



Reflection

Group 5 - 12

Yu Ke Mi (L) 4O1

Cao Yuxuan 4B1

Mentored by: Ms Grace Ong

Medium chosen: Film

We chose to film as a medium as it is a time-based media, allowing us to present our work in a way that is more immersive than other mediums. Unlike static artworks like photos and paintings, a time-based medium allows us to invoke emotions at specific times and audiences to connect better to the film. Film can capture high amounts of details and thus create impactful endings and elicit strong reactions and emotions from the viewer.

Inspiration:

Both of us were extremely passionate about film and shared different skill sets that we wanted to employ to create one. Thus, we wanted to create a short suspense thriller film as that genre really appealed to us both and our favourite films were of a similar sort. Although we lacked experience creating films like these, we were determined to make one higher-quality creative film.

Role allocations:

We based our role allocations on what we each had more experience in and split the work as evenly as possible.

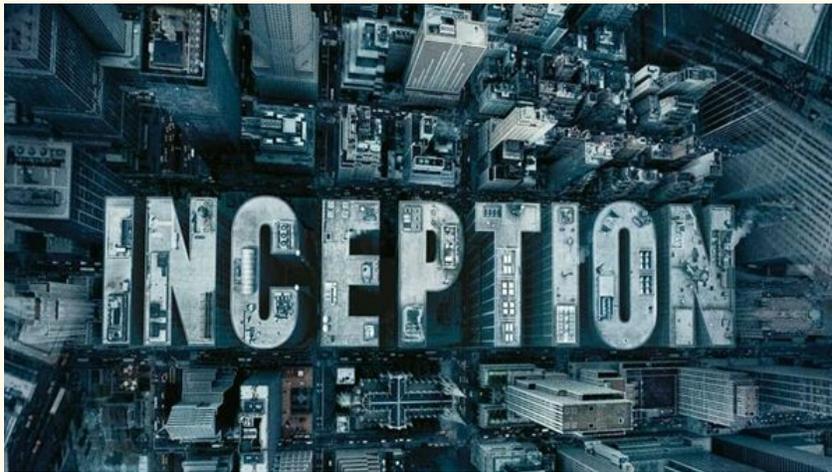
Yu Ke Mi - Ideation, Pre-production, Story-boarder, Scriptwriter, Director, Cinematographer

Cao Yuxuan - Ideation, Scriptwriter, Actor, Editor, Colourist

Artist influences:

Inception:

Inception had many interesting themes and symbolism behind it, which we also wanted to add to our film. It also had an ambiguous ending, which suited our thriller aspect in our film. We adapted this into a cliffhanger ending in the final product.



Parasite:

We were inspired by Parasite's composition, framing and colour grading aspects which we greatly admired and decided to incorporate similar techniques into our film.



Previous ideas and works:

Ideation:

First ideas:

In total, we came up with 34 concepts and iterations and developed and fleshed out 15 of them with great detail:

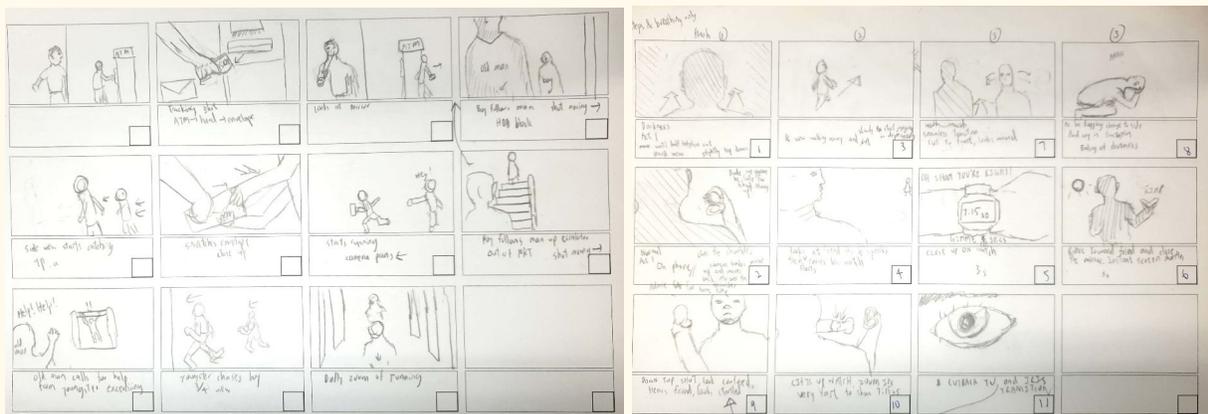
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Y9r81Xhe2ZXvszILWVnaHYMnPDZeZUp6Mg4ZI0izHP4/edit?usp=sharing>

We scrapped most of them due to disputes between each other regarding the plot or the sheer impracticality of filming them.

