



2010

EMMEDIA

Production Access Proposal



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Abstract:

Can a film edit itself? By designing a framework that randomly selects and modifies video footage, this new-media based film project thinks 'yes'. What's more, it will largely do so by seamlessly alternating between the perspectives of two cameras, thereby appearing to produce 3D-like depth. The film's spontaneous formal construction will also be paralleled in its lighthearted narrative, which explores the underlying question of choice versus coincidence.



Table of contents:

Project Description	2–3
Project Work Plan	4
Curriculum Vitae	5
Artist Statement	6
Support Material	7

Project Description: “6 Quirks (in 2C)”

Given that 3D filmmaking seems about to explode, what better time to experiment with and explore this type of alternative vision in cinema? And while I have no intention of actually shooting and projecting a short film in 3D, *per se*, I'm very interested in playing with what exactly watching such a so-called immersive experience means, as well as *where the boundaries lie in our ability to perceive the added depth*. A deeply related parallel, I think, is the process of narrative construction since it too aims to shape an audience's perception in order to create immersiveness and depth. What I'm interested in experimenting with, then, is a *film structure that edits itself*; that is to say, a film that makes many of the formal (narrative-creating) choices on its own, thereby subverting—or enlivening—the experience of traditional storytelling.

Let me simplify, starting with the faux-3D:

(But first, a quick prelude: I have an old digital camera that often fails to autofocus properly, so I usually have to snap multiple takes of any given subject. When I'm looking through these to pick the best one, I find that the camera's position has moved very slightly from image to image, and viewing them one after another creates the illusion of not only movement, but *three-dimensional depth*.) This is nothing new: film has always been based on this principle. But, what I think would be interesting, would be to film a short using two cameras (about eyes width apart, at first), then *edit the two streams of vision so as to fade back and forth between each other*, all while the on-screen action is taking place. I feel this would, at very least, offer spectators a new, even more dynamic way of approaching cinematic space. Additionally, I'd be looking to toy with this principle by subtly moving the cameras in various ways, or by using mirrors, or simultaneously tracking and zooming (in different directions, say), in order to further distort perspective.

What I think would make the project really noteworthy, though, is how this simulated 3D photography would be 'wrapped' in a *randomizing framework*; that is to say, the various video and audio clips being used (and even their formal qualities, such as duration, colour, contrast, volume, etc.) would be *chosen only at the time of observation*. In order to accomplish this, I would program an application to randomly select (from within a set of predefined parameters) how to modify the clip, thereby generating *a narrative that is literally spontaneous and unique, yet still coherent and deliberate*. *Like the film grain that adorns the surface of aged footage, the results would thus be largely unpredictable, but all the more beautiful by consequence*.

Now all of this sounds like admittedly abstract stuff, so here's how I plan to bring it all together into a worthwhile short film. As in my previous works, I aim to contain this experimentation and theoretical exploration within a lighthearted, slightly ironic tale. I find this mode of address best suits not only my personal tastes, but allows both 'high-' and 'low-' brow audiences to be equally enlightened and/or entertained. For this specific project, I want to write and shoot six distinct (roughly 1 to 2 minute) scenes about quirks in relationships/friendship/self, which tie in to one another through a chain of recurring characters. The quirks will be tangibly related to the thematic concerns of the project (dual cameras/perspectives, self-editing/monitoring, etc.), and the result would be

a *tongue-in-cheek look at people dealing with choices vs. coincidence* (again, much like the project as a whole).

On to the technical stuff: I intend to program the self-editing algorithm using, likely, Adobe Flash. I would rather use something more sophisticated and personalized—which I will no doubt be looking into, regardless—but for all intents and purposes I assume I'll be coding in ActionScript because this allows the randomness of clip properties to be achieved without having to re-encode a mess of video clips on-the-spot; rather, I would simply apply effects to the Flash-based containers holding the source footage. I am confident that my experience in non-linear video editing, graphic and web design, as well as software engineering/ programming will allow me to complete this part of the project without too much hassle. What's more, if I do end up using Flash, then the final work will be *able to be played on any computer over the internet*, with the added potential for *user customization* of many of the parameters that I'd otherwise need to set myself.

All-in-all, the proposed project deals with many core themes, processes, and ideas that I am not only familiar with, but eager to explore further. Since I've only been able to touch on the myriad of ideas which I have ready to flow into this project, it might be useful to consider the following '*project skeleton*,' for it provides an outline of my thinking that more overtly/visually allows for interpretation of what fills the spaces in between.

