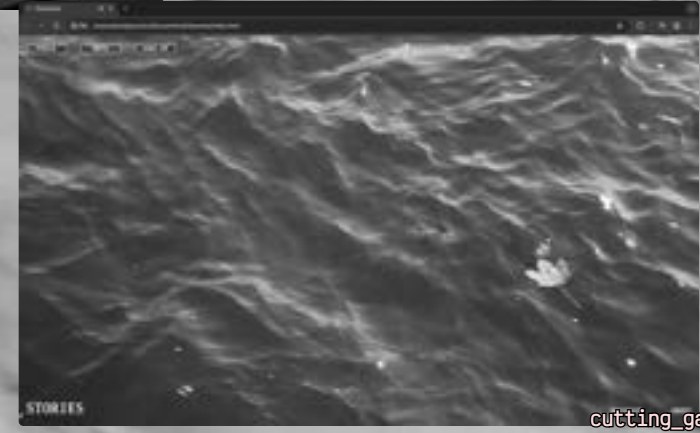
bouncing\_ball.mp4



dinner\_spread.mp4



disturbed\_water.mp4



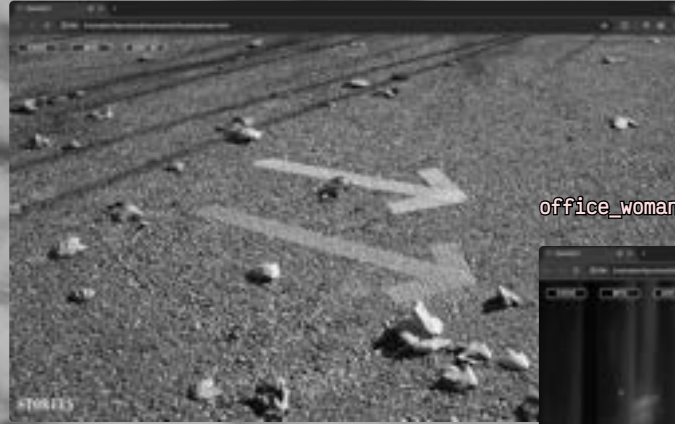
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pen\_clicking.mp4



right\_arrows.mp4



printing\_paper.mp4



office\_woman.mp4



parking\_lot.mp4



running\_water.mp4



here\_sign.mp4



pizza\_slice.mp4



stop\_light.mp4



soccer\_goal.mp4



seeknok\_river.mp4



stop\_sign.mp4



washing\_machine.mp4



under\_highway.mp4



seeknok\_river.mp4



word\_is.mp4



CLOSE



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blinking\_lights  
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2023-11-14T16:43:00



bouncing\_ball  
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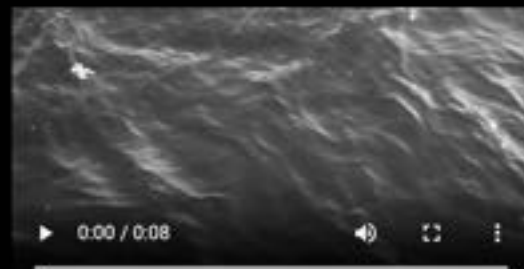
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cutting\_garlic  
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2023-11-24T11:39:00



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2023-11-24T28:17:00



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2023-11-23T13:50:00



door\_closing  
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17.1 MB  
2023-11-24T11:49:00



here\_sign  
00:05.48  
20.4 MB



office\_woman  
00:08.44  
31.6 MB



parking\_lot  
00:08.66  
32.5 MB



pen\_clicking  
00:05.65  
21.1 MB

Lino Brocka,  
*Maynila sa Kuko  
ng Liwanag* (1975),  
Drama, 126 min.

Document x +

File /Users/falecfiguracion/Documents/24scenes/index.html

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 <p>0:00 / 0:18</p>	 <p>0:00 / 0:04</p>
<p>seeknok_river 00:18.36 69.1 MB 2023-11-14T12:11:02</p>	<p>soccer_goal 00:04.48 16.9 MB 2023-11-23T14:03:00</p>
 <p>0:00 / 0:08</p>	 <p>0:00 / 0:10</p>
<p>under_highway 00:08.49 31.8 MB 2023-11-23T14:11:00</p>	<p>washing_machine 00:10.41 39.1 MB 2023-11-19T20:06:00</p>





<\*>

46

In optics, “chromatic aberration” is an optical problem where the lens is unable to focus wavelengths of colors at the same point, or they are dispersed and are in different positions on the focal plane. It manifests as color fringes, or halos in the image, usually in situations of high contrast where dark and light parts meet. It is caused by lens dispersion, a phenomenon where colors traveling at different speeds separate as they pass through the lens. Chromatic aberration can manifest the colors red, green, blue, yellow, purple, and magenta around the periphery of an object or instance in the image, and can be corrected. Higher quality lenses will minimize chromatic aberration, but like “circles of confusion”, it is also inherently present in any image taken with any lens.

→

An example of spherical aberration, which is more prominent in lower quality lenses.



Fields of View

47

There is no perfect lens. There is never a truly focused image. But even in the blurriest and the most degraded of images, colors are still able to manifest. A spectrum of color is in the nature of the unfocused image, or what is deemed as the failed image. In chromatic aberration, to sharpen and correct means to repress and dull colors. In the pursuit to achieve the perfect image, the vibrance emanating from the periphery has to be vanquished.

48

“There is no greater Filipino sorrow than being alone, and the singular focus—the whiteness—of minimalism can hardly be sold to a people whose idea of visual pleasure is an explosion of the colors and textures that constitute the experience of community. To us, variety is necessary to attract the eye and soul.”

—Clara Balaguer, *Tropico Vernacular* (2016)

49

The translation of variety, or assortment in Tagalog is *sari-sari*. In the Philippines, the *sari-sari* store is a type of convenience store found ubiquitous in neighborhoods and along the streets of the country. These stores are usually attached to the front of a Filipino home, and provide the community quick access to consumer goods, mostly sold in *tingi*<sup>[49-a]</sup>, or per piece, such as a piece of cigarette or candy, a sachet of shampoo or instant coffee, or a small plastic bag of cooking oil.

