

Writing Process



Write everyday (or almost)

The Core of the Idea



It usually starts with a feeling, with a tendency to think/perceive the idea in particular ways.

Start from identifying the core of the idea, the kernel, what you really aim to convey.

This is itself a process.

Break your idea/feelings into manageable questions that help you cover all aspects of your film.

Gradually start putting those into words by writing a lot about your idea.

Observation



You observe with your whole body, not only with your eyes. Awareness. Curiosity.

Often you observe things that you have reflected upon. Others could still be invisible.

You could prepare for observation through writing.

Writing have a pace and a rhythm that can foster reflection. It's a good tool.

You'll discover what you know about the subject, what you don't know, what you don't know you know/don't know...

Reality checks are extremely important.

Speculation



Take your observations a bit further.

Stretch your writing as in fiction.

Imagine what is possible.

You start passing from reality to the reality of your film. (Your film is not the same as reality!)

Two-way process: reality checks-peculations-reality checks.

Explorations, detours and the core

Exploration through writing: potential structures, narrative approach, aesthetic approach...

Through writing, you imagine your film in many ways.

Allow yourself to be excited by certain directions your idea takes. But keep questioning them.

Go back to the core idea(s). Put your explorations in conversation with the core ideas.

Coming back to the core of the idea usually will give you confidence. You will find yourself again after detours. But these explorations might find a place in your film. Some things are only apparently contradictory...

Scale



The process of finding your core ideas allow you to assess the scale of your film.

Do I need to go to América to tell what I really want?

For me less is more and small is beautiful. Is my film responding to my filmmaking philosophy?

For each particular scene

What am I looking for with this scene?

Why do I think is needed?

What function this could have in the film?

With which other scenes is this one most clearly in conversation?

What are the desired outcomes for this scene?

How do I work to achieve them if reality is unpredictable? Or is it not?

What other outcomes could come out?

Synopsis



Elements that it can contain:

- Character
- Story
- Background
- Conflict
- Theme
- Mood/tone
- Any other element of development (change/progression, personal connection, approach, metaphors, etc)

Synopsis *Pablo's Winter*

Pablo needs to stop smoking. Why? Because his wife, family and doctor say he should. But Pablo is a stubborn man. He has worked in the mercury mines of Almadén, Spain, risking his life daily. He has had five severe heart attacks and smoked 20 Winston cigarettes a day since he was 12. Now in his seventies, Pablo spends most of his day in front of the TV, surrounded by a cloud of smoke, with his back turned firmly towards a village that has lived through better times.

Pablo represents the last generation of Almadén mercury miners, an age-old profession with over 2,000 years of history. Through a straightforward depiction of life's everyday moments, **Pablo's Winter** explores the decay of the local mining culture, but above all, pays homage to its real protagonists: the miners and their families.

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Synopsis *Donkeyote*

SHORT SYNOPSIS 1

Manolo leads a simple life in Southern Spain and has two loves in life: his donkey “Gorrión” (“Sparrow”) and the freedom of wandering through Nature. Already in his seventies, Manolo wants to live his biggest adventure yet. He wants to walk through the USA, but he does not want to leave Gorrión behind. Manolo’s family, travel agencies, American Embassies, they all think that Manolo has lost the plot. But this man and his donkey will wander through nature, villages, and cities in order to make the joint trip to America happen. Ultimately, this quixotesque quest goes beyond whim to become a reflection on the relationship between Man and Nature.

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SHORT SYNOPSIS 2

Manolo leads a simple life in the south of Spain. He has two loves: his animals, in particular his donkey Gorrión (“Sparrow”), and taking long wanders through nature. Against the advice of his doctor, he decides to plan one last walk by re-tracing the Trail of Tears, a brutal forced 2200-mile trek through the Native American Cherokee Nation. Even though the United States is a very far and ambitious journey to make on foot, Manolo wants to take his favourite walking companions, Gorrión and his beloved dog, Zafrana. But how to overcome the small obstacle of transporting a donkey, Manolo’s chronic arthritis, a history of heart attacks, and Gorrión’s fear of water? As their adventure continues, Manolo’s wondrous friendship with his animals finds a beautiful equilibrium, man and beast intrepidly braving the harsh landscape together. Will they find the American West? More importantly, will they be able to see life as it is, and not as it should be?

Synopsis *Donkeyote* (Hot Docs)

Inseparable wanderers, Manolo and Gorrión share a dream: to travel to America and follow the Trail of Tears, the route of the Cherokee nation's forced displacement westward in the 1800s. The only things standing in their way? Logistics. Finances. Age. One has a bum knee, the other has a fear of water. One is a septuagenarian, the other is an Andalusian donkey. The odds seem stacked against them ever getting to America from southern Spain, but odd is exactly what this pair is. Leading a forgotten way of life, sitting by fires and sleeping under stars, Manolo, Gorrión and Zafrana the German Shepherd explore the Spanish countryside on foot, at an entirely different pace from those around them. Gentle, tender and triumphant, *Donkeyote* shows that even in a landscape dotted with wind turbines and crisscrossed by train tracks, there's an open road if you're willing to take a slower route. **Angie Driscoll (Hot Docs)**

Synopsis *Polaris*

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In recent years many Filipino workers have migrated from their tropical homeland to the fishing towns and villages of Scotland to find work on the trawlers. However the ocean can be a very lonely place, it can swallow your words. The continuous sound of the boat's engine, the overwhelming ocean and the never-ending repetition of work make for a disorientating and isolating experience. *Polaris* is a glimpse into the lives of these migrant fishermen and a reflection on the function of work in our lives.