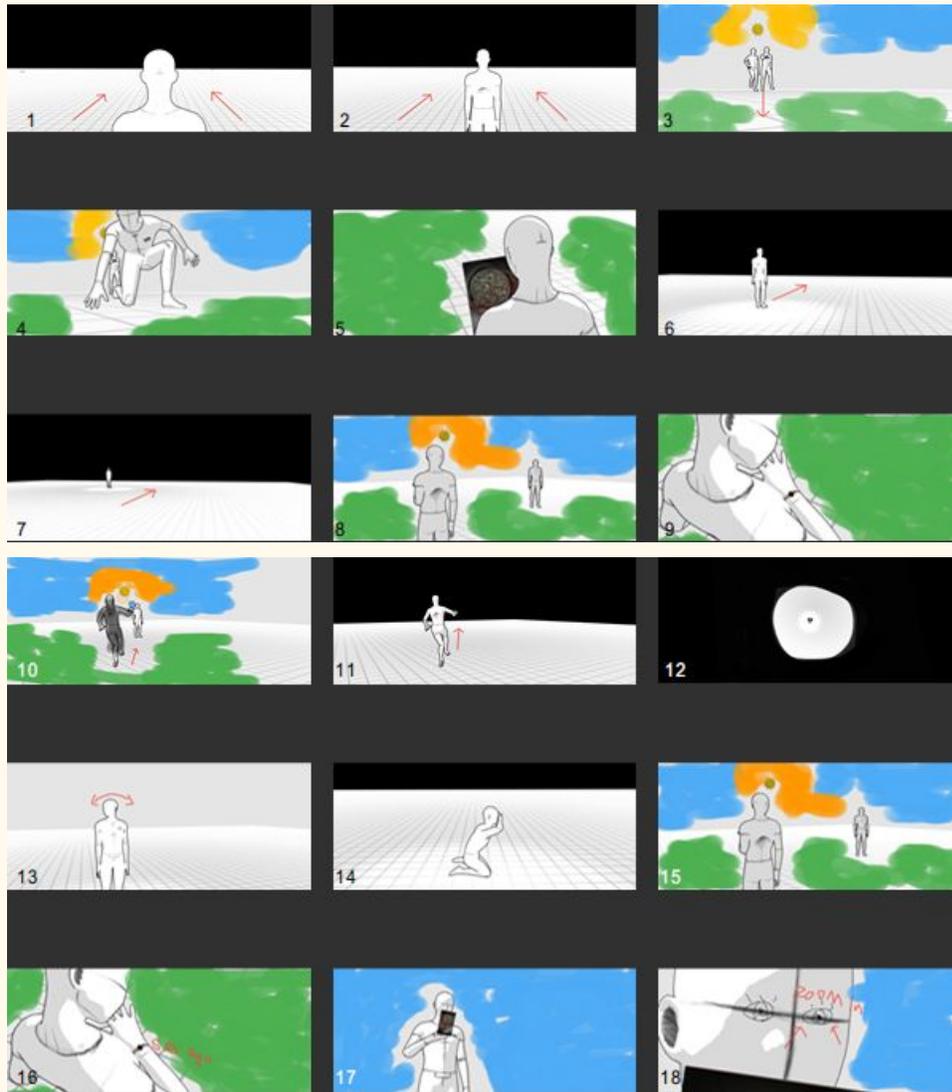
First main idea:

Our first main idea revolves around time travel via a pocket mirror which was inspired by Interstellar as we felt it made an interesting concept and allowed for many possibilities.

We came up with a refined idea and roughly storyboarded the first act:



We then refined the storyboards with digital software:

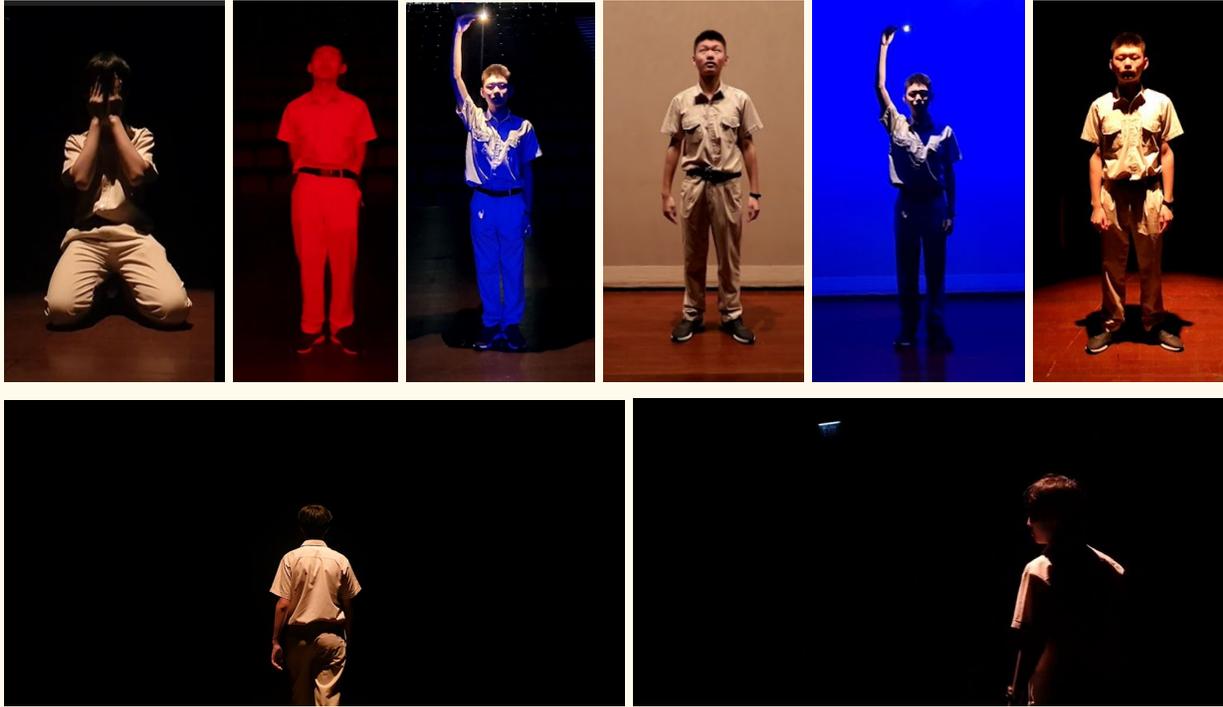


Plot: The character discovers a mirror that can time travel and is consumed by greed, leading to a paradox and him ending up in a void.