[49-a]

The “*tingi* culture” in the Philippines pertains to the purchasing of goods in small amounts—sachets, a piece of cigarette, one egg—because it is what the common Filipino could afford. This consumer practice or behavior is particularly done in *sari-sari* stores, and has been co-opted by corporations, thereby exacerbating the single-use plastic problem in the country. In his essay *A Heritage of Smallness* (1966), National Artist of the Philippines for Literature Nick Joaquin critiques this culture and mentions that the country’s tradition is that of timidity, and of “native aversion to the large venture, the big risk...” He further suggests that “We seem to be making less and less effort, thinking ever smaller, doing even smaller,” and that “Foreigners had to come and unite our lands for us.” But what is wrong with timidity, with being small? Why is it the fault of the people? Why always look through the lens of the strongmen, and the colonizers? In their eyes, of course the Filipino people are small. Power structures and systems do belittle those that they control.

&lt;\*&gt;

&lt;\*&gt;

The store typically has a hand-painted storefront sign, usually in red, and adorned with wheatpasted posters of varying contents. The products sold, always in colorful packaging, are usually displayed in a wire-mesh screen, or a metal-barred window. In most cases, the store structure is built from scrapped materials, like plywood, bamboo, or even corrugated metal.

Aside from being an important economic space within a Filipino community, the *sari-sari* store is also a place of social value and gathering. Some have built-in benches where people come for the latest gossip, where men hang around to have afternoon beer, and where children take a break from playing under the sun to indulge in sugary drinks and snacks<sup>[see p. 179]</sup>. Here, stories of variety and assortment also become the goods and currency of exchange.

→

Raya Martin, *Death of Nintendo* (2020), Comedy, 98 min • A still from the film showing the typical *sari-sari* store. The sign *Tindahan ni Aling Nena* [Aling Nene’s Store] is also a reference to a song by popular Filipino rockband Eraserheads, about a man wooing the daughter of the store owner. It is said to be about love that is complicated by economic situations.



Perhaps the nation’s visual language and culture is best embodied by the *sari-sari* store—a microcasm of the Filipino experience with all its abundance and variety. Contained within the humble space, an extension of the home, is not just the explosion of colors and textures, but also the stories told—bits and pieces, or *tingi-tingi*, of the Filipino quotidian.

# 50

Like a nation, design has a history of a certain kind of brutality—colonialism’s seizure and entrenched grip on its values, standards, and history. Clara Balaguer, a cultural worker who has largely investigated the Filipino graphic design language, mentions in her interview in Walker Art’s *The Gradient* (2018): “Challenge yourself to dismantle what the man has told you is ugly, uncouth, primitive, savage.”

Filipino graphic design is still in the process of being defined and untangled. Some researchers, such as Clara Balaguer, have articulated and framed what this picture might look like, contained in the term the “vernacular”<sup>[50-a]</sup>. In her essay *Tropico Vernacular* for Triple Canopy in 2016, she mentions that “Writing about graphic design and its history in the Philippines is a quandary because there is barely any reference material, local or otherwise, dedicated to the subject.”



[50-a]

In an article called *A Rejection of the Word “Vernacular”* on Futuress, Javier Syquia, a RISD BFA Graphic Design graduate, argues that the use of the term “vernacular” perpetuates the further othering of graphic design languages outside of the Euro-Western canon. He suggests that this places, fits, and perhaps traps the Filipino visual identity and culture into a box defined by colonization. For Syquia, the word itself is the language used by colonizers to describe other cultures and identity.



But perhaps like the nauseating sights and sounds of the country’s landscape, to arrive, make sharp, and tidy up an exact, clear picture of Filipino graphic design amidst clutter becomes a futile attempt. Perhaps the clutter, and the layered multitudes found amongst it, suffices as a portrait that does not need to be endlessly rummaged through in order to define.

But also perhaps this persistent need to make crisp, whole, and coherent a visual language that is otherwise multi-layered and vibrant also becomes an act of correcting and dulling the inherent multitudes within a culture and society. Perhaps one way to decolonize design is to recalibrate the view from the lens beyond the standardized and hegemonized image framed by the Euro-Western canon, which favors the clear and concise.

Point the camera at any congested street in Manila, and one would find that there is no one subject. The multitudes contained within the frame is the subject.

# 51

*“The common Filipino is a maximalist, filling up every available space with forms and things. It springs from an expressive exuberance deeply rooted in emotional sensitivity and strong urge to connect.”*

—Felipe M. De Leon, *In Focus: Life as Art—The Creative, Healing Power in Filipino Culture* (1985)

→ In her Pratt BFA Communication Design thesis project, *(Re)discovering Filipino Graphic Design* (2020), Anna Nieves Rosario Marcelo created a crowd-sourced, ongoing, collaborative database on what Filipino graphic design could be • [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/COLLABFGD]



At the beginning of Spring semester  
 in his second year  
 in graduate school,  
 he receives an index card  
 asking him  
 what his own  
 “vernacular” is.

He has no answer,  
 perhaps and will  
 continue to search  
 without  
 arriving at one.

Perhaps, for now,  
 the processes  
 of searching  
 will suffice  
 as a response,  
 in such a way that  
 his country  
 is continuously  
 searching  
 for its own  
 identity,  
 visual or  
 otherwise,  
 amongst  
 its beautiful  
 clutter  
 and layered  
 multitudes.



Martika Ramirez  
 Escobar, *Leonor Will  
 Never Die* (2022),  
 Comedy, Drama  
 99 min.



# <img alt="decorative icon" data-bbox="511 21 535 45"/> PINOY LANE



Book  
[8.5x11" Spiral-bound,  
11x30.25" Pamphlet,  
8x16" cardboard box,  
6x9" Perfect-bound,  
in 10x13" clear  
cellophane plastic  
sheet bag],  
Spring 2023

Sandwiched between a deli and a cigar shop, amongst other small-town businesses, and closed by car dealerships and New England colonial houses, Pinoy Lane Food Mart, or Pinoy Lane TO-GO is a small Filipino-owned take-out restaurant and grocery store located along Quaker Lane in Warwick, RI. It is the only Filipino store in the state.

