Video Arts Final Project Artists' Statement

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Abstract

This paper intends to explain the installation work called *What Am I Thinking About*. More specifically it is about how to produce the videos and why to choose to make an installation with video. In this video, the relationship between the imagination and reality is shown in the main video, using three storylines to reflect the process of inspiration. This video has referred to Gary hill's artworks and contained the transformation of our own ideas. In addition to the video itself, the background sound and the voiceover are also related to the video, while have expanded the feeling of different dimensions.

Keywords

Gary Hill, mixed media, installation, shooting, editing, multichannel, video art, inspiration, imagination, visualization

Introduction

Title: What Am I Thinking About
Mixed media installation
Video: Color
Duration Time: 00:05:20:02
Date: 20190517
Equipment: Canon D6 SLR camera, Zoom H6 recorder, tripod, shotgun microphone
Monitor: Two 12.9-inch iPads, one 9.7-inch iPad
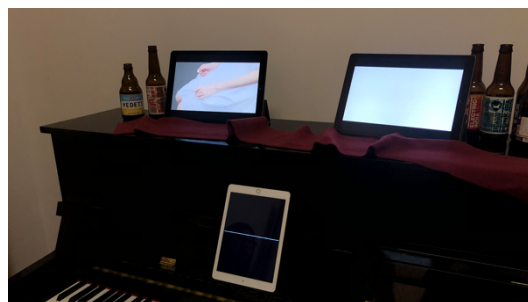Edition: Adobe Premier, Adobe Audition, Adobe After Effect

Figure 1. Installation

The work is called What am I thinking about, is a mixed media installation reflected how the girl thinking, produced for presenting the process of a girl's imagining and being inspired by the objects. The main video of the work was recorded in high-definition format (1920*1080), and is shown on two 12.9-inch LCD monitors (iPads). Images are mainly fixed shots with different perspectives and angles, while combined the use of moving lens with the viewpoint composition (view from the top) and triangle composition to enhance the visual dynamic. The images of the girl are mainly close-ups of the fractions showing her hands, back, one-side shoulder, arms and so on, accompanied with some medium close-ups, whose aim is to show her thinking and seeing things and her imagination. The sound added to the work contains the sound of the movements, voice over, and partial piano pieces as background sound. The piano pieces not only render a feeling that something's happening inside the brain, but also match the element of our installation (the actual piano).

Figure 2. The view from the top composition.

General Description of Arguments

Having some knowledge of the famous video artist Gary Hill and his works, we are interested in his notion of "language" and his unique combination of different media in his video and installation artworks. Having gone through the history and basic knowledge of video arts and

being inspired by Gary Hill's works, a video installation was decided to be made to show the understanding of Hill's making use of video, monitors and sound to express ideas and meanings. The video art work is finally constructed as an installation consisting of three video monitors, with two playing the same video clip as the main video, and one showing the video of the audio-visualization of sound volume from the soundtrack of main video clip shown on the other two screens. In the following sections, the inspiration gained from Gary Hill, the meanings and contents of the main video, and the editing techniques we applied will be further discuss.

Argument 1 Inspiration from Gary Hill

1.1 Characters of Gary Hill's Works

We are interested in his Video installations which investigating the complex relationship between language and images. Many of his works have sound and made use of speak. His works are all the mixtures of visual, structural, and sound components. Many of his video devices are composed of multiple screens, while screens of the works are not on a horizontal plane.

1.2 From Inspiration to Practice

Having gone through all Hill's works, it is easy to find that almost all of his works are installations, while most of them are multi-channel or mix media installations. We refer to his installation and characters and try to enhance the interaction between the work and the audience through synesthesia like him.

When shooting images, especially when shooting people, we adopt different perspectives, highlight the action or the moving process of fractions, and, at the same time, enlarge the sound of the movement that corresponding to images, whose purpose is to let the audience noticed the sound related to the images which they rarely notice or pay attention to in our daily life. At the same time, we combined the text and added it to the installation in the form of narration. Meanwhile, we combine the use of text that is related to theme of the main video and the images, adding it to the installation by voice over. Our installation works can thus achieve the similar purpose of Gary Hill's works, that is, to mobilize and integrate multiple senses of the audience through the video and sound of the installation, which further enhance the interactivity of our works.

1.3 Media and Space

The media used in our installation are two 12.9-inch iPads and one 9.7-inch iPad as video monitors, and one piano. And the space we installed our work is a small instrumental practice room at the first floor of CC building. This space is small and soundproof, which is conducive to creating a pure and clean environment, so that the audience can have a better audio-visual experience, and engage in our work. Applying three iPads as video monitors is because they have simple appearance that works well with the environment without interrupting viewers' attention to the whole work. Also, the smaller screen of the three can be used to play different content without interfering too much with the two larger screens as dominant ones. The significance of the piano is that we want to express the feeling that the piano is playing by itself, which seems to spontaneously supplement a part of the video soundtrack.

