

Remember : Relive : Rea{lize
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Intro:

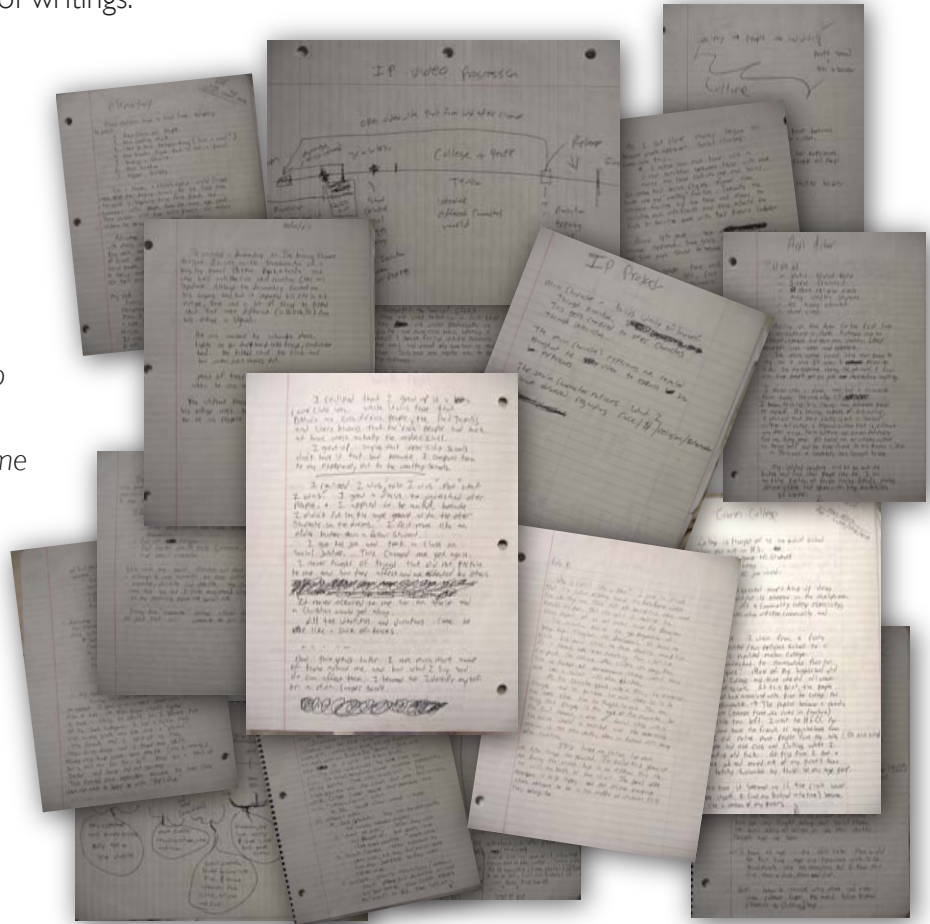
The reality of a situation may not be what it seems. This is the premise of illusionists, philosophers, conspiracy theorists, and my family. Important details of my childhood are strangely different now that I look back as an adult. Every family I have ever come to know has little white lies that they cover up when they go out or have people over. Children quite often are not aware of these lies and grow up in a world of confusion as they begin to realize the truth. In my case, the more I realized, the more I found myself wanting to get away.

My goal is for the audience to become more conscious of the world around them by challenging what they perceive and acknowledging that things may not be what they see. I want to explore my childhood experiences while, for the first time in my life, say the truth behind the family walls. My IP project conveys this idea by showing my family videos in a way that separates the experience and the facade put on by my family. The sound incorporates the actual audio and a narration of the experiences that were actually present in those times. This creates a separation between the audio and video since the narration is about personal things like family struggles, jealousy, and anger while the video shows a happy family. The narration represents my realization of the way members of my family falsely constructs their apparently happy lives. The video footage is manipulated in a way that represents the image my family tries to portray. The video will resemble hand drawn animations. This manipulation masks the reality and causes the situations and characters to appear to be more imaginary, something more than they actually are. The balance between the visual aesthetic and the audio causes a disjunction. The animation style causes the video segments to seem unreal, but the specific details in the narration allow the viewer to realize the actuality of the story.

Beginning:

I began my research with the idea of exploring how my perception of my own economic status has changed over the years. I watched films, read journal articles, excerpts from books, and searched hundreds of pictures portraying poverty. My original intention was to show that people can become rich or poor depending on who they are being compared to. I began a series of writings:

"my experience - only interaction was with my older sister and parents. Mom stayed home and dad worked. At this age, I had no concept of money and thought nothing about social class. We (me & my sister) knew nothing of religion or any other identities except age..."



