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A WORLD WITHOUT YOU

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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HBF, University of Utah, 2010

Robert Paris, Associate Professor, Kinetic Imaging.

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
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List Of Terms

INT. Interior Location
EXT. Exterior Location
I/E Interior/Exterior Location
Insert Image Generated Without Use Of Location
C/U Close Up
V.O. Voiceover
O.S. Off Screen
Beat Pause In Time
Use of Bold Denotes Camera Techniques
Use of Uppercase Denotes Art Direction, Props, etc.

Abstract

A WORLD WITHOUT YOU

By Brian Charles Patterson, M.F.A.

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The following thesis is adapted from screenplay format. The document from which it derives serves as a shooting script for a film/video called *A World Without You*. The shooting script contains explicit scene description, camera set-ups that include angle and lens choices, dialog, and

transitions - all the relevant instruction needed for anyone to reproduce the film with explicit similarity to its original. The thesis reflects a series of short videos I completed as research. In their finished state, the series of videos coalesce to a single film/video with a sixty-two-minute running time. That conglomeration emerged as a "shadow" or "inversion" of a twenty-minute, single-channel video loop called *Intermission For Deleted Acts*, which served as centerpiece to my thesis exhibition. The script navigates themes of environmental catastrophe, companionship, survival, surveillance, and art practice. The following thesis attempts to keep the screenplay formatting intact to communicate both its functionality and aesthetic quality.

FADE IN:

EXT. CLOUDS - EVENING

WIDE SHOT - STATIC: The clouds flow by. Either dusk or dawn is near. Heaven hangs below as its blue light fights through the undulating blanket as hell looms from above with a bronze glow.

TITLE CARD: A WORLD WITHOUT YOU fades to the fore with GOLDEN PAPERBACK TYPEFACE.

LIGHTNING strikes, the clouds continue to sweep across the frame.

VOICEOVER BEGINS: The voice belongs to a MAN who speaks casually, informally to us.

PERSON (V.O.)

I just wanted the kind of energy I would get when I woke up from the nightmares to last throughout my day - I could have made so much more money. But it's okay. We won't need money where we're going.

(beat)

I was in a dream. Or *I* was a dream when I went to the mall and ended up at the Suncoast video store, looking for a title to give this video when I ran into Charles Bronson.

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

was happy to see him. But he was pissed. I explained that I forgot he was a thing - a cult celebrity up and I remembered him just last week when I found my VHS copy of *Death Wish 4* - the one where he kills the end guy with a bazooka - so it was strange that I was running into him. The irony is uncanny.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAGING FLOOD - SUNSET

WIDE ANGLE - STATIC: Camera **PANS RIGHT** over a thunderous, raging flood of muddy water, finds a spot to watch the waves and blasts of the fatalist current. It looks like chocolate milk. Maybe it is chocolate milk and that's what we've become. Blackness looms over it as if it is merely a hypothetical disaster, not fixed in any known history. Camera **PUSHES IN** slightly, slowly.

PERSON (V.O.)

He said, "Yeah. I know." When you remembered I existed I was reborn into this flesh body and it sucks. It's been nothing but suffering ever since. But he said that he would

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

work on forgiving me because he had the same problem except it was with god. And god was working on forgiving him. God told him he wanted to live in a world without human folly. A world without you. And this whole premise made me feel so lonely and leaving the mall empty-handed.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHALLOW CREEK - DAY

C/U - STATIC: A small PLASTIC WATER BOTTLE swirls in a shallow eddy. Camera **PUSHES IN** to reveal an ANT running in circles on the surface of the bottle, looking for a way off of this thing. There isn't one.

When I shot this video I didn't even see the ant. When I see it now I ask myself if I had seen the ant would I have saved it? The ant is in a BETTER PLACE. Do not let your jealousy of it get in the way of making this video (or film).

PERSON (V.O.)

Lonely enough that I posted a personal ad to see if there was anyone out there. That's me on the bottle there. At least that's how they said it feels.

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When I go on dates I like to talk about garbage. One of my litmus tests on a date is to discuss garbage and the composition of litter we find strewn about. I enjoy discussing plastic versus glass in relation to aluminum. I love that you can make glass out of sand - that's the card I keep close to my heart while it's still beating.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOTUS GARDEN - DAY

MEDIUM-WIDE SHOT - STATIC: Lotus flowers sway in the wind amidst glowing green leaves. DRAGONFLIES flutter into the frame, land on the leaves and sparkle in the sunlight.

A star-filled night-sky fills the back of the frame, passing from left to right indicating the rotation of whatever planet we're on.

PERSON (V.O.)

So somebody responded to the ad. And we went on a date together. We decided to go to the pond and contemplate each other's company down by the lotus flowers. In the background there were millions of stars and galaxies

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

floating off in space. And there were these fairies fluttering around, landing on the lotus flowers. One of the fairies flew into the center of the frame there and told us that if we wanted to transcend time and space that what we needed to do was stare into the sea of galaxies and we would then receive our own galaxy as a prize.

CUT TO:

C/U – STATIC: CAMERA PUSHES IN: On the thin waving veil that conceals and obscures the universe's galaxies. As the camera pushes in, it catches a glare that hypnotizes.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER SPACE - THERE IS NO DAY OR NIGHT IN SPACE

EXTREME WIDE: We float toward a lone GALAXY. Its pink and purple spray billows and swirls as we approach. There's not another star in the black void that surrounds.

PERSON (V.O.)

...So we did. And we started floating up to our own little galaxy. But as we got closer I started to hallucinate and it looked like a little kid buried up to its waist in sand. And the stars looked like the sand he was throwing.

**INSERT: C/U OF PHOTO OF BOY THAT LOOKS LIKE SEAN SPICER
BURIED TO HIS WAIST IN SAND.**

PERSON (V.O.)

I thought it looked like a normal little kid but my date said it looked like Sean Spicer so then all I could see was Sean Spicer. And it said, "Mom". Then "Dad". Mom, dad, mom dad, etc. Like it was making us choose. Or we were making it choose. But I wasn't really interested in either. So just by standing back and weighing my lack of options I kinda zoned out because I have a really hard time focusing - which is kinda ruining my life - anyway I went into a trance and my date joined in and we kinda just lost ourselves in its eyes.