Experimentation:

We experimented with how we would film certain difficult shots, especially the void, in different locations.

Drama Centre:



Blackbox:



https://youtu.be/Vi9beApQ_Wk

Outdoors:



<https://youtu.be/m92oE8IPtF4>

However, the time-travel aspect was too complicated and had many plot holes. The film was too long and could not be shortened as there were many important details.

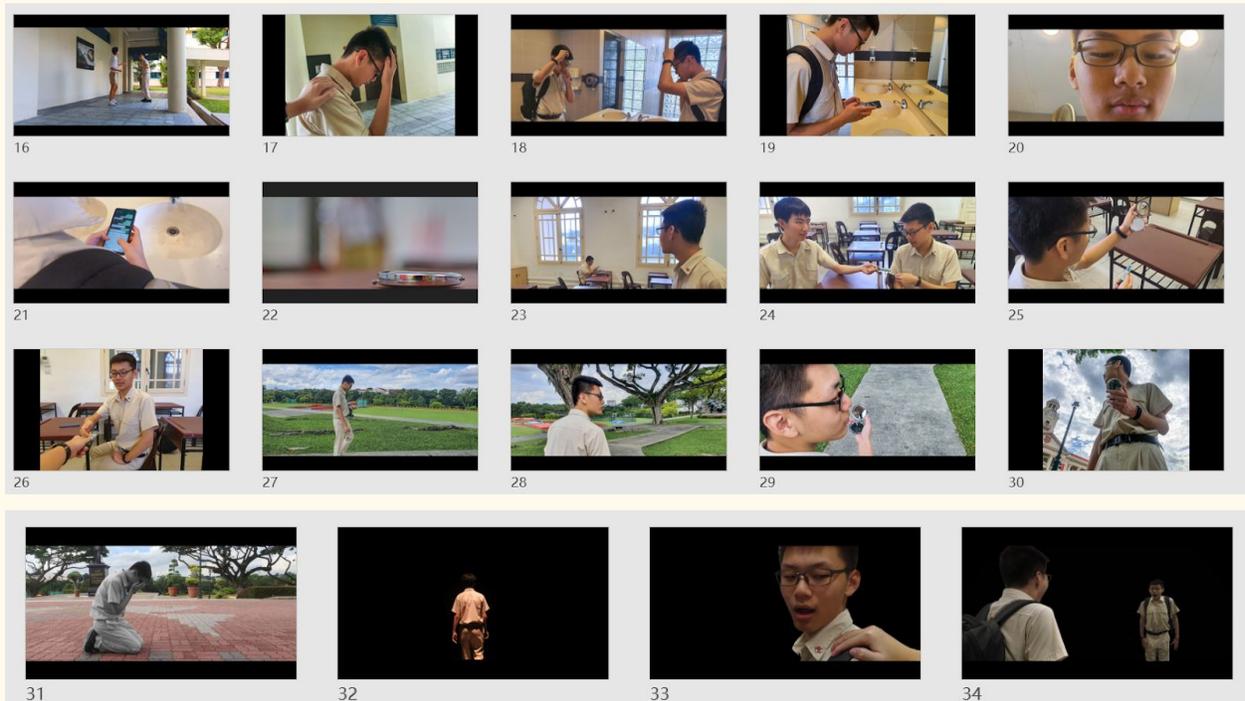
Second idea:

Our next idea is a modified version of the previous idea without the time travel aspect but retains the mirror.

Rough storyboards:



After storyboarding, we took pictures of key parts of the plot for reference for camera angles and positioning.



Plot: An insecure boy finding a mirror that appeared to read other's thoughts. His insecurity caused him to be very paranoid about what others thought of him, which eventually drove his mind into a void. His insecurities take place in the form of his imaginary friend who comforts him, but abandons him in the void..

Whether the mirror could actually read thoughts or it was merely his paranoid imagination is ambiguous.

Filming:

Since our new plot was so similar, we could skip the experimentation.

We began filming certain parts of the plot with our two volunteer actors. Here are some of the shots:



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1i40cF_bOcl

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5fiG1LhgFs>

Final work:

Reason for scrapping:

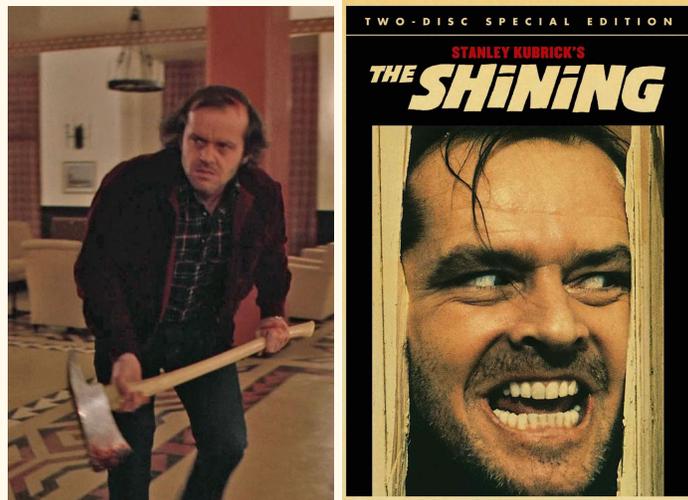
Due to the unforeseen Covid-19 virus, we could no longer film in our intended locations outdoors. As we wanted to minimise our contact with others, we stopped filming with our volunteer actors and had to completely remake a brand new plot, scrap all progress, and reshoot the film from scratch to adapt to new limitations.