“The Big Ideas”

- Main conceptual interests:
 - Experiment with:
 - '2-eyed' cinematography → faux-3D / '2C'
 - (note that, if necessary, I own one HD camcorder to use)
 - 'self-editing' filmmaking → narrative as controlled randomness
 - Through the mediums of:
 - Experimental filmmaking → parameter-based film form
 - Web-based/new-media → code-generated structure, interchangeable outcomes, interconnectedness
- Core thematic concerns:
 - Editing
 - As in the filmic process of ordering shots/ creating story
 - In terms of self-censorship/monitoring when expressing emotions and ideas
 - Choice ⇌ Coincidence
 - As a parallel to filming and alternating between two camera perspectives
 - As a parallel to the process of directing/creating a film
 - In terms of coming to one's own conclusions; establishing personal identity vs. shared consciousness; see also: polysemy
- Primary mode of address/ tone:
 - Lighthearted musings, conversations, and voice-over narration
 - Focus on relatable, personal, entertaining acting; 'serious' underlying theories made subtle through metaphor, allegory, etc.
 - Occasionally ironic, satirical, or inquisitive tone

Project Work Plan: "Roughly..."

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	25	26	27	28	29	30	1
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
May							
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
	30	31	1	2	3	4	5
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
June	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29	30	1	2	3
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
July							
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
August							
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	29	30	31	1	2	3	4

• SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

• PROGRAMMING/
FRAMEWORK DEV.

• STORYBOARDING/
SHOT-PLANNING

• CASTING/
CREW-ASSEMBLING

• FINALIZING
PRE-PRODUCTION

• PRINCIPAL
PHOTOGRAPHY

• ADR

• EDITING/POST

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+ OBJECTIVE

A flexible, part-time job that will provide valuable experience for career aspirations in the fields of film, art, design and/or new media.

+ TARGET JOB

An interesting, engaging position that allows me to learn and hone skills relevant to my general interests and abilities, as well as support any related future profession. My ideal company would be one that expects and rewards hard-working, high-achieving and innovative personnel.

Preferred Work Days: Likely weekends (complimentary to school and volunteer commitments)

+ WORK EXPERIENCE

- **Bethany Care Society – Corporate Office** *Summer 2009 – Spring 2010*
Hired on a contract basis as an Administrative Assistant to the company CEO. Asked to manually enter data for company survey, but once this was accomplished, went above-and-beyond to design and implement a customizable user interface for data analysis and reporting purposes. Subsequently called back for work on latest surveys.
- **Barbecues Galore – South Store** *Summer 2006 – Fall 2008*
Assembled, sold, and delivered barbecues and other hearth and patio products. Began as a warehouse employee in order to apply my acute sense of mechanical and technical dexterity, then moved to retail sales position involving customer service, cash handling, and requiring broad product knowledge. Was consistently praised as one of the hardest working staff members (and offered advancement), but would rather pursue more interesting career paths.
- **Papa John's Pizza – Downtown Location** *Spring 2004 – Spring 2006*
Topped and baked pizzas. Safely prepared ingredients and performed general restaurant duties such as dishes and cleaning. Worked as part of a "make-line" that required teamwork and quick thinking in a fast-paced environment. Quickly earned wage increases because of fast learning, dedication, and enthusiasm.

+ VOLUNTEERING

- **Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers** \$100 Film Festival graphics designer, jury member, and committee member; classic film screenings curator; contributing writer; event photographer; ongoing PR work
- **Calgary Cinematheque** Audience/Members/Volunteers committee member; ongoing webmaster *calgarycinema.org*
- **NUTV** Shooting, editing & reporting for campus TV station
- **Home Movie Day** Film maintenance technician & projectionist; PR work
- **Calgary Intl Film Festival** Theatre attendant/usher

+ EDUCATION + RECOGNITION

- Western Canada High School**
Graduated with a bilingual diploma (English/French), having completed several International Baccalaureate courses, receiving multiple awards, and earning Honours in most classes.
- University of Calgary** *Fall 2006 – Present*
Currently enrolled in the *Bachelor of Arts in Film Studies* program with an Honours-qualifying GPA, after transferring from software engineering. Present focus on the theoretical groundings of cinema, and its evolution as an art form. Aim to complete an undergraduate degree then possibly advance to graduate studies elsewhere.

Recognition

Earned various awards and scholarships, including recognition for:

- Outstanding academic achievement in: art, computer & technology studies, English and French language arts, science, math, and others

+ SKILLS

Select Design-Relevant Skills

- Natural tendency towards scalable design
- Highly detail-oriented, user-minded development techniques
- Keen, practical, innovative, and deeply creative spirit
- Fast learner; very able to teach self
- Experience with a wide range of industry-standard computer software, such as:
 - ⇒ Adobe CS4 (Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Flash, After Effects, Illustrator, etc)
 - ⇒ Programming languages: HTML, CSS, JS, PHP, MySQL, XML, C/C++, Applescript, VB, etc
 - ⇒ Common online interfaces: Facebook, Twitter, Wordpress, Joomla, RSS, APIs, etc
 - ⇒ Professional video editing suites: Final Cut Pro, Premiere Pro, etc
- Experience in: image optimization, typography, cross-browser compatibility, SEO, much more
- Familiar with Mac, Windows and Linux operating systems
- Strong written communication skills, both professionally and personally
- Very enthusiastic, with a history of devising improved workflow methods in previous jobs
- More casual, personable and friendly than this formal resume could ever make me out to be!