LONG, DURATIONAL, CONTEMPLATIVE DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST GARDEN - DAY

WIDE SHOT - STATIC: Of the sun blazing through the dust and insects weave between the summer leaves. Camera **ZOOMS IN.**

PERSON (V.O.)

And then before we knew it, we were in the forest. It was our forest, our unkempt garden with weeds and vermin and

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

predators. It felt like we should be naked but neither of us were really the type to get naked on a first date.

ZOOM continues until the fame is bleached completely white.

EXTREME ZOOM IN:

WHITE fills the screen.

PERSON (V.O.)

I'm going to fast-forward because this is the part where this video starts to suck. And it isn't that important. We just talked about garbage and ended up back at our own pond.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

THE FOLLOWING SCENES PLAY IN **FAST MOTION** UNTIL NOTED

MEDIUM SHOT - STATIC: A DOE watches us cautiously through the trees. Its ears turn about scanning the forest.

The **CAMERA ZOOMS IN** to the eye of the doe until its blackness fills the screen.

EXTREME ZOOM IN:

ZOOM OUT:

EXT. ROCKY CREEK - CONTINUOUS

BLACK fills the screen. **CAMERA ZOOMS OUT** to **WIDE** of the darkness of a to SNAKE's eye to reveal a full-sized water moccasin resting on a stone slab in a shallow creek.

Camera **TILTS** down to reveal a RED PLASTIC BOTTLE lying in the water.

CAMERA ZOOMS IN on the red bottle, past the text that reads CONTAINS NO JUICE until red fills the frame.

EXTREME ZOOM IN:

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - CONTINUOUS

RED fills the screen. Camera zooms out to reveal the nutritional facts of a Coca-Cola bottle.

Camera continues to **ZOOM OUT** to **WIDE SHOT** revealing a COCA-COLA BOTTLE in the sandy pits of a construction site, camera peering inward, barred by a chain link fence.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHALLOW CREEK - DAY

C/U - STATIC of a discarded ORANGE PLASTIC ROOT BEER BOTTLE lying amongst the driftwood in a creek bed.

EXTREME ZOOM IN:

ZOOM OUT:

INT. SHALLOW CREEK - DAY

ORANGE fills the screen **ZOOM OUT** to **MEDIUM-WIDE** of **ORANGE FANTA BOTTLE** resting in the driftwood.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREAM - DAY

C/U - PAN across flowing stream to **MED-WIDE** of **SUNKIST CAN** wedged between the rocks in stream.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREAM - DAY

TRACK UP to **C/U** of **BUD LIGHT CAN** wedged between two rocks.

ZOOM IN TO THE MOUTH OF THE CAN:

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTERED SWAMP - DAY

WIDE SHOT - STATIC: **BEER** and **SODA CANS** litter a murky swamp. The **FAIRY** that told me to stare into the sea of galaxies flutters around laying its eggs amongst the trash.

***** RESUME REAL-TIME PLAY BACK.**

PERSON (V.O.)

We ended up getting married. That's because we're a match made in heaven, because they like counting grains of sand and my preference is counting droplets of water.

(beat)

Now that I'm saying that out loud each of those scenarios sounds like some kind of version of hell.

CUT TO:

INSERT C/U: of ICICLE MELTING, DRIPPING. Camera **PUSHES IN.**

EXT. SEA SHORE - SUNSET

WIDE SHOT - STATIC: Of the surf roiling the sand during a pink sunset.

PERSON (V.O.)

This is us together. Being ourselves. The salad days.

(beat)

Lets just watch this for a second.

(beat)

Okay, if there's any children watching this - listen up!
Santa Clause isn't real. He's complete bullshit. He's

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

totally made up. I mean - think about it. And since we're ruining the world for children, I think we should probably talk about sex and how babies are made.

TWO CHANNEL DIPTYCH:

LEFT CHANNEL:

EXT. SEA CLIFF - DAY

EXTREME WIDE (LONG LENS) STATIC: Of a MAN and a WOMAN swimming in the ocean. Land is nowhere in sight.

RIGHT CHANNEL:

EXT. MOUNTAIN CLIFF - DAY

EXTREME WIDE (LONG LENS) HAND-HELD: Of a MAN and a WOMAN walking away backwards in the opposite direction of the people in the frame on the left. They navigate a steep rocky mountain trail, cautiously, slowly, backwards.

PERSON (V.O.)

What we're seeing here is a - I shot both of these from the edge of a cliff - the people on the screen on the left are my kids from one failed relationship. And the screen on the right are from another failed relationship. And the four of

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

them are the last remaining people on earth. So they're trying to get with each other so they can reproduce. But they don't realize that they're actually half siblings. I haven't talked to a scientist about the odds of mutation if they do in fact have kids together but I'm actually not that worried about it. Because - I guess, legend has it that the people on the right could see the twinkle in the eyes of the people on the left. You know how sometimes a person is referred to as a twinkle in their parents' eye before they were conceived. So I think they could see the offspring they would have with the other kids. So they backed away slowly, back up into the desert where they dwell. They did it really carefully like you would if you saw a bear with her cubs in the forest or something. That reminds me - maybe we can watch some forest footage later if you're still here...

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE - DAY

WIDE SHOT (LONG LENS) STATIC: Of MAN (25) agonizing on the edge of a cliff.

PERSON (V.O.)

Watch this guy. He's building the courage to jump off a cliff. It takes some eons, and then... piece of cake.

(beat)

The MAN jumps, **CAMERA TRACKS** him as he lands in a lake. Bigger splash.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT: ORANGE BLUR.

PERSON (V.O.)

Lately I've just been watching TV. I found a station that plays old episodes of Beverly Hills 90210. And there was this episode where Donna Martin - played by Tori Spelling - had her baby because she had a shotgun wedding. And right as I'm watching the wedding scene the phone rang. Well, there were actually two phones and both rang - and apparently both calls were for me so I say 'hello' - twice. And on both phones it was Donna's baby to tell me that I had won a million dollars. But then the baby proceeded to tell me what it would do if it had a million dollars. My lawyer was able to obtain a recording of the phone call because the government had tapped my phones because I had

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

admitted to having feelings of rebellion and thoughts of political assassination. Let's have a listen...