Argument 2 Meanings and Contents of the Main Video

Our main video is split into two pieces to be played by two video monitors. The contents played by the two video clips are different. The two videos intermittently play the divided contents of the whole after being separated. The integration of these two contents is the complete work. The reason for this kind of operation is that we want to show that the two contents are in different dimensions. The video clip played on left side is the real scenes, while the video clip played on right side shows the fictional scenes. So, what is our story? It will be explained as follow.

2.1 Theme of the Main Video

The themes embedded in the main video are imagination and inspiration. The idea is that if our imagination can be a person in the real world, what would it do? Would it do something that its master (the person who is thinking or wondering) could not do or would find it hard to do? The idea also derived from three pictures. The three pictures recording process of creating the painting providing an inspiration about how our imagination can work while we are to create an abstract artwork. The pictures are also included in our main video.

2.2 Three Storylines of the Main Video

As stated above, the dominant video is about imagination and inspiration. Therefore, we divided a girl, her imagination of the daily-life objects she associated with, and the drawing and painting elements that her imagination is manipulating into three storylines. Meanwhile, the real scenes and the fictional scenes are placed in two different videos, but as said, should be combined as a whole.

Except for scenes of the girl sitting on the chair, the primary ones, other scenes are all in her imagination, the supported ones. Different kinds of objects, even some of the girl's movements, are

the "products" of the girl's imagination. In order to create a virtual feeling of the fictional scenes expressing association and imagination, we construct the images into non-narrative clips. The images of the girls' action and the ones of the imagination support each other, so that the meaning of the main video can be fully expressed. These three storylines also represent us ourselves who are outside of the video, and our imagination.

2.3 Elements of Each Storyline

All elements, definitely, are related to the theme of imagination and inspiration. They are also related to the painting we show at the end. Inside the video images, the colors of the elements indicate the result painting as clues. Every color of the object we show in the video makes sense by connecting with the colors of the final painting, which also represents a kind of transformation of the imagination. The elements like the fruits, the flowers, the mirrors, the toy elephants, the feather lamp, the bottles, and so on, are reflecting the girl's association with the daily-life objects which inspired the girl. However, the drawing paper, the pencils, the brushes, the pigments, and the other tools suggesting the process of creating a work by her imagination. Finally, but the most importantly, are the movements of the girl's sitting on the stool, fixing her hair, touching her arms and scratching her clothes, which reflect the real-world storyline.

Argument 3 Shooting and Editing

To better express our intent and the theme of the video installation we make, we incorporate various video shooting, video editing and sound editing techniques. In this section we will detailly discuss the intentions and methods of applying those techniques to convey the ideas and meanings behind.
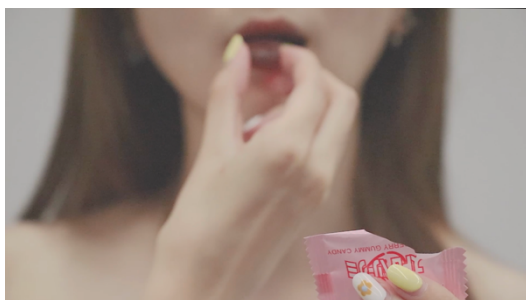
3.1 Video Shooting

Figure 3. The close-up scene (eating sweet).

Techniques in shooting help to draw audiences' attention to the things we want them to focus on. Therefore, shooting technique like fixed shooting, horizontal panning and crane up or down, which are based on level horizontal line or tilting horizontal line, are mainly used to shoot the original video materials, and shooting angles like close-up and extreme close-up are also accessed concomitantly.

First group of examples, a large part of the shots, is the fixed shots. There are some examples of Gary hill's works like Loop Through which shows the application of this kind of technique. [1] The girl or objects are in motion when using this technique. Fixed lens, combined with close-up technique, are beneficial to well reflect the subtle movements of the girl or the local dynamics of the objects, so as to represent the forms or features of the girl and the objects, and to achieve visual harmony. For example, the shots of the girl eating candy use fixed lens shooting, which help focus only on the girls' movement. [2] And the scene of the paper plane flying from side to side also applies this technique.