Ideation:

We wanted to stick to the theme of reflection and self-identity, and since school and public places were off-limits, we decided to create a film that could be shot only at home and based a plot around that. With only two people in our group, we also had to limit the characters to one as the other had to film.

Artist influence: The Shining

This movie mainly took place in one remote location with few characters, and was centred around the premise of someone slowly being driven insane over the course of the film.

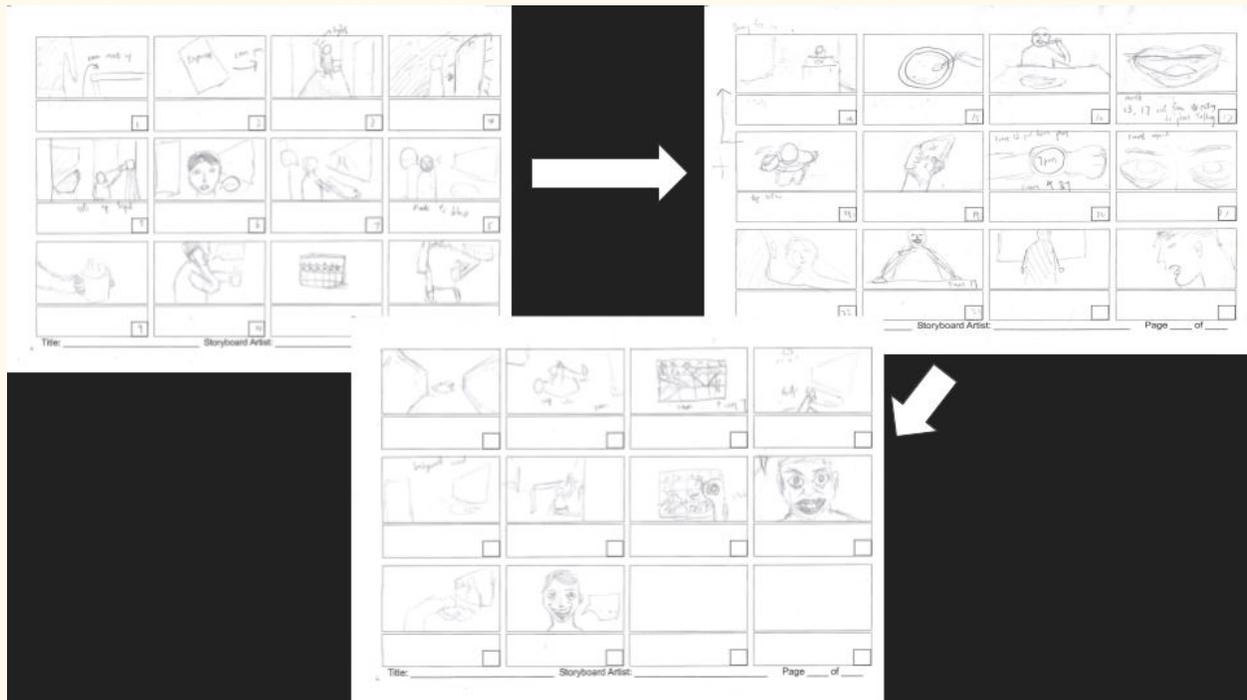


Final idea brainstorming:

Our first concept was an experiment conducted by the character himself, where the experiment slowly drove him insane. We decided to develop on this idea as we both agreed that it was an interesting premise.

We heavily involved the mirror in the film just like our previous plots, as it allowed for a more interesting dynamic and conflict in the character, allowing the character to interact with himself instead of relying on multiple characters.

Rough Storyboarding:

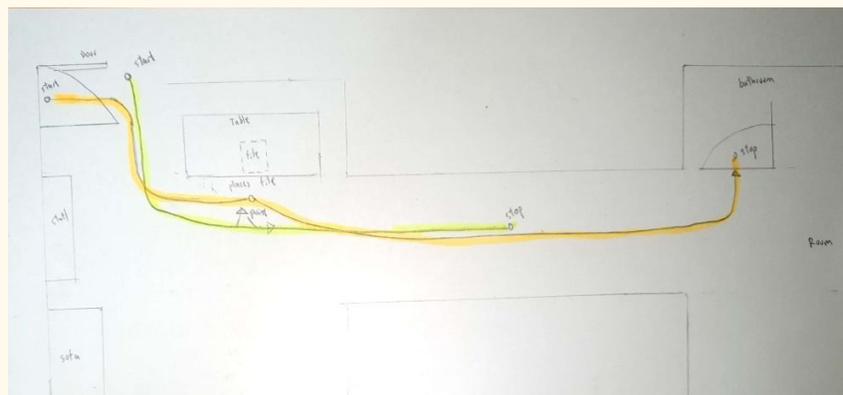


Brief summary:

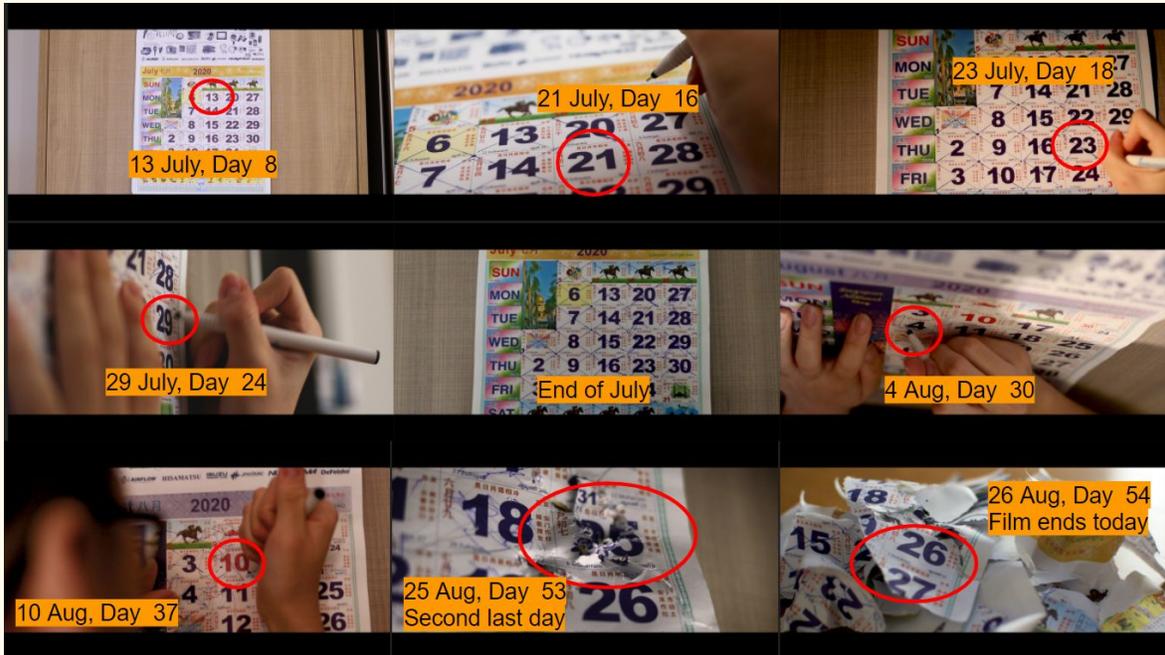
The main character signs up for a psychological experiment where he has to ask himself "Who are you" in a mirror every day for 60 days and record the results. The recordings document his spiral into insanity until he snaps.

Planning:

- For complicated moving shots, we planned the movement of both the camera and the actor around the furniture in order to create cleaner shots.



- The experiment folder shown at the beginning of the film contains the dates that the experiment takes place, which also aligns with the dates shown on the calendar.



- The t-shirt colour changes, length of hair of the character and the battery level of the recorder changes with time accordingly.



Yellow shirt



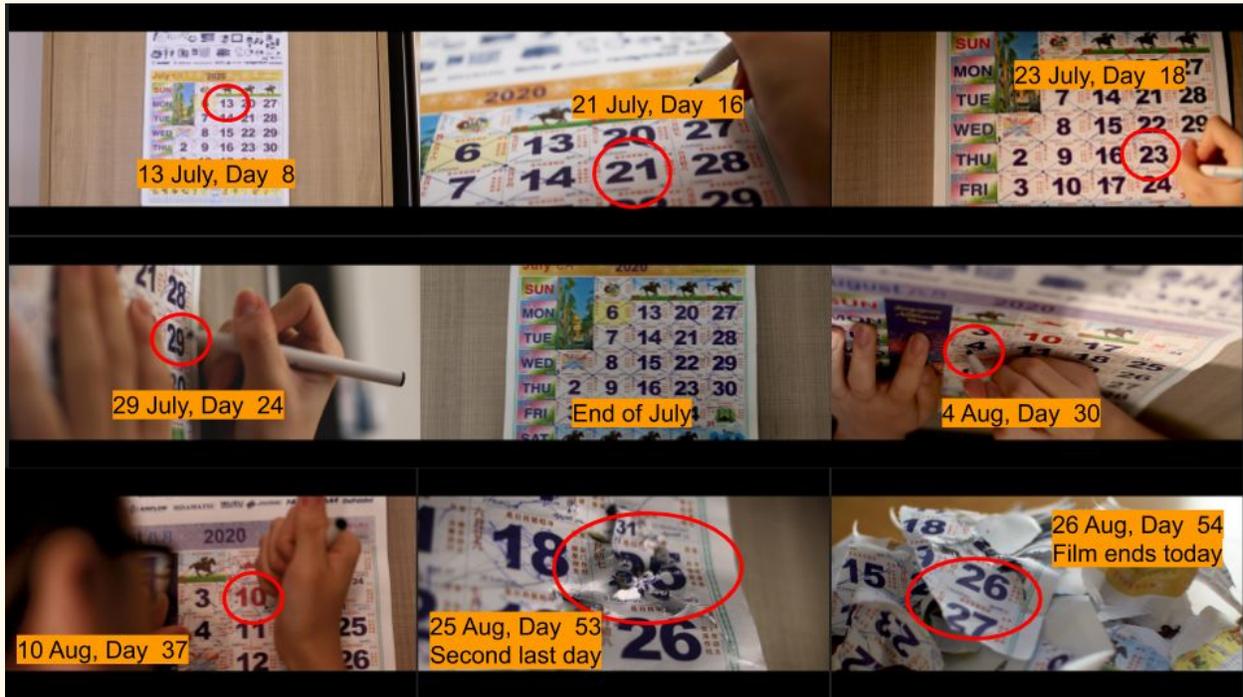
Blue shirt



Grey shirt



- Throughout the montage sequence, the scribbling and mental instability in the character increases in intensity.



- Dark eye circles were drawn onto the actor with a whiteboard marker at the end as his appearance degraded.



Filming Process:

In total, we took 164 shots, of which 65 were used.