Donna's Baby's dialog is **READ TWICE** slightly different wording and **OVERLAID** to create two layers of dialog.

DONNA'S BABY (V.O.)

If I had a million dollars I would build a time machine and I would go back in time to when my mother was still pregnant with me. And I would...

Donna's Baby's dialog track **FAST FORWARDS**.

PERSON (V.O.)

Okay. I'm gonna fast forward because this part makes me uncomfortable and I don't want you to get uncomfortable and leave. The baby talked about building a time machine with the million dollars to go back in time and track down Donna while she's still pregnant with them and giving her an abortion with a wire hanger in a back alley. It's intense, so I'll just skip to the part when they talk about Back To The Future...

The **ORANGE BLUR** is **MORPHING** to perhaps be an image of something?

DONNA'S BABY (V.O.)

...Like Marty McFly's hand in the movie Back To the Future when he's strumming the guitar and singing that song...

"Earth angel, earth angel, won't you be mine? Da-na-na-na-na-na, and forever until the end of time... Oh Donna, Oh Donna, Oh Donna, Oh Donna." And - if I did have that million dollars I think that Donna would fall in love with me because I'm very much in love with Donna.

PERSON (V.O.)

...Anyway. Turns out it was a prank call and I didn't win a million dollars or two million dollars or whatever. I didn't have caller ID so I couldn't tell who it was and the feds wouldn't help me out with that. What I had heard from someone who saw the next episode was that the baby was very disappointed that Donna and the rest of the gang, including Dylan, had destroyed the earth. And couldn't believe - could not understand - the complete apathy and disregard for future generations. Hence the time machine.

I/E. HEAVEN - WHENEVER

Use **FOUND STANDARD DEFINITION FOOTAGE: C/U** on baby being handled and passed on to other hands.

INSERT FOUND VHS FOOTAGE OF WHAT THEY MADE ME WATCH WHEN I WAS A KID SO MY MIND WOULDN'T GET LOST: MONTAGE of NATURE FOOTAGE: Waterfall, underwater shot of tropical fish, whale tail, honey bee, squirrel, sea shore, etc.

PERSON (V.O.)

Let's watch this for a moment. This is what they made me watch when I was a little kid so my mind wouldn't get lost. The music is very inspiring. I'm gonna turn it up.

(beat)

...Actually, I'm just gonna fast forward because it brings up painful memories.

FAST FORWARD found footage because of the pain. The last shot is of surf spilling out onto a flat beach...

MATCH DISSOLVE:

EXT. VENICE BEACH - DAY

A similar shot of surf, except this time you shoot it in **HD** and **MATCH** with the previous shot. Yours feels alive because it's **HAND-HELD**.

PERSON (V.O.)

I think I shot this at Venice Beach. But I suppose it doesn't matter now that things are the way they are.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT DUNES - DUSK

WIDE SHOT - STATIC: Sand storm rages, a MAN and a WOMAN (20s) sprint into it in **SLOW MOTION**.

PERSON (V.O.)

Oh, okay, so yeah. I forgot to tell you that the people who were swimming in the ocean reached the shore and they went in search of the people who were in the other screen. They followed them into the desert. They went through all kinds of deserts...

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - SUNRISE

STEDI-CAM - SLOW MOTION through the Joshua Trees, roaming...

CUT TO:

EXT. RED ROCK DESERT - DAY

STEDI-CAM - SLOW-MOTION through bulbous hoodoos, wandering...

CUT TO:

EXT. RED ROCK DESERT - CANYON - DUSK

STEDI-CAM - SLOW-MOTION through a red cliff canyon,
staggering...

CUT TO:

EXT. SLOT CANYON - DUSK

STEDI-CAM - SLOW-MOTION finds a path through a slot canyon,
a narrow path carved by **MELTING ICE** and **HOT WIND...**

CUT TO:

EXT. STONE PATH - WOODS - DAY

STEDI-CAM - SLOW-MOTION moves along a stone-paved path into
the shadows of haunted woods...

PERSON (V.O.)

...until they turned into this kind of hallway that turned
into a hallway in the forest.

CUT TO:

TWO CHANNEL DIPTYCH:

CHANNEL ONE (RIGHT FRAME):

EXT. EVERGREEN FOREST - SUMMER - DAY

STEDI-CAM - SLOW-MOTION: camera advances along a wooded trail towards...

CHANNEL TWO (LEFT FRAME):

EXT. EVERGREEN FOREST - AUTUMN - DAY

STEDI-CAM, SLOW-MOTION lumbers away from nothing on a wooded trail. Yellow leaves litter the path...

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT: Distorted angle of evergreen trail in summer, grainy, loose, drunk, maybe trapped in a memory of some show that was on during the same time slot as 90120.

PERSON (V.O.)

They ended up getting lost because they squandered their breadcrumbs on some stupid conceptual bread tile that they left on the dirt road at the edge of the forest. Probably got an MFA or something.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - EDGE OF FOREST - DAY

MED-SHOT loaf of whole wheat bread laid out to create a patch of tile work in a muddy dirt road.

DISSOLVE TO: TIGHT SHOT of bread tiles.

CUT TO:

TWO CHANNEL DIPTYCH:

CHANNEL ONE (LEFT FRAME):

EXT. FOREST - DAY

EXTREME WIDE - ARIAL - STATIC of an evergreen forest.

CHANNEL TWO (RIGHT FRAME):

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

EXTREME WIDE - ARIAL - STATIC of the ocean.

PERSON (V.O.)

Someday... all of this is going to burn. I shot these both from a very high cliff. But not the same cliff.

(referring to the right frame)

And it will take all the water in the world to put it out.

(referring to the left frame)

EXT. SEA SHORE - DAY

WIDE - STATIC - SLOW-MOTION - FROM ABOVE of waves crashing onto the warm sand. The white foam kicks up the sand, snarls and swirls it.

PERSON (V.O.)