After analyzing the different stages of my life: early childhood, elementary school, junior high, high school, community college, work, and U of M, I decided to dig out my family home videos and digitize them. Throughout this process, I started to remember more about my childhood. I began a series of free narrations where I thought about a given topic and told my experiences. All together, there are more than 45 minutes of studio-recorded audio of me reliving my childhood.

After listening to these recordings and watching my home videos, I began to realize how there were so many things were not portrayed accurately in the videos. I realized how much of my childhood was based on lies. A violent dysfunctional household was seen in the videos as a happy, loving family. This was our family facade.

Upon having this revelation, I came up with a title/summary for my project.

Remember : Relive : Rea^{lize}_{lies}

Remember: _____

The first stage is to remember the events of the past. In my case, I remember my childhood as being that of a normal middle class boy. We had a house, huge yard, birthday parties, and my family was always coming over. In order to remember more, I began watching the family home videos from the mid-eighties to the mid nineties. In every video, my family acts very social. There are presents all over and I was smiling all the time. I began thinking of how I felt in the segments. Since we didn't have a camcorder, all the footage was at exciting times of the year like birthday's, Christmas, and Thanksgiving. I noticed how much fun I had during these times as a child.

Development process: I began a series of writings to remember my childhood. These were focused on time periods so that I could concentrate on a small block of time. I concentrated on the relationship between me and the other students in my grade at school. I noticed that once I began writing about school, I focused more on the aspects and relationships of my family.

"I always liked thanksgiving, there was so much food. Even though the turkey was always dry, it was still good.... It was something different...."

Relive: _____

Looking back as an adult, things seem different than they did when I was a child. The presents I wanted so much as a child are not that impressive now that I have grown up. In my memories, my family was always over when I was a child, but in reality, they only came over on holidays, and even then, only a handful were present. Watching the footage, I was able to see the event as a whole, whereas when I was a child, I focused on a specific point of the event. This enabled me to see everyone's emotions, body language, and interaction. There is also the current knowledge of family issues that was not present during the video taping, for instance, uncles and aunts that divorced shortly after the event. By taking this current knowledge and more mature mindset, viewing the event as a whole has a profound impact on the way I experience the event again. During the narrative recordings I made, I began speaking of the family secrets. I started to remember the things that are not on any family videos.

Development process: I began a series of recordings where I talked about how I felt when I was given a gift. These recordings started on a specific topic, but usually ended up revolving around my relationship within my family and how we lived. The initial set of three recordings was reviewed and from those narrations, I expanded my recollection of the events into six, 15-minute tracks. I compiled these into one 7-minute narration. This became the backbone of my video.

"We had a dog; it ran away. The weekend later, my dad went out to the back yard and burnt the doghouse in a bonfire."

Rea{lize/lies}: _____

As a child, I did not notice the adult world around me. I was drawn to the false facade in front of me. Emotions were covered up to hide what was really going on. In the videos, I was a happy boy with a close family, friends, lots of toys, and loving parents. In actuality, my extended family was not around and when they were, all they did was argue. I really did not have many friends because my parents did not want the other families to know our business. The few toys we received were only given to us at birthdays and Christmas. They were bought with money my dad made selling drugs. The loving man in the videos, my father, suffers from numerous psychological disorders that have only recently been diagnosed. I grew up in a house where my father led us to believe that there is a conspiracy behind everything. In his opinion, the world is bad; people are bad. Everyone I associated with during my childhood had similar lives at home, so I grew up thinking this was normal. After watching the family videos and narrating my true experiences, I finally saw how abnormal my family was and how they tried to cover that up by putting on a false act when people were around.

Development process: By remembering the details of my past, reliving them through focused narration of specific events and details, I found the parts that were hidden to me. Growing up, I thought my best friend's father was an automotive painter who ran a paint shop out of his garage. His yard had a ten-foot high privacy fence around it so you could not see the dozen cars that were hiding by the garage. It resembled a mini junk yard with a large garage for painting. My parents didn't like me hanging out there and never did give a reason as to why. As I grew older, I learned of the serious drug problems in the household and soon realized that it was actually a chop shop.