Cinematography:

Gear:

- Canon 80d (kit land macro lens)
- Tripod
- Gimbal with phone
- Condenser microphone
- Light Boards and video lights



Lighting:

We used a mix of natural and artificial lighting in the film:

- Natural lighting is used more toward the beginning of the film as it appears to be more peaceful and calm.



- External lighting is used more toward the end of the film where the character is growing insane. Such lighting creates harsher light and shadows, and a more dramatic effect, which matches the tone and atmosphere.



- The lighting and shadows are harshest at the end in the final scene where the character's insanity is at its peak and helps to create a more unsettling atmosphere:



- Since we lacked manpower, we made use of the surroundings to prop up the lightboards or mounted lights on the actor himself:

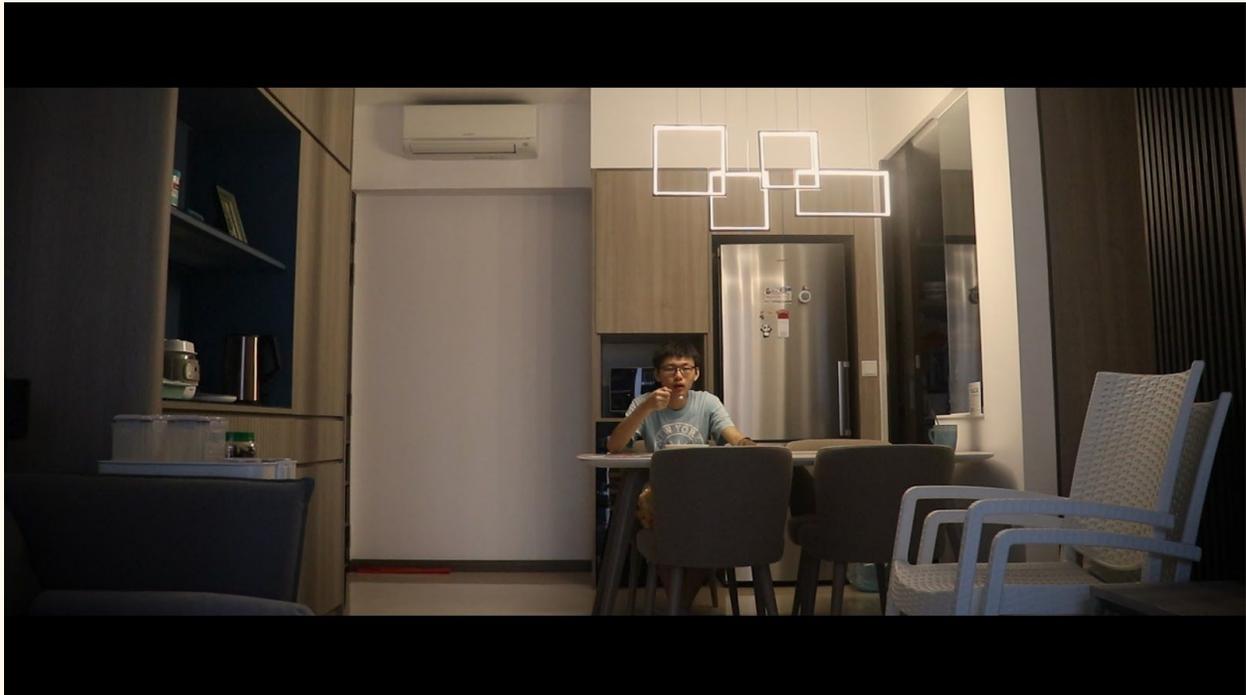


- We also hung up clothes around the window to block out sunlight so we could film in a dark environment.



Framing and Composition:

- For wider shots, we employed the rule of thirds for a more cinematic appearance.



- Closeups were used to establish and view emotions in the character and catch specific details.



- Medium shots were used for the majority of the shots as it can capture body language and is the most versatile.



- A cropped composition was used in several shots to cover the face or certain areas in order to create a more mysterious tone and build up suspense.



Camerawork:

- We used a macro lens to create a more cinematic look with the use of bokeh.



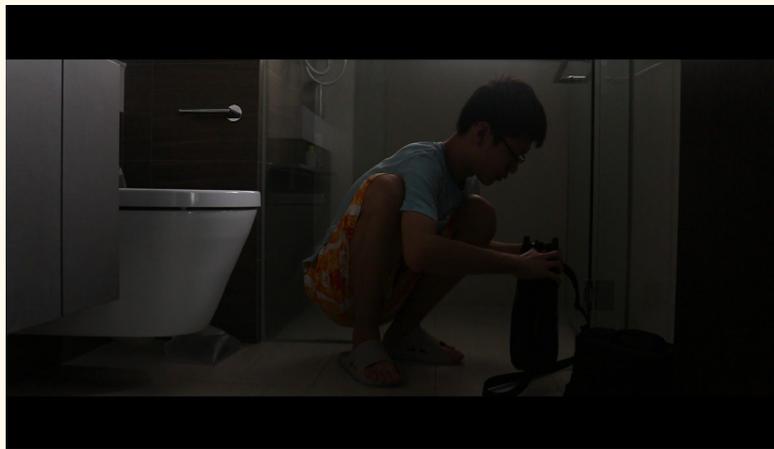
- We mainly relied on a tripod for most shots as it provided stability. For moving shots, we used a gimbal and a phone for much smoother movement.

Editing and post-production:

Colour-grading:

- We adjusted the exposure on certain over-exposed and under-exposed shots. However, this sometimes resulted in a grainy look.