Second group of examples is the ones which applied panning and crane up or crane down. Some shots in this group follows the movements of the girl or things, but mostly the shots represent the states and features of the static objects. The combined use of panning, or crane up/down with close-up or extreme close-up highlights the details of things and attracts the audiences to look at things from different perspectives and distances. This has enhanced the visual interest to a certain extent. For instance, we shot the static object flowers in a moving way. The lens moved from top to bottom, then from the left to right, which is put in the two static scenes and aims at creating an association of activity and inertia. And it also shows a silent world thought something is shaky, it presents an unsearchable feeling. The second example is that a brush is stirring in a transparent kettle, and the water in the kettle is light blue. This lens is handheld work, so the image is ramshackle and even makes audience dizzy.
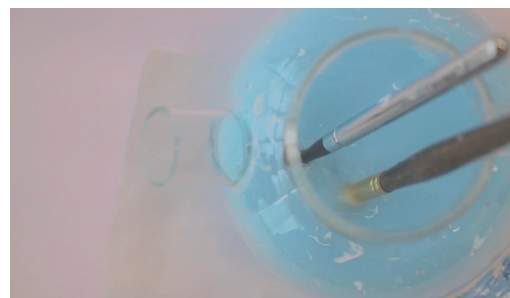

Figure 4. Handheld lens.

The transport method of lens learns from a famous Hong Kong director named Karwai Wong, he always uses this kind of shaky footwork to make his movie achieved an emotion expression. As a result, we choose this method to follow the shift with the brush as well as the emotion of the girl who are pursuing something in her brain or mind.

3.2 Expressing through Video Editing

Video editing techniques like cut-away and match up could help in connecting video clips to make the action or story visually coherent, while jogging, slow motion, and fast-speed editing could exaggerate or detail the motion of the objects that are necessary in presenting their features and forms. There are many specific examples. The first one example is girl eating a candy. The clip that girl tearing off the candy'package is cut away, then image of the girl putting the candy into mouth is matched up. We use the cut-away and match up technique to make two gestures continuous that creates a complete narrative and wipes off useless fragments. [3] The second example is for explaining the slow-motion technique. In the scene which the girl sitting on the chair with her flying skirt uses the slow-motion technique because we want to magnify the passing of time and quiet environment. What's more, the slow-moving skirt horn and slimmer shanks convey an unspeakable desire with lily atmosphere, then audiences may image the girl's facial expression and mental activity which can achieve a mental interactive.

Figure 5. The slow-moving lens.

Since we do not intent to create a narrative story, the video also applies playback technique to add dynamics. The prominent example for playback technique is ink going back from water glass and disappearing in the frame. What we want to express in this playback frame is that inspiration always breaks out in unexpected moment and flashes across sometimes, we need to do back run to catch up with this sudden and creative moment. Therefore, playback technique accords with this concept extremely.

For the whole video, colors are adjusted to desaturate the images and reduce the contrast of them. This process is accessed for the intention of creating a consistent and aesthetical atmosphere to the video. For achieving this goal, we set the basic tone for the whole video firstly. We chose white and gray as our basic tone on account of that we want to make the image been pure and simple. Then we adjust the color's data of all of clips according to our basic tone and main theme. We also use a film filter to convert the normal
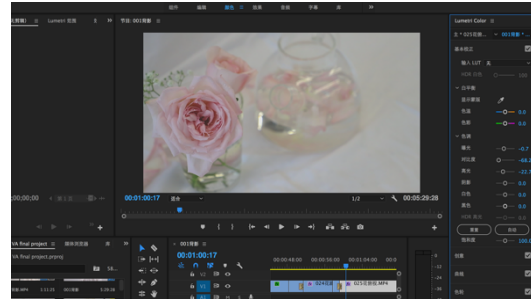

Figure 6. color arrangement.

texture into a blurry sense of reminiscence.

3.3 Soundtrack Supporting the Video

The soundtrack of the video is composed by a piece of voice-over, the original recording of the sound that are in sync with the video images, and some music clips.

The texts of the voice-over are short sentences in Chinese which are similar to people's muttering when thinking, and thus match with the theme and contents of the video. The English translation of the texts are as follow:

> It seems…nothing could be better than that.
> This…also looks beautiful.
> Or…something like this?
> Let it flies It could be fine.
> Is the pure white…from start to finish…no one cares.
> What is left can always be made up elsewhere.

Some sound of the actions or motions are in sync with the video images, which were recording exactly at the same time when using camera
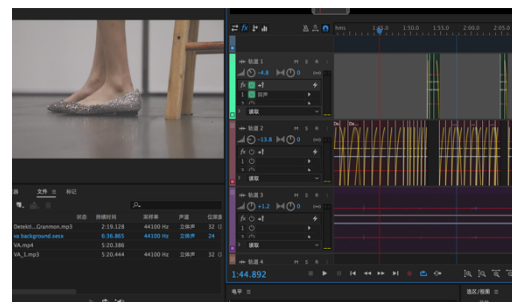

Figure 7. Sound produce.