People ask me all the time why I film water so much. Particularly waves. And I don't really have a good conceptual reason. Which I know, as an artist I should have. But I just love it. I can't take my eyes off it. But in talking about it I get to say the word 'liminal' a lot. I guess I'm just in to it because, it's this place where the ocean meets the land - I mean, obviously. But it's where sea life crawled onto the land and species began evolving over hundreds of millions of years to what we see now. And did you know that ninety nine point nine percent of all species that ever existed on earth went extinct. That's something we can hardly even wrap our heads around. Anyway, the shore is this constant, universal, paradoxical domain where we go to vacation and play. It's where drowned refugees and plastic bottles wash up. And it's the great indicator of our biggest mistakes. We'll be able to watch the oceans rise and move inland and destroy our cities. It simply doesn't give a fuck about us. It's this insanely creative and destructive force. I just love it. Lets just watch it for a minute.

CUT TO:

INSERT DIPTYCH: BLURRED LANDSCAPE - MOJAVE DESERT #1

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT DIPTYCH: EXTREME C/U of HAIR embedded in ice. The ice melts and the hair burns.

PERSON (V.O.)

If I remember correctly we were talking about evolution... here's a transcript of an experience I had a while ago that I don't really want to talk about but I wanted to share with you because I want to build trust between us...

EXT. HIGH DESERT VALLEY - DAY

STEDI-CAM - SLOW-MOTION meandering toward a small log cabin.

PERSON (V.O.)

...I was sitting in class. And this is what they won't teach you in science class or even church, - is that Jesus Christ is actually a Darwinist. That's because he understood the physical dynamic of the universe. It's like your spirit won't be able to capacitate life, the next dimension or whatever. That's because Jesus' thoughts seemed to be being teleported to his mind by a being that has evolved through natural selection to experience deep time. And these beings can see the big bang and every

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

moment from every life up to right now and deep into the future as well. It should be noted that these beings have both a penis and a vagina, but they don't really use either of them, ya know. So then, I was out in this field and there was no one around and then there were these enormous black helicopters. That were really, like way high in the sky. And I remember thinking that these are the helicopters that Jesus was telling me he wanted to get. He said they were really cool. Because they have these magnets that suck up all the guns and bombs and knives out of people's homes and hands. And the helicopters took all of the weapons on earth - even the armies. And some people wouldn't let go of the guns and they would shoot at the helicopters as they pulled them up in the sky. So there were all these screaming people getting pulled into the sky by their machine guns while they shoot the helicopters. And then the helicopters turned into fire, and the fire sucked them in, which made me think that the Earth was really hell. And, then the field I was standing in started turning into a lake.

CAMERA arrives at log cabin, **ENTERS** it, digs into its shadows.

BLACK fills the screen.

PERSON (V.O.)

And I remember being underwater and it was dark and still. And then out of the dark I could see a light way off in the distance. And it would slowly come closer and closer. And then I realized it was a glowing fish. And the fish was ugly. It reminded me of a dirty homeless person that would ask me for change in the parking lot. Then the fish said to me, it kinda looked around to make sure no one else was there to hear it. But then I whispered in my ear. It said, "On the other side of a black hole, is a big bang."

FADE TO BLACK:

PERSON (V.O.)

The home my family shared had hardwood floor as far as the eye could see. And off in the distance there was a mirage. As I got closer, it looked like a big shiny egg. When I finally got up to it I could see it was a man completely encased in a droplet of water.

INSERT: C/U of skin revealed by the motion of inhalation - breathing - exhale - skin moves out of the light.

BLACK covers screen.

This breathing in and out, revealing the body and returning to dark repeats as an actual body breathes, repeats throughout.

PERSON (V.O.)

He wasn't a full sized man - maybe four feet tall, muscular, and very hairy. The hair on his feet was white and then it faded to blonde up his legs and around his pubic area which was so hairy that I couldn't even see his genitalia. I mean I think he was a he - I mean I don't know. And brown hair on his chest and then black on his head. He had a thick black beard. All the hairs on his body were sort of reaching out and swirling in the droplet of water like seaweed does, or mermaid hair. But he had these enormous eyes that kinda flickered like a film projector - beautiful yellow eyes - that could look in different directions and he could see the world differently with each eye. And When I got close to him - I remember him leaning in and saying, "I need carpet." He told me the only way he could get out of the droplet of water was to get some carpet under him. I tried to help him out - I offered to use my clothes to absorb the water and wring them out - I'd do it as many times as it takes. But he said, "Nah, you'll make a mess of the floor." Then he leaned in and told me he

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

can see the past and the future and I could carpet in my future. He then asked me since I didn't have any carpet, to kinda slap the surface of his water droplet, like hand drum - kinda like a bongo. When I did, his eyes fixed on the surface of the droplet.

INSERT: WIDE SHOT - STATIC of wave breaking into the frame out of the darkness, sweeps against the low sun. The sea breathes just the same as the skin.

PERSON (V.O.)

And he got completely hypnotized by it and started giggling. And then I started giggling. And then he started laughing and then I started laughing because it was totally contagious. And then he started laughing really hard.

(beat)

Then his laughter turned dark and he started to scream and cry. It was weird was I could see the tears coming out of his eyes and merging with the droplet of water and making it bigger. And then it was clear that he was really suffering and so I started crying and I couldn't handle it. So I just ran.

The wave sweeps back into **BLACK**.

EXTREME C/U: SKIN returns, repeats.

PERSON (V.O.)

There was nothing I could do. I didn't have any carpet or anything. But I looked back and could see that he had stopped crying and he was sucking his thumb and he was floating upside down in the droplet in fetal position. With his other hand he had his other thumb out. And to this day, I still wonder if he was giving me the thumbs-up because it was up for him, or it was the thumbs down because he was upside down. But when he sort of rotated to when his thumb was pointing north, it kinda twinkled was that my family had gone searching for clean water up north and that would be where I would find them. And all I had to do was stay on this invisible line that vanishes off in the distance. But if and when anyone stops me, be very sure I am on the right side of the line.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPAZ - DAY

STEDI-CAM - SLOW-MOTION meanders through a barren desert valley. The camera scans over a rusted, old, steel fence - a baseball diamond. Use entire clip - allow for **shakes** and

movement resulting from hitting the record button before and after takes.

PERSON (V.O.)