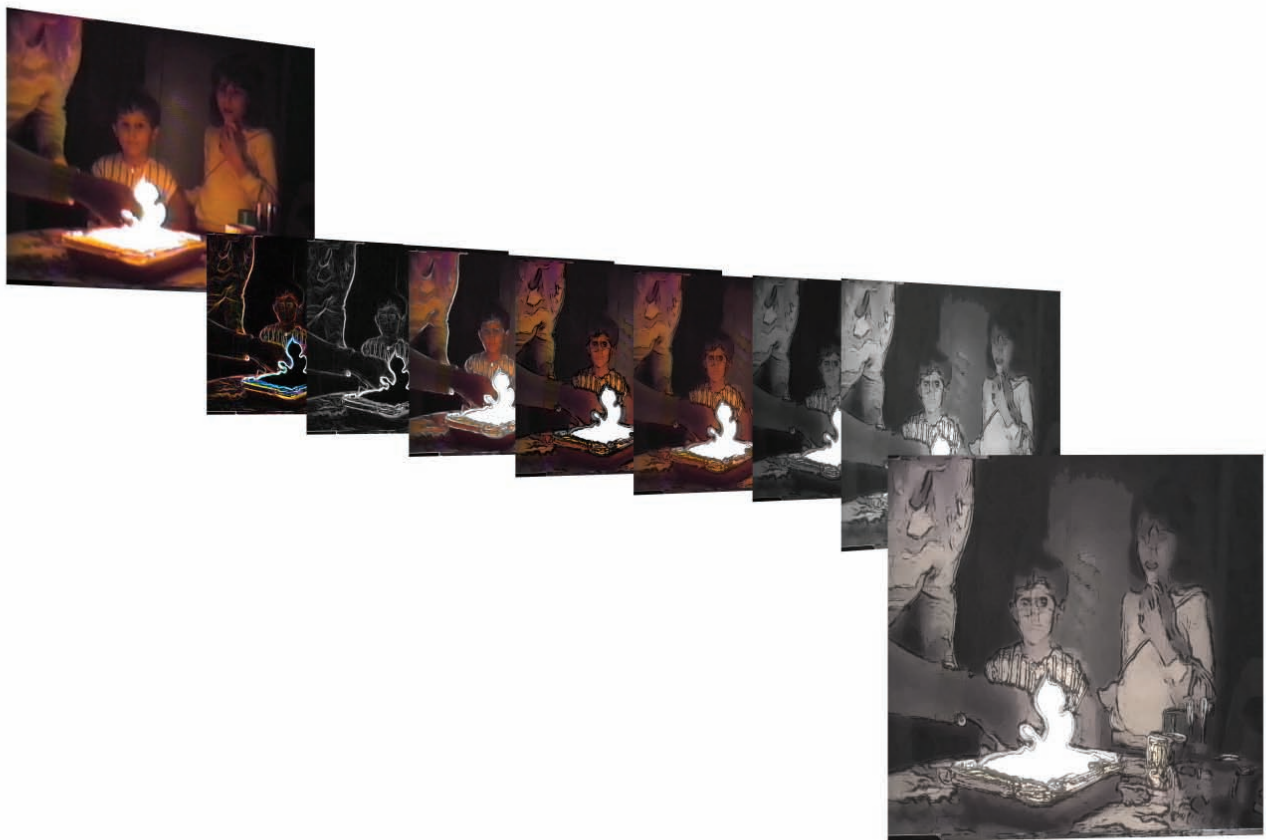
"Me and my sister would have birthday parties and it was the only day of the year that we felt special... It was the only day of the year that we felt important..."

Aesthetics:

I wanted the look to represent my childhood; ordinary, bland, but masked from the reality of the world around me. The video is manipulated in a way that creates the look of an animated charcoal drawing. This method creates a visual representation of the way my family covers up certain aspects of their lives in order to appear different than they actually are. Whenever they are around people outside of the house, they act totally differently. In this idea, a charcoal animation would be a normal family, the manipulated look of the video represents the image my family portrays to other people and the original video footage is the real family life. The audience does not see original footage of my family since my family would never show their true selves to non-family members. The only original footage that is used is a dissolve at the end to show that there is another side to the imagery.

The animations by William Kentridge and Peter Chung have this almost gritty feel to them. Though very different, they both have this aesthetic that simplifies the characters while developing the story. Their sequences can be unsettling if taken out of the context of the story.

To create the look, I converted my family home videos into an image sequence and processed them with a number of filters in Photoshop. This line-based image was layered onto a blurred version of the corresponding images. This gave a charcoal-like look that has color undertones.



One cannot reflect upon his or her self unless that person breaks away and has the opportunity to view from a distance. My project has taken me through twists and turns of my childhood while I remember and realize the truth. Through this animated video diary, I relive my childhood experiences and give a vision of the lies that my family lives..



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