

INTEGRATED MEDIA 1 - MAJOR PROJECT ESSAY

KORSAKOW FILM: 'CELEBRATE'

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OUR KORSAKOW FILM: 'CELEBRATE'

'Celebrate' is a film exploring the various ways in which different people of different ages and cultures celebrate. It focuses on noticing how people's perceptions of celebrating can be quite different from one another, whilst still conveying to the viewer that being amongst close family and friends is the commonality amongst us all. We also wanted to observe how people behave in different celebratory settings; the more formal functions requiring a traditional and reserved approach while more informal functions present people in a more relaxed setting. Our goal was to capture as much variety as possible, from the abstract moments of everyday celebrations right through to large and opulent gatherings. We chose to use iPhones in H264 format to film our content as we wanted to capture the observational, spontaneous and intimate style that it would afford.

Right from the beginning of our planning, we decided that we wanted to include a large variety of content to demonstrate the great scale that the theme of 'celebration' encompasses. Our goal was to capture the little everyday moments of celebration and compare them to the vision of teenagers and young adults partying, large and formal events at a function centre, religious celebrations in church, and traditional cultural celebrations to show a large range of diversity.

Continuing on with the theme of diversity, our content differs in motion and speed. This was deliberate as we decided that each example of celebration required its own style of filming; the more traditional and spiritual celebrations required stiller vision, while vision of young people partying needed more motion. These choices were made to reflect the particular celebration and the mood and actions of the people captured.

To maintain a sense of connection between the clips, we chose to film all of them in landscape to capture as much of the celebrations in frame as possible. This decision allowed us to keep some sense of continuity and smoothness amongst the diversity of the camera movement and content throughout the film, ensuring that the viewer doesn't feel polarized.

As a means to organise our clips, we decided on three main clusters or categories for our video clips. These reflect the types of celebrations that we captured, making it simpler for the viewer to notice the connections and patterns we implemented in our film. It also demonstrates our perspective that each person experiences different types or levels of celebration in their lifetime and the way they behave in these different circumstances is reflected by the social culture surrounding them. These categories are everyday, formal, and informal forms of celebration.

In the everyday cluster you would find clips of people celebrating a small victory in an average setting as well as objects and places that you would normally find whilst going about your day that reflect a celebratory nature. Rather than just capturing celebratory actions, we decided to include vision that incorporated places and objects that people visit or use to celebrate.

The formal category represents traditional, cultural, religious celebrations that have their own specific customs. These clips include traditional Fijian ceremonies on the beach and a Catholic confirmation ceremony, amongst others. These reflect ceremonies that have a long history and tradition behind them and our observations of them demonstrate how the people shown respect the traditions and customs of the event they are attending. These observations allow the viewer to

experience a different culture's version of celebration which is something that they may have not experienced before. It also allows them to observe how these social customs demand a different type of behaviour by the people attending, compared to those shown in the 'everyday' and 'informal' clusters.

Juxtaposing them between clips from the 'everyday' category and 'informal' category allows the viewer to make connections between them as well as noticing the differences in how different people celebrate. These juxtapositions were specifically chosen to engage with Dovey & Rose's (2012) observations on the power of it as it "allows for greater interpretation and depth."ⁱⁱ We wanted to allow viewers to experience their own interpretation and meaning of our film rather than just the surface theme of 'celebration' and therefore chose keywords to juxtapose between the different types of celebrations we captured.

In the informal cluster you will find clips that reflect more intimate gatherings, including those that are unplanned or spontaneous amongst friends and family. These clips include young people at parties and music events, as well as home birthday gatherings. They reflect people in their most comfortable settings, behaving without the restrictions that celebrations in the 'formal' category demand.

The keywords of 'everyday', 'formal', and 'informal' form these clusters. When examining our clips, we discovered that there was a pattern in the movement of them. Most of the videos in our formal cluster were either shot statically or with slow movement, highlighting the traditions and customs of the formal event, and therefore the keywords 'slow' and 'static' are used for these clips. In comparison, the videos in the informal cluster are more shaky and fast, representing the intimate gatherings of friends and family, therefore the keywords 'fast' and 'motion' are used. We also incorporated the keywords 'dark', 'light', 'inside' and 'outside' to make further comparisons and links between our videos and to increase the opportunity of all of the clips being seen.