Before edit:



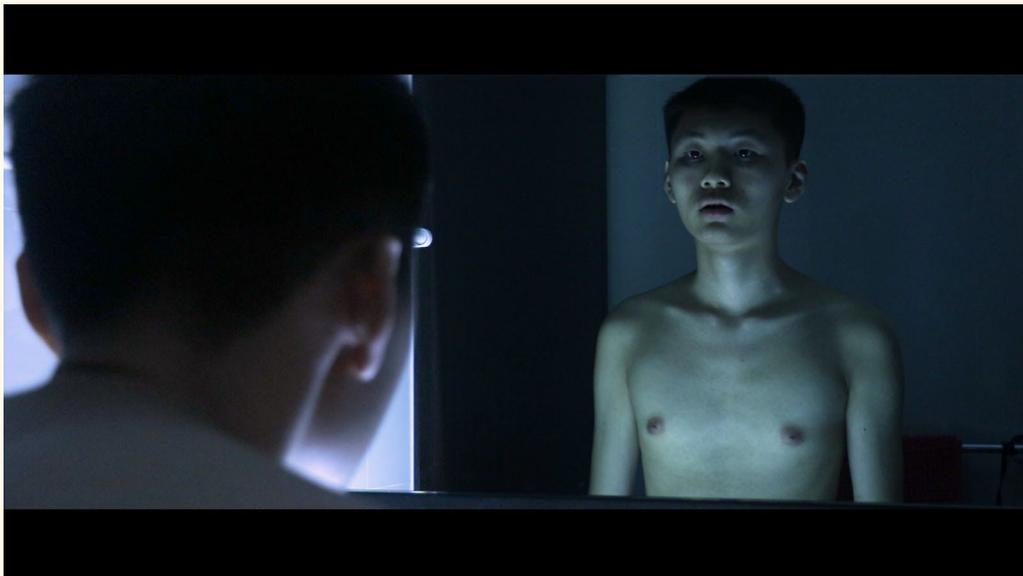
After edit:



- Hence, we had to denoise them:

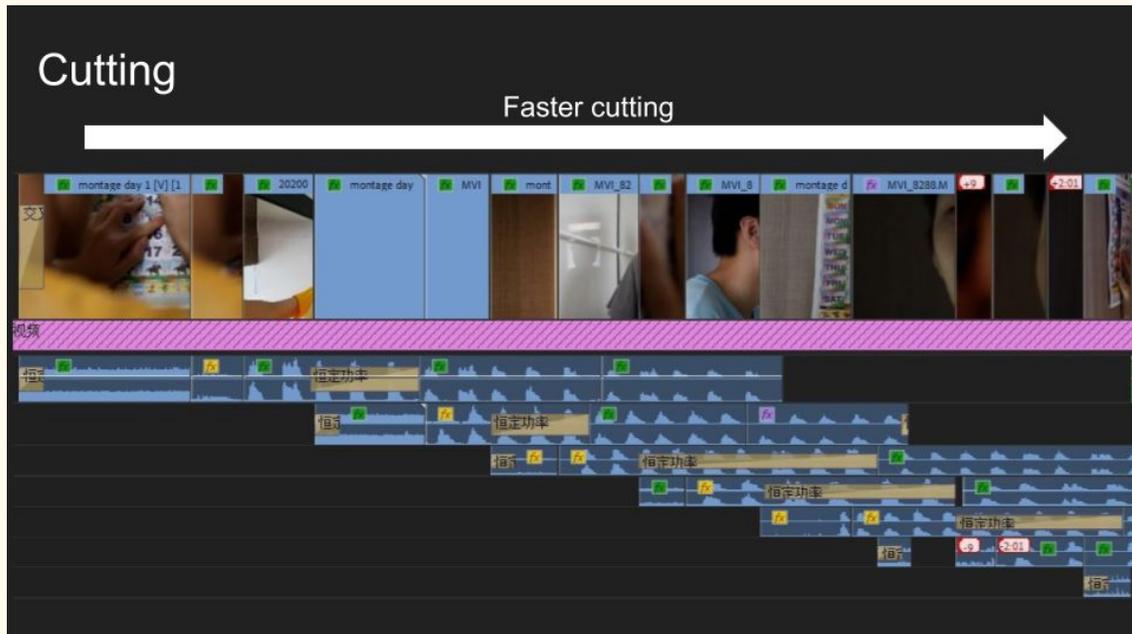


- We adjusted the colour and brightness shots in order to match the mood that we wanted to convey in certain parts of the film. In the final scene, we added a green and yellow tint inspired by Parasite to create a more unsettling and unnatural feel.



Cutting:

- Throughout the montage sequence, both the calendar and character shots became shorter in order to increase the intensity of the scene along with the character losing his mind.

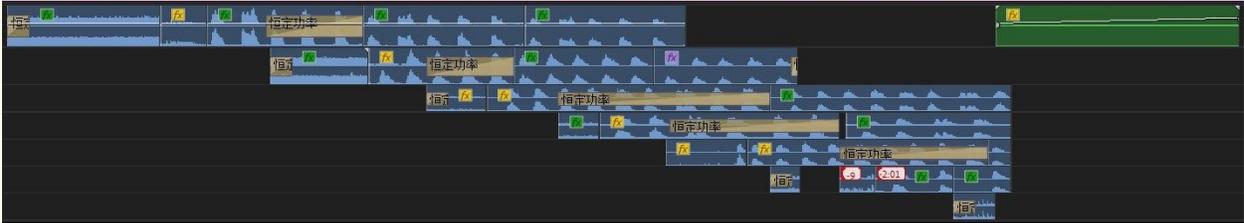


- We used either abrupt cuts, fade cuts and cuts to black to transition between clips in order to ease tension and awkwardness, convey the flow of time or to create more intense sequences.