*Pinoy Lane* is a documentation and celebration of a place, through the lens of its people and artifacts displaced. A set of publications tucked in clear cellophane sheet bags, this work is a glimpse and a brief exploration of what the Filipino experience might look like, within the diaspora or otherwise.

This publication, most importantly, is bound with acts of care towards the people it represents, the *kapwa*<sup>[a]</sup>. What was formed between the author and the individuals portrayed here is an intimate dialogue between people who share the commonality of being outsiders in a foreign land. This work is a materialization of vulnerability, and takes self-publishing as a form and symbol of softness—the materiality of the pliable book—to bring forward a community in the margins into the public.

[a]

Psychologist and researcher Carl Cervantes, also known as Sikodiwa, defines the Filipino concept of *kapwa* as the recognition of a shared humanity. “It is the relationship we have with the people and places that contribute to our personal identity. The deepest level of *kapwa* is *pakikiisa*, which is literally, “becoming one”.





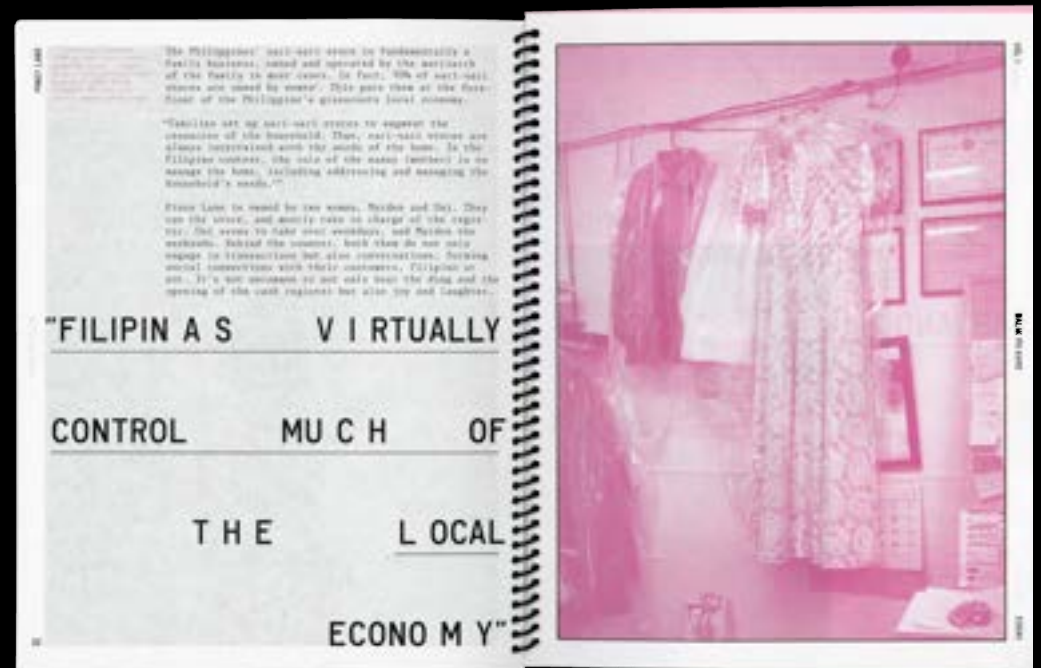
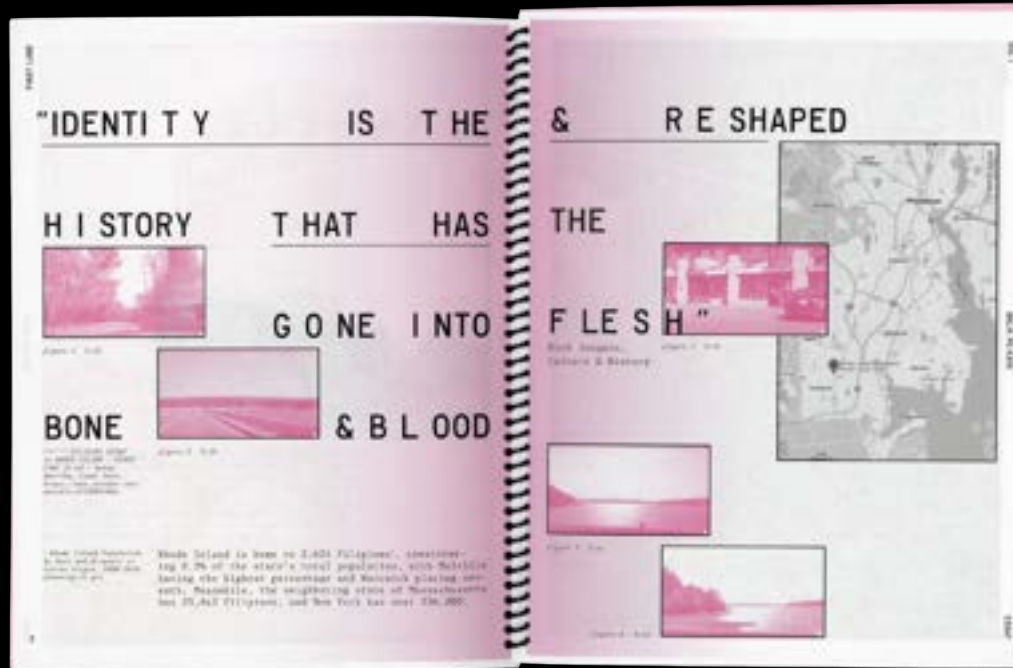
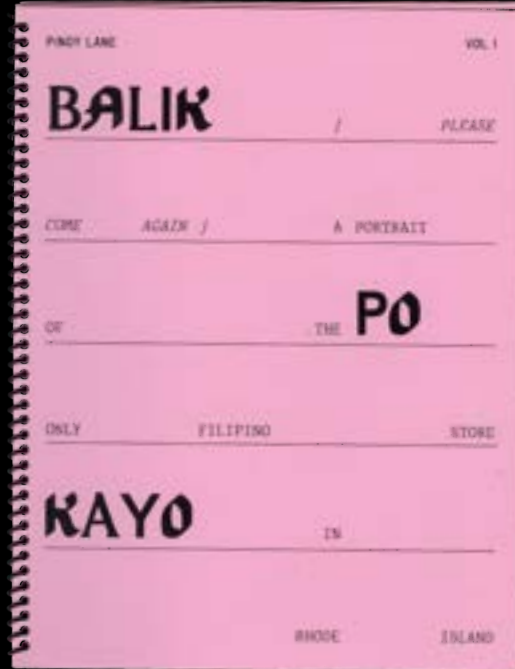
"LOOK WHERE WE

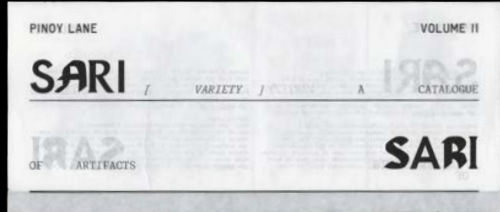
ARE NOW..."