+ REFERENCES

Available upon request

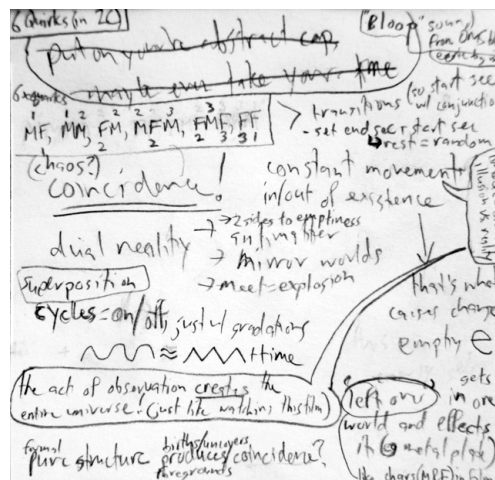
Artist Statement: "MiSmith"

Murray Smith is a critical thinker by nature, an avid cinephile by nurture, and an enthusiastic filmmaker by consequence. He's largely a film formalist, and has a shared passion for photography, writing and (especially) editing—not to mention film theory in general. Some key topics/influences include: philosophy, contrast, ambiguity, film noir, surrealism, Linklater, Tati, and Kubrick. He's currently in his final years of a Bachelor of Arts in Film Studies Honours degree at the University of Calgary, and volunteers whenever he can in the local film community.

The mere possibility is enough to get me extremely excited about beginning work in a combination of experimental film and new-media—my two mediums of choice. To top it off, I feel this proposed project is *filled* with potential, both for viewers and myself alike, not to mention EMMEDIA as the producing body. Though I've never yet managed to affiliate myself with EMMEDIA, my résumé outlines how enthusiastically involved I have become with similar organizations—the CSIF in particular.

I've begun with the flash-bio above, but perhaps I should dig a little deeper into who I am and what I have to say. I guess it's only natural to start off by saying I'm an avid cinephile: I eat, sleep, and breathe movies. I'm always looking for new ways to approach filmmaking that increase its potential depth—whether it is emotional or intellectual. What I find most interesting at this point in my life is the dichotomy between narrative and anti-narrative that's so often discussed in experimental cinema—not so much in identifying with either side, but with the very existence of the conflict itself. How, for instance, do you strike a balance between innovating and appeasing? In truth, this is a time-worn question that has been around since the earliest commercial roots of art, but I would argue that, fundamentally speaking, it must all boil down to coincidence. Building upon this notion, I wonder if a film *about* and *shaped by* coincidence would therefore—somewhat paradoxically—be able to *consistently* succeed?

Notably, all my art seems to be rooted in ambiguity born out of contrast, so I would think it's fair to say that this must be a value of mine, or at least a recurrent viewpoint. I see myself as someone who perhaps asks too many questions, or raises too many concerns, but ultimately makes an impact in doing so. Simplicity is, to me, only a clever disguise for complexity, and I feel my work, interests, and ideas reflect this. My goal as an artist is to inspire talk/communication, and for this project specifically, it is to craft a competent, polished film that does exactly that—and hopefully much more.



Just for fun, here are some of my (cryptic) notes/scribbles/brainstorms about this project

Support Material: “Short, but Sweet”

Maybe Film Dreams (2009)

[watch it → <http://film.mismith.info/films/mfd>]

Runtime: 3m19s • production format Super8 4:3 • exhibition format: DV 4:3

Synopsis:

Did you know an increasing number of underprivileged film reels sit perpetually dormant? So mightn't they spend this time dreaming, then? Part lighthearted musings and part Linklater-dubbed montage, this aesthetically chaotic short focuses on the medium of film – as seen on celluloid – and toys with the notion of an industry-wide digital takeover.



Last Night In Noir (2008)

[watch it → <http://film.mismith.info/films/lnin>]

Runtime: 4m29s • production format HDV 16:9 • exhibition format: DV 2.35:1

Synopsis:

With a dark style reminiscent of classic era noirs, Last Night In Noir explores the suffocating smoke, strong shadows, and striking settings of the genre by incorporating its trademark iconography, voice-over narration, cynical tone and expressionistic cinematography.



Still photography available at → <http://flickr.com/photos/mismith/show>