So... I got stopped and I didn't have my papers. And they took me and put me in this room and told me I would be able to leave if I'll just tell them who to eliminate. And I didn't know what they were talking about. They said that human life is not sustainable - there won't be enough resources for everyone on earth to live - by a long shot - and that I needed to pick a group of people that would be selected for elimination. They said I could pick people by their race, religion, sexual orientation, age - whatever - my choice. And after clarifying that meant these people would be rounded up, put in camps and exterminated, I refused to give an answer. So they left me alone. I don't know how long I was alone for.

(beat)

...But it was a really long time.

(beat)

Then one day when they came to give me my food they said that I could see my family if I just gave them an answer and without thinking I just blurted it out...

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...I said 'people who yell when they sneeze' because that's my biggest pet peeve. The irony of it is that everyone in my family yells when they sneeze.

CUT TO:

INSERT: WIDE SHOT - STATIC of TOWERING INFERNO. A massive, sourceless flame billows and smokes. Embers streak into the black sky.

PERSON (V.O.)

Oh yeah. This is that hell fire I was telling you about earlier.

(beat)

My favorite part is when it turns to blue skies and light clouds.

The towering inferno **TRANSITIONS** its color to sky blue and white flames.

CUT TO:

INSERT: EXTRA-WIDE ANGLE of **FLORAL ATMOSPHERE**. A gaseous space of blossoms and foliage undulate and swirl.

PERSON (V.O.)

...Oh, this is... Remember when I was telling you about that date I went on and we ended up floating in space and we got our own galaxy? Yeah, so this is what the galaxy looked like when we got up close to it. Kinda like a galaxy made of blossoms and foliage. I won't waste your time telling you about the date since I already did.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GREATEST WILLOW TREE ON EARTH - DAY

MEDIUM SHOT - STATIC of green willow leaves fluttering in the wind. Camera **PUSHES IN** gently.

PERSON (V.O.)

You can go up this tree and the top of it is like crawling on a cloud of grass.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOP OF GREATEST WILLOW TREE ON EARTH - CONTINUOUS

WIDE SHOT - STATIC. Camera **PUSHES IN** atop a billowy, pillowy, mossy green dome of the greatest willow tree on earth. Make it look like an allergy pill commercial. Except sell them just the allergy.

PERSON (V.O.)

And then I changed things again, I'm not sure if it was TV or what but this show about the future came on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

EXTRA-WIDE SHOT - STATIC: Sun blares on a glittering but near-motionless sea. The waves move with a subtle gesture - like doubted memories. Two MEN stand silhouetted on the shore as one takes the picture of the other as he poses.

PERSON (V.O.)

It was kinda crappy, it was about how all the people who died from climate change - catastrophes related to climate change - were condemned to haunt the beaches and coastlines - living half way on land - half way at sea - waiting for balance to return to the earth. And there were these guys on the beach taking pictures of each other.

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT: EXTRA-WIDE - STATIC: BLANKETED SOFT GROUND PLANE with ambient morning sun. Or maybe it's evening sun.

PERSON (V.O.)

And once they took a picture they were satisfied with the seas began to dry up. And then you could see them out on the horizon.

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT: EXTRA-WIDE SHOT - STATIC: Flat wasteland with to BLURRY SPECKS in the center of the foggy frame.

PERSON (V.O.)

If you walked out to them they walk away. If you take one step toward them, they take a step away. So it's actually impossible to get close to them because. Legend has it that's their mating ritual.

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SCORCHED EARTH - DAY

EXTRA-WIDE ANGLE - STATIC: As the frame fades in a dark FEMALE FIGURE emerges on the horizon and approaches the camera. She grows more and more distinct in the blowing sand.

PERSON (V.O.)

And then they had a daughter that crawled out of the edge of the earth - the halfway point between hell and heaven and walked towards us.

In the sky above the woman, an interlocking chain of pale setting suns descends onto the horizon. Then, an opaque golden-orange disc follows the chain to the ground, repeating itself seven times per second. *** **MAKE THIS LOOK LIKE YOU JUST DISCOVERED THE MEDIUM OF VIDEO. WOW 'EM!**

PERSON (V.O.)

She asked us where she was and we had no idea what to tell her. And that's all I can remember.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT DIPTYCH: of **FLAT WASTELAND** from the previous scene. Both frames are the same.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT DIPTYCH: EXTREME CU - STATIC: compostables frozen in water, wrapped in a plastic grocery bag. The hot wind stretches the plastic as it shrivels and breaks, revealing ice surrounding orange peels, cucumber skins, carrot

shavings, etc. The wind grows hot enough to char the fresh vegetable matter.

PERSON (V.O.)

Thank fucking god. An intermission. Lets just watch this for a minute.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT DIPTYCH: of ABSTRACTED LANDSCAPE, MOJAVE DESERT #2.

CUT TO BLACK:

I/E. HOUSE - NIGHT

MEDIUM SHOT (LONG LENS) HAND-HELD: Apartment window from above and across a short distance. Blackness surrounds the window. Inside the window is a CHAIR sitting at a quaint breakfast table. The same scene is seen every night for basically eternity.

PERSON (V.O.)

Okay, So I've heard of that rule that you're supposed to be nice to your neighbor or love them or whatever.

The **LAST FRAME** of this shot is **DISTORTED** with **MOSAIC PIXELATION (post)**.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - EVENING

WIDE ANGLE - HAND-HELD on plumb blossoms, camera **TILTS DOWN** to find a **MALE PEACOCK** strolling down the sidewalk, just minding its own business.

*** The **FIRST FRAME** of the shot of the plumb blossoms is **DISTORTED** with **MOSAIC PIXELATION** (for transition purposes) **(post)**.

CAMERA FOLLOWS the peacock (**HAND-HELD**) down the street, ending with **WIDE SHOT** of it standing on a white picket fence.

*** This sequence is shot using **MINI DV** or other **STANDARD DEFINITION FORMAT**.

PERSON (V.O.)