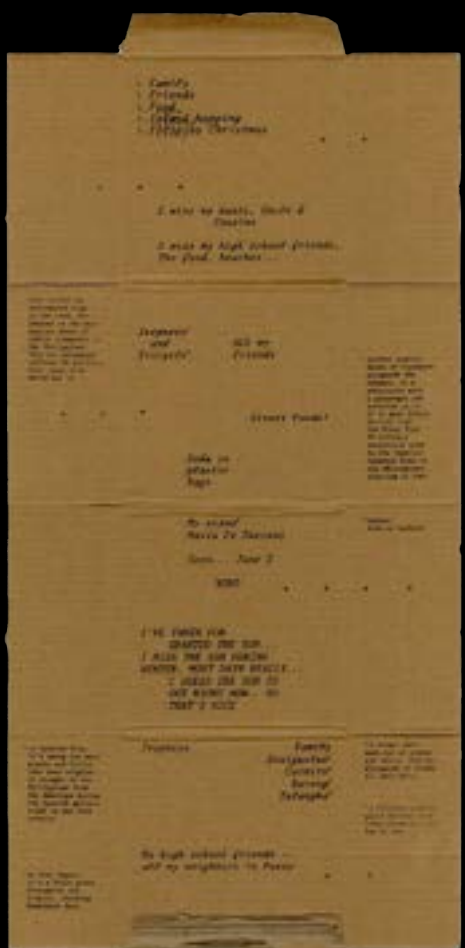
Pinoy Lane Food Mart, or sometimes, Pinoy Lane To-Go, is a small Filipino-owned take-out restaurant and grocery store located along Quaker Lane in Warwick. Sandwiched between a deli and a cigar shop, nestled among other small town businesses, smacked close by big car dealerships and New England colonial houses, its location cannot be more American. Although some Filipino items are also sold at Good Fortune Supermarket in Providence and possibly other Asian groceries, Pinoy Lane is the only Filipino store in the entirety of Rhode Island. "You have to go the way to Boston if you want Filipino food," said one of the store's owners, from behind the counter while she fiddled with the cash register.

Some spreads from volume one of the publication, which contains an essay about the Filipino *sari-sari* store and the diaspora, and the interview of the owner of Pinoy Lane.





← ↑ →  
 A catalogue of some artifacts found in Pinoy Lane. The text on the backside attempts to unpack the function and context of each object within the Filipino culture and identity.



Over a period of a week, I left some notecards in the store that ask, "What do you miss about the Philippines?" The responses are then screenprinted on small cardboard box mailers as a rendering of the *Balikbayan Box*, or care package, sent out by overseas Filipino workers living abroad to their loved ones they left at home.



*half-halo*

*- reminds me of visiting  
my father's hometown, Tiel, as small town*

*by the foot of the Mayon Volcano*

*- local restaurant makes the best  
half-halo, a shared ice dessert*

*with milk, custard, tapioca balls,  
beans, ice cream*

*- eating half-halo  
brings back memories of*

*eating with cousins  
after swimming*

*at the beach  
as a way to cool ourselves*

**COOKING**  
dairy, egg,  
ask a server  
for help.







# TROPICO OBSCURO



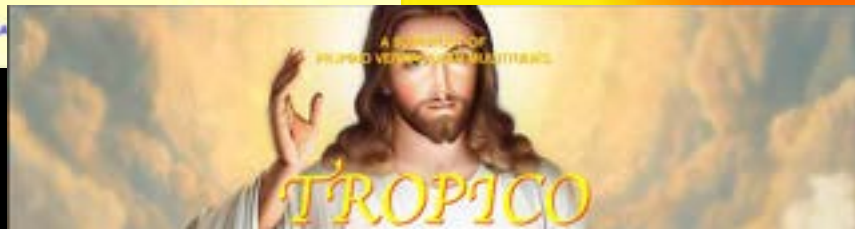
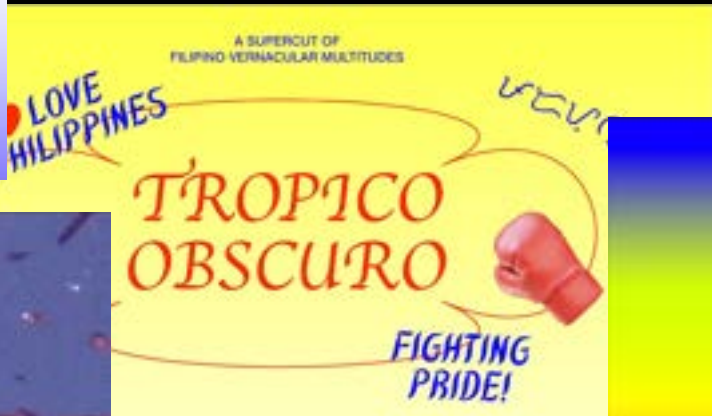
Video,  
Motion,  
Winter 2024

*Tropico Obscuro* translates and visualizes Clara Balaguer's essay, *Tropico Vernacular* (2016) into a motion title sequence and supercut of typographic and formal clutter and abundance—a discernible quality of the Filipino graphic design vernacular and visual culture of a nation. A hyper-condensed translation of a brief investigation of an unstudied history, this work becomes a celebration of visual maximalism and an abandon of defining a culture of multitudes.