shooting the images. Such as the sound of shoes rubbing on the ground, marble chocolate hitting on beer bottles, water flowing, pens drawing on paper, and so on. These sounds are of high quality, making the picture more authentic and sophisticated. Subtle and beautiful sounds can create an immersive environment. Especially the sound of shoes rubbing and knocking on the ground, it makes a sense of anxiety and aggression though we can't distinguish it is relaxed or nervous. Retaining these sounds and

properly amplifying them enables the audience to have an intuitive auditory experience synchronous with the visual experience, and further promotes the correlation between the picture and the sound.
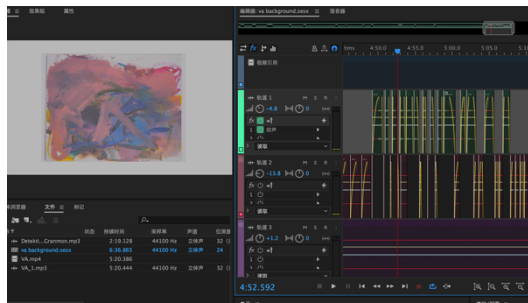

Figure 8. Music clips.

Music clips mixed in the soundtrack are aimed to promote the dynamic of listening, which are also composed to match the temper of the images. [4] In the whole video, we use piano music as a background music. Piano music is also an invisible emotional expression. In addition, the brain is stimulated by the sound of the piano to produce different emotional changes, using the piano to aid the expression of the visual elements of the pictures. Furthermore, we also cut the piano rhythm to fit with the quick changing images which can construct tension and It is also the signal that the video reaches its climax. By the use of music, the rhythm of both audio and video images are enhanced, so that it can integrate the audience's auditory perception and echo the visual sense, and thus supporting the whole video and enhancing people's visual and auditory experiences of the installation.

3.4 Audio-visualization of Sound Volume

As said above, there is one video monitor used to show the audio-visualization video of the soundtrack. The aim of the audition audio-visualization is to enhance people's auditory perception of the text and sound, and to strengthen the internal connection between the dominating video and the sound, even though the images from the audio-visualization video would seem quite different from the main one.
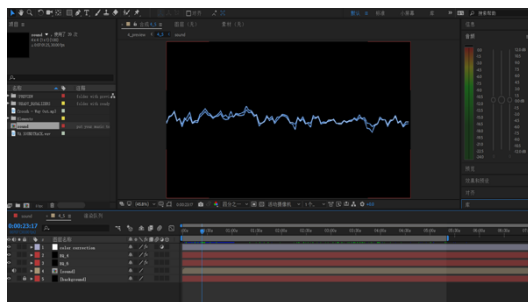

Figure 9. Sound visualization.

Sound volume is chosen to be the content of the audio-visualization video because the changes in the volume is the first thing people normally can feel in when hearing or listening. The visual aids by images can enhance people's perception of the sound they hear, and thus promote the audio-effect of the whole work on the audience. This is consistent with the core of Gary Hill's work. [5]

Conclusion

Referring to Hill's making use of video, monitors and sound to express ideas and meanings and being interested in his notion of "language" a video installation consisting of three video monitors was made. The main video playing on two of the monitors reflects the theme of imagination and inspiration, which contained three lines of stories with one as dominant and the other two as support. Another one monitor shows the audio-visualization of sound volume from the
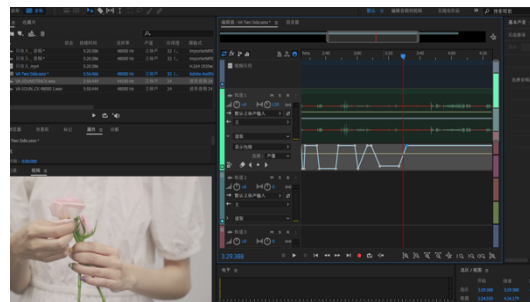

Figure 10. Sound channel switch.

soundtrack of the main video, which strengthens the internal connection between the dominating video and the sound, although it seems to be quite different from the main video images.

For the contents of the main video, the close-ups of the girl and her actions are the parts to construct the primary story, which is used to show that the subject of imagination and inspiration is people. Objects, such as fruits, flowers, white shirts, feathers and so on, are parts of one branch line to express the association of things in creation. Paint, brush, paper and other tools constitute the other branch line, suggesting that the girl in the main storyline is creating something related to painting.

In terms of shooting, shooting technique like panning, crane up, and shooting angles like extreme close-up, close are applied to draw audience focus on one single thing including its form and movements to show its character. Meanwhile, editing techniques like cutaway, match cut, slow motion, fast-speed editing, and playback are incorporated to maintain the consistence and show the relationship of the storylines, and to exaggerate or elaborate the features and forms of the objects. Also, colors of

the images are adjusted to create a coherent aesthetic atmosphere. [6]

The sound of the installation contained human voice as text-based voice-over related to video images and the theme, the sound of actions and the objects' movements, and some music clips that could match the temper of the images, which integrates the audience's auditory perception and echoes the visual sense, thus enhancing people's visual and auditory experiences of the installation.

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