I've also heard of ways that neighbors communicate with each other to signal that something is wrong - like turning on a certain light or leaving another light on means that everything is cool. My neighbor and I have a system of our own where we've agreed that he would sit at his kitchen table by the window for the rest of his life so I could keep an eye on him. However, one night he disappeared. And then I realized we didn't have a plan for when one of us disappears.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH BOARDWALK - DAY

MED. SHOT - STATIC of a MAN (60) leaning down to pick something up that's out of frame. He lumbers toward the left edge of the frame. *** This entire shot is **DISTORTED** using **MOSAIC PIXELATION** to protect his identity.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA PARKING LOT - EVENING

WIDE ANGLE - HAND-HELD of a shirtless MAN (50) wearing blue jeans, basketball shoes and a white ball cap. He walks backwards carrying a broom and dustpan. The camera follows him obsessively, **ZOOMING IN** and **OUT PERIODICALLY**. This man's face is not obscured by **MOSAIC PIXELATION** - his privacy was surrendered when he left the house in the morning.

*** This scene is shot in forward motion using MINI DV or other **STANDARD DEFINITION FORMAT**. But played in **REVERSE** to blow the audience's minds because they've never seen someone walk backwards before. **EITHER THAT OR THE POINT IS TO CONTEMPLATE THE LABOR OF STRATEGICALLY MAKING A MESS OR PERHAPS FUTILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP.**

EITHER WAY, MAKE IT LOOK LIKE YOU JUST DISCOVERED THE MEDIUM OF VIDEO.

PERSON (V.O.)

So I'm like panicking - I'm freaking out. And in a moment of quiet there's suddenly a knock at the door. I wasn't expecting guests. The knocking got louder and louder. And I go peek out the window but I can't see anyone. Then they started pounding. I'm like "shit, it's the cops." Like nonstop pounding. So I open the door and it's this lady. And she's actually really nice. She said she was in the area conducting surveys and asked if I would be willing to take a survey. I invited her in and offered her some tea and biscuits. But she got all quiet and said it would be "bad idea". I'm like, "Why is tea and biscuits a 'bad' idea?" I'll just say that she was weird. There was just something off about her. Like in her tone. Anyway, she asked for my name.

The following SOLICITOR'S voice is produced using a **VOCAL SYNTHESIZER. *** BE SURE IT SOUNDS FAKE ENOUGH THAT NO ONE WILL THINK IT'S AN ACCIDENT. OR, LIKE YOU JUST DISCOVERED A VOCAL SYNTHESIZER.**

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

Please state your name for the record.

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Tom Cruise.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

And do you perform your own stunts?

(beat)

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Yes.

PERSON (V.O.)

So she asks me a bunch of questions and we chatted. We got along pretty well. Like, I felt comfortable talking to her.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

Have you been having thoughts of rebellion?

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Yes.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

Have you been having thoughts of political assassination?

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Yes.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

Do you now or have you ever played on, in, or around the
New England Patriots?

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Yes.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

I'm glad we've had this talk.

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Me too.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

I have two more questions for you. Same as the first.

Please state your name.

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Tom Cruise.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

And do you perform your own stunts?

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Yes.

The man continues to sweep the parking lot in reverse.

PERSON (V.O.)

So after her questions she marks something on her clipboard. And I'm like "Thanks. Hope that was useful." And she didn't get the cue. She just sat there glaring at me.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

She just sat there?

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Yeah?

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

Then what?

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Okay... she's about to get up and leave. But I notice that she spelled my name Tom Screws. S-C-R-E-W-S.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

No way!

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

I'm like what the fuck?

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

How embarrassing that must have been.

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

For her! Yeah. I'm mean I guess this is a confession because I'm not really Tom Cruise. I just tell people that.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

That's interesting. Tell me what we're looking at here. Who is this man sweeping this parking lot?

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Okay. Look at this guy's dustpan. When this guy looks into his dustpan he sees a cliff. And if he can build up the courage to jump off of this cliff, he'll be rewarded with a different type of cleaning task. But until he builds up the courage to jump off the cliff he's condemned to sweep this parking lot. For pretty much eternity.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALPINE CLIFF - DAY

WIDE ANGLE - HAND-HELD looking downward off a cliff. The edge of the cliff is **IN FOCUS** the distant, alluring ground below is **OUT OF FOCUS**.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT CLIFF - DAY

WIDE ANGLE - HAND-HELD looking downward off a desert cliff. The edge of this cliff fits the **NEGATIVE CONTOUR** of the cliff in the previous shot. Thus, the cliff in this shot is in the **TOP OF THE FRAME**. It too is **IN FOCUS**. The inviting ground below is **OUT OF FOCUS**.

SOLICITOR (V.O.)

You are Tom Screws. You perform your own stunts. - Would you jump?

(beat)

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Yeah. I guess. I mean that's what I'm known for.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

Because you could land it without dying? You can transcend death.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - EVENING

WIDE ARIAL SHOT - STATIC: Of the blue ocean. It's shadowy black where it's not baby blue. It breathes like it's waiting for you to put your guard down.

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Hey, remind me to tell you about this guy, since we're going to the beach later. This water just reminded me of him.

SOLICITOR (V.O.)

Why don't you just tell me now before we go to the beach?

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH BOARDWALK - DAY

WIDE ANGLE - STATIC: of blurred beach. The shot bears a similar aesthetic to when the Two Men were on the beach taking pictures of each other - **BLURRED, LAYERED** - the

vague impression of a shirtless BEACH BUM (30), arms spread, squatting, EMERGES out of the haze of the frame.

A still pose of the beach bum establishes itself **CENTER FRAME**. His layered aesthetic echoes that of the chain of suns when the woman climbs out of the horizon.

CUT TO:

INSERT: CU ANGLE - STATIC: on Beach Bum's face. His mouth agape, spit glistens on his lip. **KEY OUT** the shadows of his face. **SUPER: WIDE SHOT** of the blue ocean. The ocean footage is comprised of **TWO FRAMES** that play **BACK AND FORTH**. The ocean in the man's face twitches, jiggles.

*** The preceding shot is **CROPPED** to the **SHAPE** and **SCALE** of the window in scene 42. It **TURNS BACK** and **AWAY** from the camera to match the window's exact angle (**post**).

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

There's man whose face is all messed up. And it has the ocean all squirming around.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

Where did you first see this man?

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

By the beach.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

For the record please describe your relationship with this man by the beach.

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Uhh. I don't know, we just kinda passed each other by. But I feel like he has the ocean in his face. And it kinda jiggles.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

WIDE ANGLE (LONG LENS) HAND-HELD: Of MAN blowing leaves with a leaf blower. The man's head extends beyond the top edge of the frame - his identity is mysterious. Is he the man who was sweeping the parking lot? The leaves on the lawn of the house next to the lawn he's currently working on cover the grass. However, the strip of grass on that

property that sits between the sidewalk and the street has been blown clear.