A SUPERCUT OF  
FILIPINO VERNACULAR MULTITUDES

*TROPICO  
OBSCURO*

BASED ON CLARA BALAGUER'S ESSAY, "TROPICO VERNACULAR"



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You're a great singer!

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STREAMERS → STICKERS

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# **REALISM**

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**POWVER**

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STREAMERS → STICKERS

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**VERTY**

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STREAMERS → STICKERS

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**CHANGE IS COMING!**

**MAKE IT BIG**

**VOTE!**

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OF THE  
CARPAULINS

CARPULINE  
EXTRAVAGANZA

LEGAL  
PREMATURE  
CAMPAIGNING

LITERALLY  
EVERWHEYRE



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**DEFAULT**

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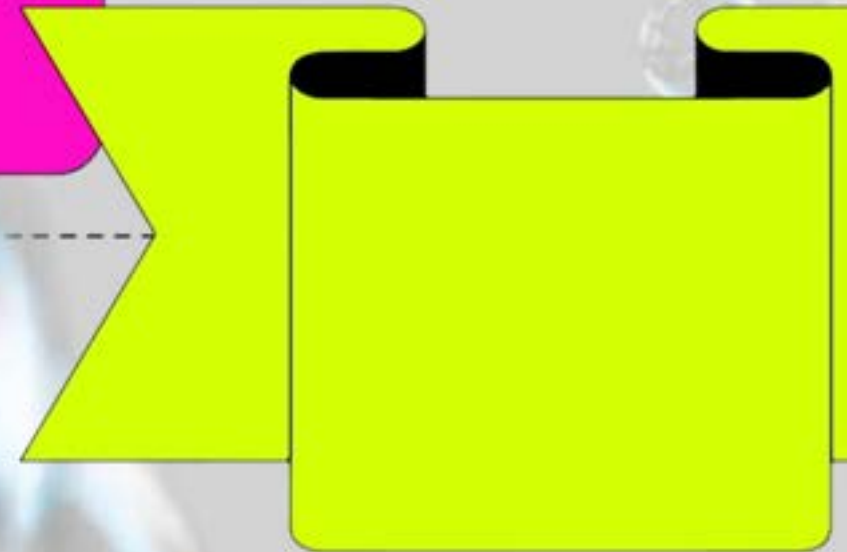
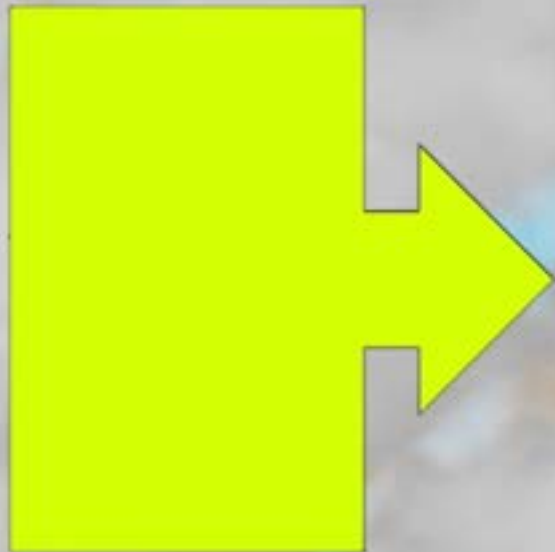
Microsoft Of

Microsoft Office Creative Cloud

*DEFAULT*



*AS PRACTICE*





# INTERLUDE

< Are you having fun? >

A photograph of a busy street scene, likely in a developing country, with people walking and buildings in the background. A large black text box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text 'SLOW STREET TYPOGRAPHY' and the quote 'TO GOD BE THE GLORY'.

**SLOW STREET**

**TYPOGRAPHY**

**"TO GOD BE THE GLORY"**

**SLOW STREET**

**TYPOGRAPHY**

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**"BACK THEN WHEN  
YOU WERE LETTERING  
IN ESCOLTA STREET,  
YOU WERE FAMOUS.  
YOU COULDN'T WORK  
IN FLIP FLOPS.**

**YOU HAD TO DRESS RIGHT."**

**ISIAS L. CANAY, SIGN PAINTER**



# A (VERY) BRIEF

DL.1 NO.2 FEB 19 - MARCH 20 1976

48 PAGES 3.50 P

MARCOS REGIME'S USE OF DESIGN TO  
FABRICATE AN OPPRESSIVE NATION ISSUE.



A large group of people, likely a crowd at a sports event, is shown in a stadium. The word "HISTORY" is overlaid in large, bold, white, serif capital letters across the center of the image. The background is slightly blurred, showing the crowd and some stadium lights.

**HISTORY**

# OF DESIGN

THE SILKSCREEN PROCESS  
THE SILKSCREEN PROCESS  
THE SILKSCREEN PROCESS

## PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

I shall never exchange my fetters for slavish servility.  
'Tis better to be chained to the rock than be bound to  
the service of Zeus.

-Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound

Mars shall glow tonight,  
Artemis is out of sight.  
Rust in the twilight sky  
Colors a bloodshot eye,  
Or shall I say that dust  
Sunders the sleep of the just?

Hold fast to the gift of fire!  
I am rage! I am wrath! I am ire!  
The vulture sits on my rock,

# AS RESISTANCE

As the dictatorial regime employed design to fabricate its oppressive nation, the graphic subversions of magazines like Ermita helped foment the spirit of civil disobedience that ultimately led to the Marcos-toppling EDSA Revolution of 1986, which saw citizens of Manila storm the city's main thoroughfare, Epifanio de los Santos

# AS RESISTANCE



THE

OF THE

# ERMITA

As the [Ferdinand Marcos] dictatorial regime employed design to fabricate its oppressive nation, the graphic subversions of magazines like *Ermita* helped foment the spirit of civil disobedience that ultimately led to the Marcos-toppling EDSA Revolution of 1986.

#### PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

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—Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*

Mars shall glow tonight,  
Artemis is out of sight.  
Rust in the twilight sky  
Colors a bloodshot eye,  
Or shall I say that dust  
Sunders the sleep of the just?

# INSTANT



Glenn Barit,  
*Cleaners* (2019),  
Comedy, 79 min.







