

# Ordinary Thoughts

*Senior Thesis by:*

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My parents came down to Ann Arbor one time this semester to visit and because I was sick with a cold my Mom brought me some homemade potato salad and groceries. My Dad was carrying in a box of food and he had a stub of a cigar perched on the side of his mouth, I said “mmm your cigar smells good Dad” and he glanced at me with a crooked smile because of the cigar between his lips. My parents have laid the foundation of what makes me who I am and if there is one thing that reminds me of childhood it is the smell of my Dads grenadier cigars he occasionally smokes as he works between his barns, it is a scent I have known all my life.

The short *Ordinary Thoughts* evolved from a study about my home on the farm, and my obsession with the weather in Michigan. I have friends and family who all have different favorite times of the year. Craig my brother in-law likes the smell of the crisp air and crackling leaves of autumn right around Halloween, Annette, my older sister enjoys the whiteness just after a fresh snow and the dry warmth of the wood stove that warms our parent’s house. My Mom loves the springtime, she can’t wait to get out in the black dirt that surrounds our house and plant her beloved garden; we have some of the richest most nutrient soil in all of Michigan. When my Grandpa Mitas was still alive we always planted at least two rows of sweet corn and peas on Good Friday no matter how early it fell. My Dad will take any weather without snow because he doesn’t enjoy plowing it, and as for my twin sister Michelle and I, we love the warmth of the sun on our freckled faces and the smell of freshly cut lawn.

My childhood like farming was driven by weather, my Dad was in Vegas with my Mom a few years ago and he wouldn’t put a dime in a slot machine because he said he gambles enough with the crops in our fields. Planting the fields in the spring, spraying them to keep the weeds down in the summer and harvesting the crop in the fall is only possible when the weather conditions are just right, not too windy, not too wet or dry. I didn’t see a whole lot of my parents during the month of May growing up because it was planting season or the month of October during the harvest. They were always in the fields until it was so dark out they couldn’t see anymore. When the planter would need to be refilled with seed my sisters and I would go out and help our Dad lift the 50lb seed bags to fill it up faster so he could keep going. We grow corn, wheat and soybeans on 200 hundred acres that has been in our family for three generations my sisters and I are the fourth.

Waiting around for the weather to warm up in Michigan is part of our lives, since the seasons are always changing. In *Ordinary thoughts* Lisbeth receives a text message on her phone summoning her home. It is autumn and she begins walking, the entire time she walks she is thinking, autumn turns into winter and winter turns into spring and she is still just walking along her cloths changing with the season.

You can tell she is having a good memory because we see a big smile engulf her face, then it cuts to her in summer cloths and she finally reaches her home.

Ordinary thoughts is inspired by the weather and four seasons of Michigan, my relationship to my home, the closeness of my family that has only gotten stronger with age and our obsession to weather being Farmers. In the last few years my sisters houses and mine have become our homes. When we all get together my parents included it is somehow decided where we all are going to meet. The traditions of food and cheer my parents have passed to each of us arise in the opportunities when we all get together. Whether I am cooking chicken popi kosh at my house or pouring bloody marys on a Sunday morning there is a strong sense of home present that comes from the traditions of our parents and our home on the farm.

To have Lisbeth wondering through the atmosphere of the four seasons of Michigan is to portray the past months of this final school year and in part inspired by the book *Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape Our Thoughts, Emotions, and Actions* by Winifred Gallagher. *Power of Place* studies the psychological significance our environment has on our state of being. In many of the examples the environment is the weather of the climate in which we live. One study was of researchers stationed at a high altitude in the mountains during winter. The subject being studied reported himself to be depressed and upset for the first few weeks on the camp. It took his body time to adjust to the frigid conditions and thin air before he could feel normal again and happy. Also his human interaction was minimal for there was only a handful of researches at the camp this was also a factor of his mental state. We take for granted the weather in which we live and just how much it does affect our state of being. In Michigan we only get summer for three months and that is why I appreciate it so much. Also the importance of the people we surround ourselves with, family and friends directly affects how we feel.