On the property the man is currently blowing, the strip of grass that sit between sidewalk and the street is covered by leaves. However, the front grass of that property is nearly blown clear by the man just now finishing up that section.

The result is a checkered effect of green grass and orange leaves bridging to adjacent front lawns.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

Did your neighbor's face jiggle too?

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

Now that you mention it. I believe it may have.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

Are you trying to tell me that you see your neighbor's jiggling face when you look at the sea?

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

No... I mean... maybe.

SOLICITOR (O.S.)

I'm glad we've had this talk.

PERSON (O.S.)

(to Solicitor)

So am I. I'm glad you knocked on my door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - MOMENTS LATER

WIDE ANGLE (LONG LENS) HAND-HELD: Of the man now up on a roof blowing leaves from there. A ladder rests against the rain gutter.

PERSON (V.O.)

Falling off a roof is not the same as jumping off a cliff.

(beat)

Trust me on that.

CUT TO:

INSERT TWO CHANNEL DIPTYCH: EXTREME CU - STATIC: Of

detritus: cat hair, coffee grinds, carrot shavings, sand, and other miscellany embedded in melting ice. The detritus begins to singe, burn.

PERSON (V.O.)

Dear god please let this be the end.

CUT TO:

INSERT MEDIUM SHOTS - HAND-HELD: Of CORNERS of CUBES. The cubes are a light GREY, or WHITE in a dim BLUISH light. It becomes uncertain if we're looking at the interior of the cube's corner or the exterior. This sequence is a **MONTAGE** of shots of corners all closely similar to each other.

PERSON (V.O.)

Ok. So I made one of my most significant pieces back in 1978. It was an installation in an empty white space where we had eight mechanical baseball throwers - like they have at batting cages. But instead of throwing baseballs I had them throw rocks. There were eight of them total. There was one in the center of every wall and every corner - we installed them behind the walls so the rocks would shoot out of a small, round portal. And my studio assistant at the time - who was AMAZING - got the throwers' speed up to 95 miles per hour and used lasers to get their accuracy within a two centimeters. Yeah, so people would enter the space and you'd see mutilated human remains and rocks. It was very interior-landscape. People would come in thinking

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

all the bodies amidst the rocks were sculptures and all the flies - AND SMELL - were just for effect. They would explore the space and then after a randomly selected amount of time a barrage of rocks would shoot out of holes in the walls from all directions and wouldn't stop until the person was completely motionless. Near the end of the exhibition I got greedy - or maybe I got bored? - My gallerist and I were talking about that statistic of how people spend like fifteen seconds with a work of art and move on. So I programmed the throwers so that once the viewer had fallen to the ground the frequency of the rocks would slow down and then aim anywhere below the neck... I just wanted them to spend a little more time with the piece. I'm trying to remember the name of that piece. It had something to do with guilt. Either way. It was with that piece that I realized when you make anything and call it "art" and put it in an "art-space" it immediately becomes kitsch. And that was the last piece of art I ever made.

(beat)

Except for this video.

CUT TO BLACK:

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT TWO-CHANNEL DIPTYCH: EXTREME C/U - STATIC: Of FLOWERS melting in ice then burning to charred ash.

This sequence is to be known as:

INTERMISSION FOR DELETED ACTS.

The two channels depict the same event, however they are shot with **TWO DIFFERENT CAMERAS** and are **SYNCHED** in post. The shots transition with 15-22 second **DISSOLVES**.

The shots should look like this before the hot wind blows:



And after the hot wind:



The purpose of these shots is to encapsulate a deviation from the slim margins of our "Goldilocks" status as an inhabitable climate on Planet Earth. It is imperative that the flowers take on a character within their eroding environment. They should writhe and personify the agony of a child dying of thirst in blinding sun and wind in the bowl of a crusty, barren lakebed after desperately hoping to find water there. Reminds me of dinosaurs.



Allow the flowers to emerge and strike the viewer as fresh, delicate, and precious – a treasure unveiled by the melting ice. Allow the viewer to feel the frustration of watching

them wilt and wither. Give the viewer a DARK QUIET SPACE to watch this video. Perhaps a space with BENCHES or MEDITATION CUSHIONS to contemplate their inability to stop this destruction or inability to be much more than a passive observer? Don't include a score – let the silence leave the viewer to examine and sit with their thoughts and feelings. The intimacy of these camera angles will expire in exchange for views of ubiquitous terror seen with every living eye. Allow them a space to recall fondly when they become a passive victim.

(after long awkward silence)

PERSON (V.O)

I feel like you could just make a video out of this flower diptych material and not complicate things anymore than you have to. Maybe scrap everything else – all the scripted material.

(beat)

Seriously. All of it - all that dialog that feels as inconsequential as a dream? And all that gimmicky editing and effects? I feel like the flowers diptych all on its own encapsulates the most important themes and aspects the script is attempting to communicate. And it's a total nod

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

to your past inquiries as an artist. It operates as painting of sculpture with an A-to-B narrative scene structure – which is the primary rule you were employing with the scripted material. It's contemplative, meditative. It's a fucking still life of flowers! That's what your grandmother and her grandmother made. And you wouldn't be here if it wasn't for one of them sacrificing their family for their art and the other sacrificing their art for their family. Fucking duh!

(beat)

For years you've talked about how you want to create media that made people at peace with dying. I think this is the better work. In fact, you don't even need to talk about those videos or the script. No one even needs to know they ever existed.