<\*

53

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines objective as “expressing or dealing with facts or conditions as perceived without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices, or interpretations.” Yet, people see the world through multiple lenses—framing and reframing, zooming in and out, and going in focus and out in varying degrees and occurrences. Evidently, the lens has been a metaphor for the multiplicity of perspectives: the critical lens, political lens, cultural lens, cinematic lens, graphic design lens, personal lens, and so forth. What is seen through the lens then is brought visible by the relative, not objective.

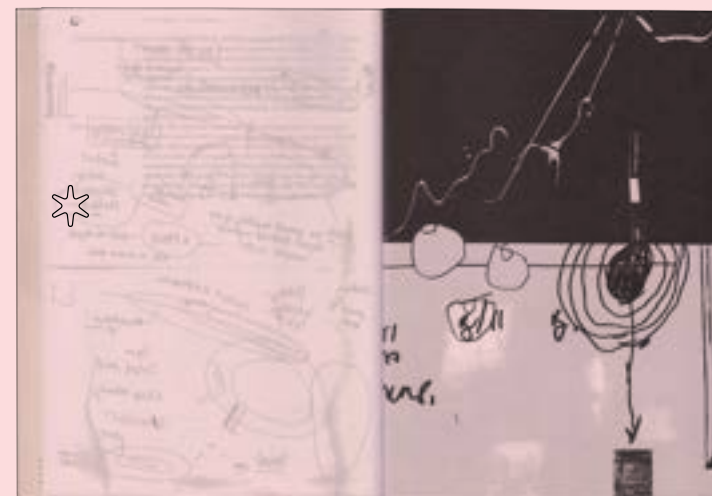
54

→  
Kameelah Janan Rasheed, *in the coherence we weep* (2023), Book.

*“in the coherence, we weep”*

— Kameelah Janan Rasheed, *in the coherence, we weep* (2023)

\*



55

Visual culture and production is burdened with history that has wreaked havoc and left multiple viewpoints and perspectives in ruins by entrenching its Western grip on the very definition of the matter—all in service for a

universal, standardized lens, the view through it deemed as the “good” image. Borrowing from Clara Balaguer again—how do you “... dismantle what the man has told you is ugly, uncouth, primitive, savage?” How do you push back on the canon when, along its wake, it has left multiplicities, or many fields of view fogged to the point of erasure?

56

In *Softness as a Boundless Form of Resistance* (2020), the 6th edition of the Gender Fail publishing platform, writer and publisher Be Oakly describes the physical form of the published text as “... radically soft: the published materials or objects can be damaged easily by heavy use, water or excessive force. Their physical instability ironically problematizes assumptions about the firmness and phallic power of whatever “truth” a text must convey.” He further suggests that, “When our texts are printed, the pages in each publication, zine or any printed object open up a forum for public dialogue, not just in their content but in their materiality.”

57

This book does not contain a gestalt whole, or a crisp field of view, or a finished proposition, or pure originality, or even perhaps a body of work, but is instead an assemblage of things that have come before and that will come after. Every thought in this book has been, and is being, and will be conjured by other brighter minds; every action performed more gracefully; every sentiment felt more intensely by someone else. This slab of a thesis is a mere aggregation of everything else outside of its mere contained body.

<\*>

<\*>

58

“Ideas cannot be owned. Images belong to the commons.”

— Susan Buck-Morss, *Seeing <-> Making Room for Thought* (2024)

59

“A book read by a thousand different people is a thousand different books.”

— Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (1985)

60

“as possible as yeast  
as imminent as bread...”

— Lucille Clifton, *i am not done yet* (1936-2010)

61

“All minds quote.”

— David Shields, *Reality Hunger* (2010)

62

BEGIN TRAINING MONTAGE:

... You shadow box like a champ in the dead of night. Does the fire even cast its own shadow?  
... Swimming lessons in seawater: on your mark, you race to where the sun touches the Earth. But who has ever reached the horizon?  
... You wrestle a boulder up a mountain. But one must imagine Ma and Pa happy.  
... You push a block of ice until it melts. It only took half as much time in the tropics.  
You love your country.

63

To be soft is also to be tender. To be tender is to become sensitive about one's self and the world around one. It also means having a soft and yielding texture or consistency. This exercise to frame and reframe, zoom in and out, focus in and out the self so as to compose and articulate a whole, or a body of work then becomes an act of softness. But like the multiplicity of the lenses people look through to see the world, perhaps this thesis becomes a refusal to arrive at the singular, but is instead a celebration of the power of having too many meanings, too much uncertainty, too thick of a haze, and a little too much feeling.



64

*"For softness is great and strength is worthless"*

— Andrei Tarkovsky, *Stalker* (1979)

Soft Procedures



Abbas Kiarostami,  
*Close-Up* (1990),  
Documentary, 98 min.



Sergei Parajanov,  
*The Color of Pomegranates*,  
Drama, Avant-Garde,  
77 min.



<\*> DEAR  
PHILIPPINES,

# DEAR CINEMA,



[p. 161 ]  
*Stories We Tell* (2012)



[p. 24]  
*Andrei Tarkovsky: A Poet in  
the Cinema* (1983)



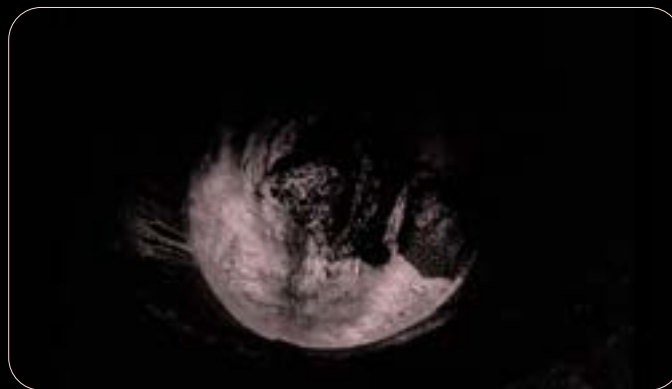
[p. 237]  
*Batch '81* (1982)



[p. 47]  
*2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)



[p. 108]  
*The Man with a Movie Camera*  
(1929)