Elizabeth Gilbert's novel *Eat Pray Love* follows her through a journey to find God in her life after a challenging divorce. She travels to Italy where she eats a lot of pasta and takes the time to relax, an Ashram in India where she meditates through her emotions of hurt and loss, and finally to Bali, Indonesia where she falls in love again. When she is in Bali her new friend says to her "you are a perfect snail: you carry your home on your back." In Ordinary Thoughts Lisbeth is just trying to go home it relates to the idea that home for me is not only a place but the traditions that I carry with me and it is memories like my dads cigar smoke that really take me home where ever I am.

In Katsushika Hokusai's woodprint series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* the one consistency is that Mount Fuji is always in the print somewhere. The seasons change and the scenes change everything from people in a town in the foreground to the ocean. Big or small Mount Fiji is the subject whether obvious or not. In Ordinary Thoughts the consistency is the girl and her bag, her cloths change with the seasons and the shots alternate from close ups to long takes but like *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* Ordinary Thoughts is a narrative about time, change, and Lisbeth's endurance of these elements.

I draw inspiration for my Animations and film from popular stop-motion artist PES who always has quirkiness to his famously short narratives. Artist Bob Sabison's award winning "*Snack and Drink*" for which he invented the program roto-shop that is custom made as a digital technique for roto-scoping, which was used for the making of feature length films *Waking Life* and *A Scanner Darkly*. Roto-scoping illustrates the eloquence of the visual narrative and its ability to turn ordinary shots of reality into something fantastical through the creative liberties and art of drawing.

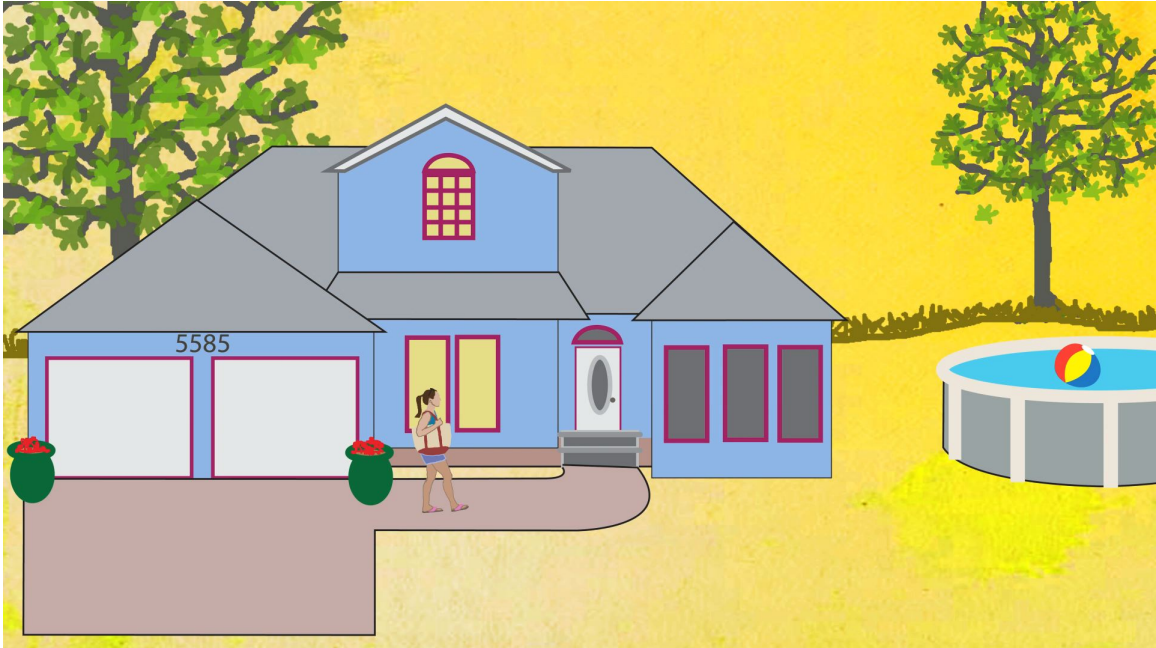
I like to make things move. I like being a creator, to come up with a character to portray their story through visuals and to stimulation the audience's senses is exciting. *Ordinary Thoughts* evolved from a study about my home on the farm and my family's obsession with the weather in Michigan. In *Ordinary Thoughts* Lisbeth is living life through the seasons she wonders threw them searching for her place in the environment, in the world, and it ultimately leads her home.











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