Sound:

- Our location naturally had a lot of background noise which was distracting. We tried to edit as much out as we can with noise reduction.
- We purposely left in the background noise in the recording by the character for a more amateur sounding video.
- As both of us had little experience in composing soundtracks and music, we could not put in any. However, we found that the lack of music allowed the film to feel more quiet and eerie, which enhanced the film.

- For the montage sequence, we stacked the audio from multiple clips and used the delay effect in Premiere Pro, increasing the effect as the sequence progressed, which aimed to create a dizzying and uncomfortable feeling:



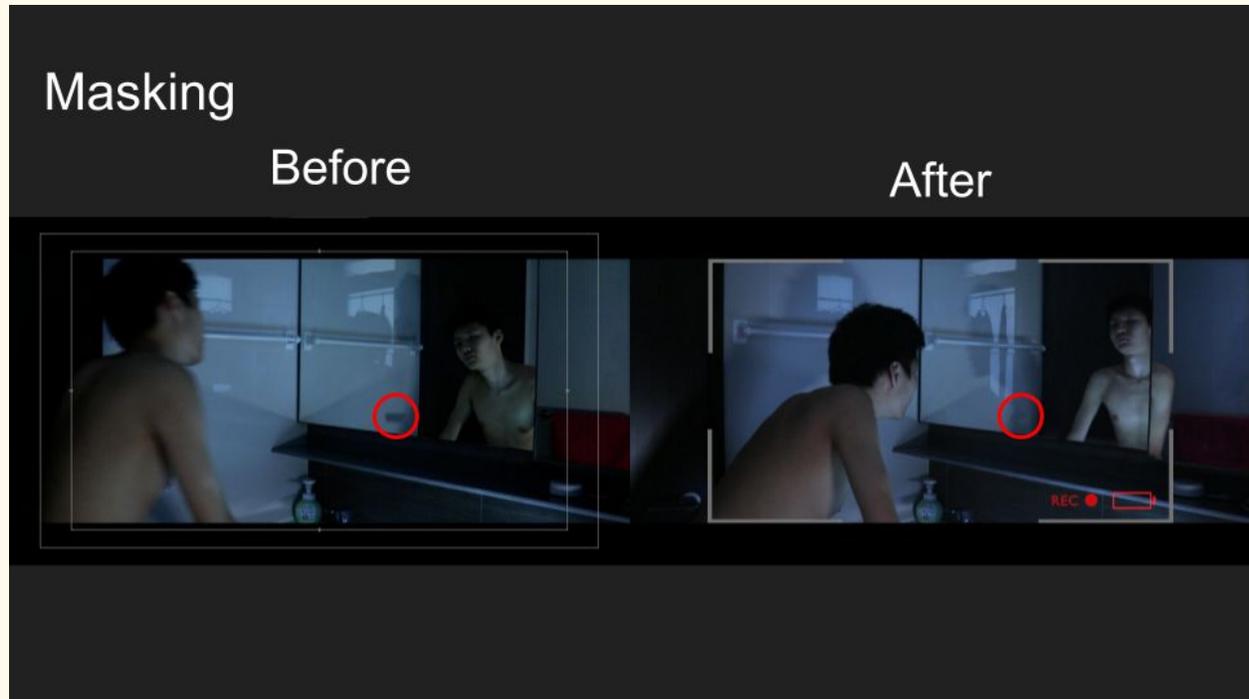
- For the final line said by the reflection, we slowed down the audio and added several effects to deepen and distort the voice to make the voice sound as non-human as possible.

Masking:

- In some shots, the lightboards could be seen in the shot which we had to cover. We filmed a clean plate to cover up the areas, but the colour was too different between shots.



- We exported these clips out and used Adobe Lightroom and various software to digitally paint out the lightboard and lamp, and used colour adjustment to hide anomalies.



- The shadows were moving too much and we used static to cover out certain frames we could not fix.



Final product:

Here is the link to our completed film.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-UoAO4HeZo&t=46s>

Theme and symbolism:

- The main theme present is self-identity, which was constantly questioned literally and figuratively with the question “Who are you?” throughout the film.
- The mirror is used as a metaphoric object that reflects the character’s inner personality.
- The mismatching reflection in the mirror symbolises how his inner personality was no longer present.
- In the montage sequence, the increased intensity of scribbling and stabbing the calendar shows his hatred toward the experiment, but his inability to quit the experiment shows the loss of control over himself.
- In the first few days, the character is taller than the reflection. However, on the last day, the reflection towers over the character. This shows that his alternate personality has taken over him and he is no longer himself.

Reflections:

Yu Ke Mi

Through this filming project, I have discovered a new-found appreciation for filmmaking. Creating a short film with only two people has been pretty difficult, as it results in little manpower and each person is responsible for a huge workload. I also understood the importance of time-management and pre-planning, in order to get optimal productivity completed. Yuxuan and I have been lucky to have good teamwork and thus were able to complete this film on time, despite the restrictions and restarting the whole project multiple times. Despite having little experience in film-making, I am glad that we were able to produce a film that I am proud of.

Cao Yuxuan

As the editor of the film, I was able to learn new techniques that I applied during the editing phase to allow the film to improve in terms of visuals, sounds, atmospheres and tempo. This allowed for the film to have more suspense and build-up, especially toward the climax. Although we had little time to complete the film and had to cut out many parts due to time constraint, I still find that the film is successful in delivering our intended message, themes and symbolism. I also learnt the importance of teamwork and patience, which eventually helped us with the project.

References:

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