[p. 26]  
*Stalker* (1979)



[p. 316]  
*One Thousand and One Attempts  
to Be an Ocean* (2020)



[p. 323]  
*Making a Splash* (1984)



[p. 223]  
*Season of the Devil* (2018)



[p. 317]  
*Zuma News, LA* (2014)



[p. 64]  
*The Immeasurable Impact  
of Film* (2018)



[p. 48]  
*Cinema Paradiso* (1988)



[p. 23]  
*Battleship Potemkin* (1925)



[p. 49]  
*Kuleshov Effect* (1910-1920)



[p. 58]  
*Look. Touch. Feel* (2023)

[p. 232]  
*Aswang* (2019)

[p. 283]  
*Maynila sa Kuko ng Liwanag* (1975)





[p. 107]  
*The Man with a Movie Camera*  
(1929)



[p. 51]  
*Beaches of Agnes* (2008)



[p. 105]  
*Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003)



[p. 106]  
*Good Morning* (1959)



[p. 111]  
*Sorry Angel* (2018)



[p. 193]  
*That Thing Called Tadhana*  
(1991)



[p. 133]  
*Aftersun* (2022)



[p. 65]  
*Close-Up* (1990)



[p. 99]  
*Frances Ha* (2012)



[p. 317]  
*Moonlight* (2016)



[p. 139]  
*Equinox Flower* (1958)



[p. 110]  
*Solaris* (1972)



[p. 139]  
*Good Morning* (1959)



[p. 110]  
*Solaris* (1972)



[p. 322]  
*Solaris* (1972)



[p. 44]  
*Vapour* (2015)



[p. 189]  
*History and Memory:  
For Akiko and Takashige*  
(1991)



[p. 295]  
*An Elephant Sitting Still*  
(2018)



[p. 199]  
*The Mapping Journey Project*  
(9 Apr-10 Oct 2016)



[p. 341]  
*Maynila sa Kuko ng Liwanag* (1975)



[p. 191]  
*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*  
(1991)



[p. 311]  
*Soft Film* (2016)



[p. 321]  
*Texas* (16 Nov, 2002-30 March 2003)



[p. 227]  
*The Kingmaker* (2019)



[p. 322]  
*Solaris* (1972)



[p. 143]  
*Happy Together* (1997)



[p. 427]  
*Cleaners* (2019)



[p. 151]  
*Hinulid* (2016)



[p. 349]  
*Leonor Will Never Die* (2022)



[p. 463]  
*Μίτρον* (1975)



[p. 432]  
*Close-Up* (1990)



[p. 60]  
*Le Bonheur* (1965)



[p. 433]  
*The Color of Pomegranates*  
(1969)

# SOFT CINEMA



[p. 17] *Sans Soleil* (1983)

*Softly,*  
*Alec*

This is an incomplete list of film recommendations that I personally consider, arguably of course, soft, gentle, or tender, inspired by an existing Letterboxd list called *Gentle Cinema* by Doug Dillaman. The criteria for picking is very loose, and more on the intuitive level. This will be an ongoing list that also lives online [[HTTPS://LETTERBOXD.COM/WALECALEC/LIST/SOFT-CINEMA/](https://letterboxd.com/walecalec/list/soft-cinema/)], where anyone is welcome to add their very own interpretation of a soft film.



*Tokyo Story* [1953]



*The 400 Blows* [1959]



*Nostalghia* [1983]



*Stand by Me* [1986]



*Cinema Paradiso*  
[1988]



*My Neighbor Totoro*  
[1988]



*Yi Yi* [2000]



*Eternal Sunshine of  
the Spotless Mind*  
[2004]



*Little Miss Sunshine*  
[2006]





Still Walking [2008]



The Beaches of Agnes [200]



Somewhere [2010]



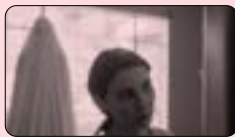
Hawaii [2013]



Paterson [2016]



Colombus [2017]



Ghost Story [2017]



Microhabitat [2017]



Happy as Lazzaro [2018]



Shoplifters [2018]



House of Hummingbird [2018]



Ad Astra [2019]



Minari [2020]



Drive My Car [2021]



Marcel the Shell with Shoes on [2021]



Aftersun [2022]



Broker [2022]

ADD YOURS AT  
[HTTPS://LETTERBOXD.COM/WALECALEC/LIST/SOFT-CINEMA/](https://letterboxd.com/walecalec/list/soft-cinema/)



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Andrei Tarkovsky,  
*The Mirror* (1975),  
Drama, Avant-Garde,  
Biography, 107 min.



*Soft Procedures* by Alec Figuracion is a thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Art in the Department of Graphic Design of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, 2024

## SPECIAL THANKS

### TO MY FAMILY

*Salamat na marháy,*  
[THANK YOU SO MUCH]

*Papa, Mama, Mae, and AJ, gabus na ini para saíndo.  
Padangatun ko kamong.*

[PAPA, MAMA, MAE & AJ, THIS IS ALL FOR YOU. I LOVE YOU.]

*Lola, nagbabasol ako ta nagpundo akong magdangug  
kang mga istorya mo. Naging para istorya ako dahil saímo.*

[GRANDMA, I DEEPLY REGRET THAT I STOPPED LISTENING TO YOUR STORIES.  
I TELL STORIES BECAUSE OF YOU.]

TO MY COHORT OF 2024

Soo Min Lee    Husna Abubakar  
Glikeriya Shotanova    Michelle Belgrad  
Clinton Van Arnam    Emily Bluedorn  
Shiyue Wang    Lydia Chodosh  
Berett Wilber    Gabriel Drozdov  
Rebecca Wilkinson    Kaela Kennedy

Where do I begin? You are all equally special, talented and brilliant. This entire endeavor was easier, more fun, worthwhile, and a little less lonely because of you. I don't think I'd be the designer and person that I am now if not for the company. We will be all okay.

TO THE CLASS OF 2023, 2025  
& THE 3-YEAR COHORT OF 2026

You are all cool and talented.

TO MY FILIPINO COMMUNITY

Cheeny, Bhen, and Kerr, I'm glad I got to know you all better in my last months at RISD. Thank you for being my home away from home.

