

VA384 Project *Dream* Reflection

Do you feel your subconsciousness is sometimes leading you to a world that you never even dare to imagine? Do you feel your dreams sometimes are way too horrible than the reality? Have you ever experienced sleep paralysis or sleepwalking? I bet at least once your answer is “Yes”. I always dream, and most of my dreams were fantasies. I am not even scared, but I am really into the indescribable way of how those “impossible possibilities” just happened in my dreams. I cannot see anything clearly in my dreams, while I do exquisitely feel the existence and the chaos of it. I believe what I can “see” in those dreams depends on my subconsciousness, which to some extent I am always trying hard to hide when I am awake.

Therefore, with this project of photography, I was trying to release my subconsciousness a little bit, restore the scenarios that I had dreamed, and show you those images with sincerity. As a result, I named this series “Dream”. More than once, I dreamed I could fall into the abyss or walk into another dimension when I was just passing through the hallway as usual; more than once, I dreamed I was lost in an unfamiliar forest without anything accompanying me but darkness and eerie light intertwining and flickering; more than once, I dreamed I stood on the middle of the road, I was about to die because a car was crashing into me at high speed...for those moments, I only remember glittering, fragmented and overlapping images. I cannot even make up a complete image or a storyline out of them, but I have found it so exciting.

Before this project was taken into practice, I showed my original ideas to the instructor, Tetsuomi Anzai (Tetsu). I told him I was about to use multiple exposure as the technique and shoot a series of fantasy-like “Op art” photography using existing buildings, doors and landscapes as subjects. I was thinking about constructing the photography from the camera’s perspective as I could manipulate the camera angle, the ways of loading film and the ways of multiple exposure. However, Tetsu disagreed. He explained that construction for photography is not about how I can manipulate the camera, but how I can do with the scenes, sceneries or scenarios in front of the lens. It is also a little different from staged photography (staging for photography). I do not have to provide a specific setting, instead, I am supposed to create “installations” for photography. What can I do with the subjects that I shoot to make them look different in the lens? What can I add to the existent objects in nature

and the artificial constructions? What kinds of special relations can I build to link the objects with my camera? Can I create optic illusions merely by using realistic solid objects? I thus realized that I needed to focus on the preproduction of the project rather than the shooting technique or the postproduction.

As a result, with those questions in mind, I did the project. Each of the series is of double or more exposures. I made the lighting effects by capturing the light and shadow on the white wall on the first exposure of each film separately. I took advantage of an LED headlight, three crystal prisms in different shapes, and my specially measured lighting angles to capture the lighting effects cast on the wall of my apartment. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I could only take a journey around where I live, so one midnight I decided to go “sleepwalking” from my unit hallway to the nearest road. I do not even remember if I was awake during the entire process, it felt more like an adventure. I cannot even tell if I was really “dreaming” sometime. Nonetheless, the results turned out to be enjoyable because I successfully documented my dreams in reality. Consequently, the entirety of the process showed a great deal of inventiveness and satisfied a lot of what it means to engineer the image for the camera. With the instructor’s feedback and advice, I finally succeeded in this project.

As mentioned above, unfortunately, the project was done during the hard time of the outbreak of COVID19, I just finished processing the films before the school studio was shut down. Alternatively, Testu provided us with an option: instead of printing all the films, create documentation of the making process of the project. This is such an effective way and the documentation of photography reminds me of the famous photographer and director, Gregory Crewdson, who treats photography as filming and he creates filmic storyboards each time he does a photography production. As I have done much documentation work for my performance projects, I started to think about developing a habit of documenting any artworks this way in the future. Documentation of artworks can offer me a great chance to look back to my previous experience and get some feedback from my own records. This is another way of self-reflection.