<https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/8bf1b656-db99-4dc3-9475-1709d3c0dc3e/polaris>

Long Synopsis *Encierro*

In 1984, 11 miners locked-down inside the mercury mines of Almadén (Southern Spain) to claim for better working conditions. Inside the oldest and most productive mercury mines in world's history, the miners endured in the dark and contaminated galleries for 11 days and nights until their claims were addressed.

35 years later, an emigrated local filmmaker comes back to post-industrial Almadén with the idea of making a film about the mining strike. The premise of the film is to find young locals willing to live inside the now-closed mines for 11 whole days to homage the old miners and recreate the experience of 1984. What it starts as a local reenactment of a past mining strike, soon will turn into a social movement throughout the whole shire to demand a better future for this post-industrial area.

The 11 young people locked-down in the galleries attracts media attention throughout Spain, with national broadcasters covering live their entrance in the mines and reporting their days underground. People from the surface sustains the locked-down participants by sending food, messages and support. The participants in the mine start demanding political solutions to this area. Politicians start worrying that this film project can turn into a social conflict.

Everyday life starts closely resembling the events of 1984. There is confusion as to whether people on the surface are following a script, or showing their genuine desire for a better future. Tensions arise between participants, the mine management and the creatives of the project. Participants threaten with no leaving the mine after the 11th day. And the day is fast approaching...

Synopsis *Encierro*

SHORT SYNOPSIS 1

In 1984, 11 miners went on strike in the mercury mines of Almadén (Southern Spain) to claim for better working conditions. 35 years later, an emigrated local filmmaker comes back to post-mining Almadén with the idea of making a film about the mining strike. What if 11 people lock themselves in the mine now, when Almadén suffers high rates of unemployment, emigration, and pessimism after the closure of the mines? What it starts as an homage to the past, soon transforms into a widespread social movement that hope for a better future in this area.

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SHORT SYNOPSIS 2

In 1984, the hard fought protest of 11 Spanish mercury miners made the national news as they barricaded themselves hundreds of meters below ground in a mining shaft for 11 days and 11 nights in protest of poor working conditions and pay. 35 years on, the mine is closed for good, the world in Almadén has changed but the problems kept growing. Can the spirit of the miners' strike rise once more and help bring hope and social justice to a community isolated in their fate? A reenactment turns into social action -a film becomes a protest movement.

Synopsis exercise (homework: first part)

Write three different synopsis for your film idea.

Each synopsis should/could explore different “layers” of your film idea. Make them as different as possible!

This particular exercise is not about writing three versions of the same synopsis. Rather, it is about writing a synopsis for three different films that could be made from your film idea.

Try to work with some of the main elements of synopsis: character, story, background, theme, tone, mood, etc..

Synopsis exercise

(homework: second part)

Take one of the synopsis amongst the three you have written for class. The one that at this moment feels closer/more interesting for you.

Experiment with that synopsis, writing 3 different versions. In each of them you can foreground different aspects/approaches. It could centre more on character, or story, or theme. It could try to convey the story as clearly as possible, or being more literary, more poetic, etc....

After you have explored different ways of writing the “same” synopsis, put one synopsis together that bring together the main aspects. It could combine elements from the three versions. Send to arturo.Delgado@aalto.fi and salla.sorri@aalto.fi by Monday 3 pm.

Example three different synopsis (first part of assignment)

The difficulty of giving up

How it feels when letting go feels impossible. When letting go, do the memories disappear at the same time? Or do the memories remain alive in the mind? Does touch have a connection to memories. The documentary examines three main characters who are forced to give up their property due to aging. Through relinquishment, not only goods and chattels disappear, but a whole period of life lived.

Inventive further processing

Think you've seen it all? You certainly haven't seen everything! Many of us use stuff and materials for their intended purposes, but this documentary is about when stuff are modified to meet new needs and solve problems. In the documentary, through the three main characters, we get to know their way of reusing things that have already been used. They give goods and materials a new life, a life you couldn't imagine in the first place.

My Collection

Where are you? Oh, you're over there behind that pile, why can't I see you? We experience stuff and things differently, some try to get rid of them, but this documentary opens up another side. We get to know the collections of the main characters, where we always find different kinds of goods, materials, and stories inside a new pile. Every item and material has a story, some longer and others shorter. The goods have not been used for a long time, but there will still be a day when we still need them.

Mood board



Mood board is a type of visual presentation or collage consisting of images, text, and samples of objects in a composition. A mood board can be used to convey a general idea or feeling about a particular topic.

- Creative artists use mood boards to visually illustrate the style they wish to pursue.
- Mood boards can also be used to visually explain an imaginary setting for a story line.
- They can be also used to visually show the different layers or elements in the film and the relationships and dynamics between them.
- It is as a visual tool to quickly inform others of the overall "feel" (or "flow") of an idea.