To the Filipino community, our yearly picnic and Christmas party are always the best times of the year. I will miss our

*salò-salò* [FEAST; GATHERING].

TO THE FACULTY, TEACHERS & STAFF

Bethany, I am extremely grateful for giving me a chance at this program. Thank you for trusting, and guiding me throughout this Herculean task.

Paul, you gave me the courage to pursue this research—that is this whole book. Thank you for seeing, being critical, and ever so present in this process. It was a privilege having you as my primary advisor.

Pouya, thank you for pushing me to be less rigid, and for all your reading and film recommendations. I have grown to love Tarkovsky even more. You inspire me to look at design in a different light.

Wael, thank you for being a great external critic, and for reminding me to just do what I want, because I only get to make a thesis book once. I aspire to be you when I grow up.

Anne, and Tina, thank you for believing in me, and my writing. I would be a mess of incoherence without your guidance and support. Anne, I am in awe of your wisdom and light.

Africanus Okokon, Alana Perino, Andrea Dezso, Anther Kiley, Brian Ulrich, Christopher Sleboda, Cyrus Highsmith, Doug Scott, Isabel Manahl, Jamil Fatti, Jessica Helfand, Kathleen Sleboda, Lucinda Hitchcock, Minkyong Kim, Nancy Skolos, Olya Domoradova, Rafael Attias, Ramon Rivera-Moret, Ramon Tejada, Shawn Greenlee, Teddy Blanks, Tom Wedell, and Tycho Horan, it was great pleasure learning from all of you.

Eva, the studio would burn without you. You never hesitate to help. Thank you.

To Ed, Julia, and Hassan, thank you for putting up with my technical ineptitude, and being the kindest.

To everyone else that I have met and worked with in the three years spent at RISD, thank you.

## COLOPHON

Designed and writing Alec Figuracion

Editorial Support Anne West  
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Kristian Cordero  
Carl Lorenz Cervantes

Typeset in Exposure by 205TF  
Serial B by Dum Dum Studio®,  
Victor Mono by Rune Bjørnerås  
Courier by Howard Kettler

Printed Mixam Inc.,  
1515 East Woodfield Road, Suite  
342, Schaumburg, Illinois, 60173

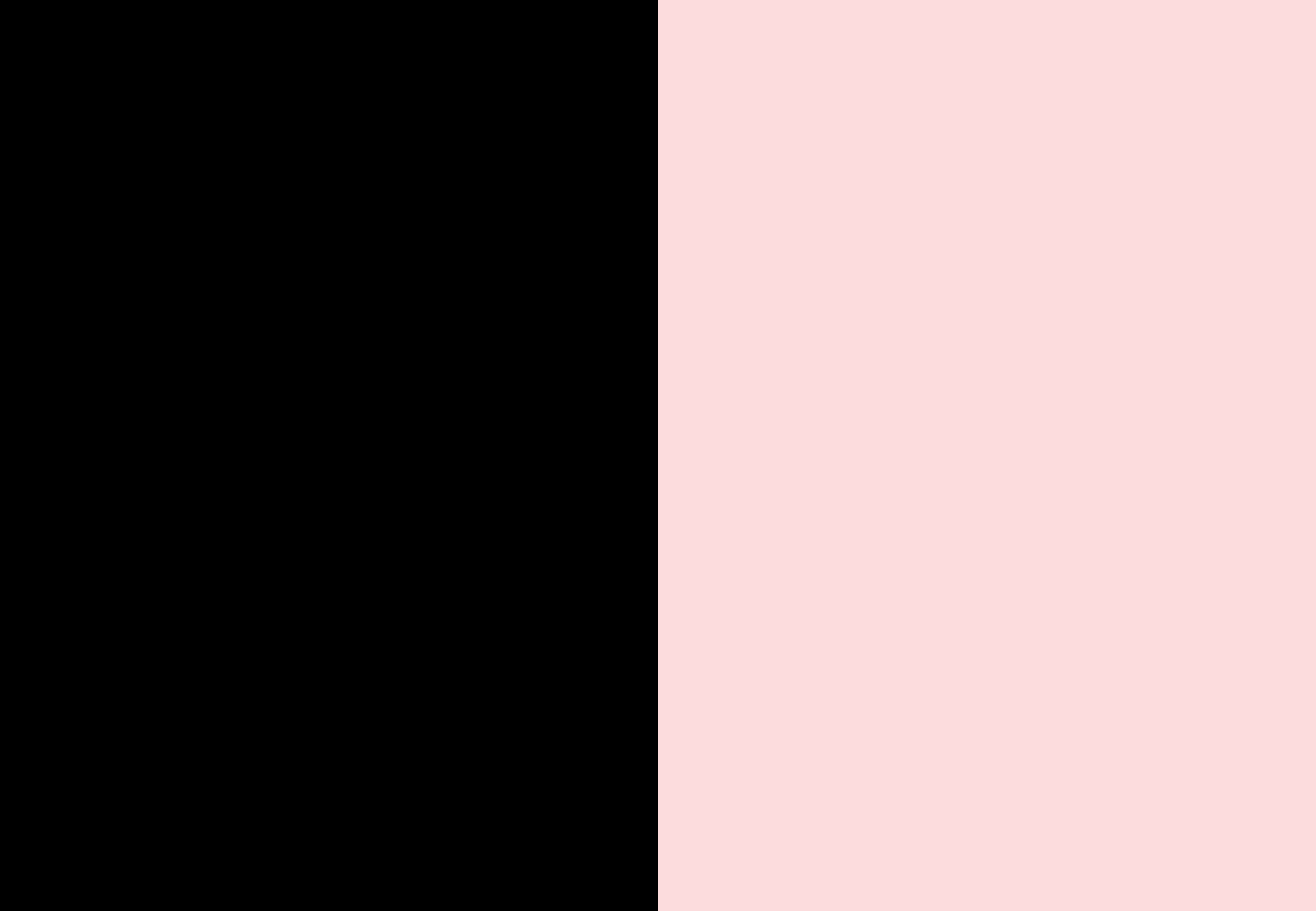
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