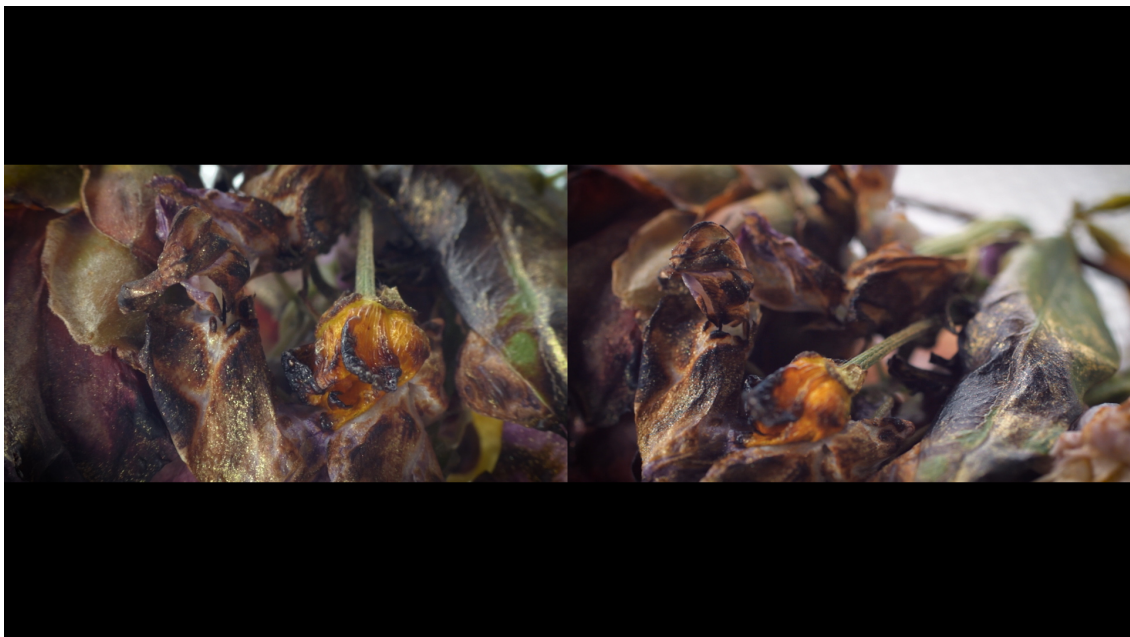
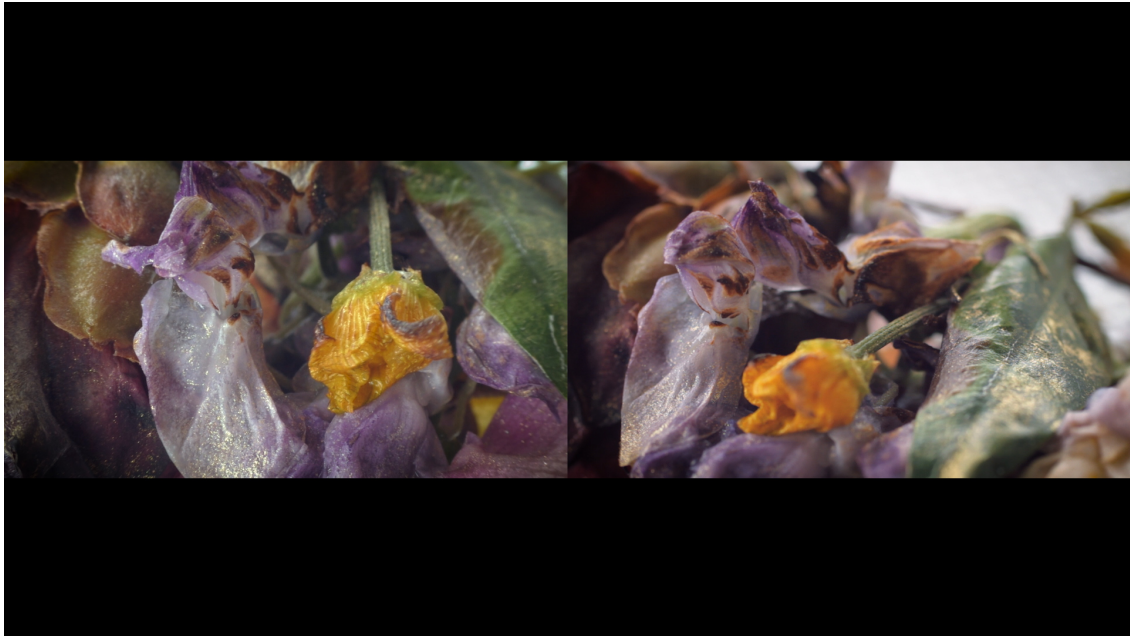
(long beat, awkward silence)

Just do the diptych video. Keep it simple, ya know. Because why would you make your life more complicated than it has to be? And if you want, this can be the last piece of "art" you ever have to show anyone. If you're paying any attention to the work you're making, you'll understand that you're not going to live forever.

PERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Build your life around what makes you joyful.





CUT TO BLACK:

FADE OUT.

Conclusion

This thesis, or “screenplay” as written up until the sequence *Intermission For Deleted Acts* on page 51. is, as stated in the abstract, reflective of a series of videos completed as research during my graduate studies. However, on the opening night of my thesis exhibition, I performed a variation of this script as live voiceover narration loosely synced to a specific rendition of the videos in front of a live audience. The performance lasted roughly forty minutes. The loop known as *Intermission For Deleted Acts* played seven times in a row until 7:20 pm when the sequence known as *A World Without You* began. At that time I appeared in front of the projection with a microphone and amplifier. I delivered the voiceover narration as if it were part autobiography, part art talk.

After the completion of the performance, *Intermission For Deleted Acts* began again and I exited the room. *Intermission For Deleted Acts* played on loop for the remainder of the exhibition. There is no known literature

regarding the performance. And I have intentionally not created any. I made no fliers, no notes, no placards, no sculptural or textural evidence of it in the gallery space. I wanted the performance to be ephemeral, unique, and bewildering. As of now, the only evidence of it are social media posts. The performance exists as a caveat to *Intermission For Deleted Acts* for a handful, maybe thirty-five persons who attending the performance.

The tone of the preceding script – its loose, conversational nature and subjective approach to objective tasks take the same tone of the performance and the delivery of the voiceover narration of the original videos. Technically, *Intermission For Deleted Acts* was achieved by freezing flowers in blocks of ice and melting the ice with a heat gun. The heat was extreme enough to melt the ice and burn the flowers within seconds of each other, creating a paradoxical scenario. Since the heat had no accompanying light, such as fire, its source remains mysterious, metaphorical. The procedure was filmed using two different cameras and then synced during editing. The video playback is in real time; there is no time lapse of any kind.