As Daniel (cited in Soar 2014) said, "the act of designing the interface is a form or argument"ⁱⁱⁱ and so our interface presents our argument that not only are there many different types of celebrations and ways of celebrating, but that the way people behave in these circumstances depends on the type of celebration occurring. The circular and colourful background image captures the bubble of fun that people experience whilst celebrating and encircles the theme, while the text thread presents a more poignant meaning behind the clips than what may be on the surface. The three thumbnails underneath the large main frame present the variations in celebrations, juxtaposing people's behaviour in each of them as well.

In designing the interface, we made the important decision to keep it as simple and clean as possible. This meant that our thumbnails and main frame aligned perfectly, ensuring that the viewer's attention is directed towards the content and feels comfortable clicking through a smooth interface rather than being distracted by one that is messy and disjointed. The main frame is large and positioned in the centre of the frame so that the viewer's eye is focused on the main clip playing, giving them the feeling of being amongst the celebration showing. Making the main frame large was also chosen to ensure that our vision was shown in its full potential and not missed out on by the viewer due to a smaller clip. Our three thumbnails are positioned underneath the large main frame so that the viewer's natural eye movement follows down to them once they decide to move onto another clip.

The decision to have the clip in the main framing playing on loop was chosen so that there wasn't any pauses in the Korsakow film. It also ensures that the viewer doesn't feel like they are being taken out of the experience of the film as we believe they would feel if the main frame stopped playing after its first showing. It keeps the rhythm and momentum of the film going as the viewer moves from one example of celebration to the next without the film feeling disjointed by pauses in it.

During the showings of our prototypes, we received great feedback that included using a colourful background image to capture the joy and happiness that our content delivers to the viewer. We sourced an engaging background image of people covered in colourful chalk in the midst of dancing. As we couldn't source the same image to fit the full background of the Korsakow film, we decided to blur the outer edges of the background so that it blends smoothly with the surrounding black background colour of the Korsakow film. The blending technique applied to the background formed it into a circular shape which developed its own meaning and symbolism as representing either a balloon or a bubble of fun, tying into the theme of our film as exploring celebrations.

We were also given the advice to include a text thread that captured the essence of our theme. In one of our prototypes, the text thread was positioned underneath the main frame and thumbnails. After receiving feedback that the position of the text thread at the bottom of the film was distracting for many viewers who felt that they were missing out on concentrating on the vision in the main frame. As a result, we chose to position the text thread on top of the main frame so that the viewers could relate the poignant lyrics to the vision playing more easily and without being distracted. The text thread is written in white font so that it stands out from the mixture of colourful and surrounding black background.

After searching through different poetry and lyrics, we chose to use the lyrics from Frank Ocean's song 'Strawberry Swing'. The song and lyrics discuss an adult reminiscing about their joyous childhood, discussing their memories of them on a strawberry swing. We chose to use these lyrics for their nostalgic quality and to demonstrate that despite our differences, we all delve into our inner child when we are having a good time. When taken out of its original context and cut up into separate lines per clip, the lyrics develop an ambiguity that allows for the viewer to create their own interpretation.

In our work as documentarians we have transformed raw artefacts of people celebrating into meaningful constructions (Rosen, cited in Frankham 2013)ⁱⁱⁱ of observing how different celebrations influence the way in which people behave. We have also explored the different types of celebrations that exist; delving deeper into celebratory instances that people wouldn't usually think of when they think of the word 'celebration'. Rather than just capturing vision of fireworks and large parties, we have explored the theme more deeply and captured moments of everyday celebrations that don't get as much recognition. We have also explored how people from different cultures and religious backgrounds celebrate while also comparing how people of different age groups celebrate.

ⁱ Dovey, J & Rose, M 2012, 'We're Happy and We Know It: Documentary, Data, Montage', *Studies in Documentary Film*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 159-173.

ⁱⁱ Soar, M 2014, 'Making (with) the Korsakow System: Database Documentaries as Articulation and Assemblage', in Nash, K, Hight, C & Summerhayes, C (eds.), *New Documentaries Ecologies: Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 154-173.

ⁱⁱⁱ Frankham, BL 2013, 'Complexity, Flux and Webs of Connection', *A Poetic Approach to Documentary: Discomfort of Form, Rhetorical Strategies and Aesthetic Experience*, University of Technology Sydney, pp. 137-147.