

4th Dec 2013

Dear LUTSF

Please find my report for the project:

NYFA 8-week film and digital course

I would like to say a huge thank you for letting me have this opportunity that has had a huge impact on my work already.

I hope this report is able to describe how much I have learned and how I will be able to go forward with my choreographic work.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes

Seeta

REPORT

Seeta Patel: New York Film Academy 8-Week Film and Digital Program (August 2013)

Project Description

The 8-week Film and Digital Program at the New York Film Academy was an intensive course that used a very hands-on practical approach to learning. We worked in crews of 3-5 people on various exercises that allowed us to learn fundamental techniques within filmmaking including writing, camera handling, lighting, editing and directing.

Tasks included creating a mise-en-scene in which we had to shoot one scene that set the basis for a story; a continuity film where we learned to edit together shots that did not appear to jump in time and flowed visually to create a short story; a music film that worked with the idea of Eisenstein's theory of montage and using sound to augment the visuals. Then came the production of our final films that had to be scripted and produced from scratch from conception through to editing and screening.

The class consisted of 13 students of varying ages, backgrounds and disciplines from across the globe. We worked in a range of roles within our teams including Director of Photography, Assistant Camera, Sound, Styling/Art Direction, etc. This helped us to be able to learn to work in a team environment as well as experience the demands of different roles within a film crew. We would screen the films we made throughout the process and look at them as a group with our directing teacher. We would critique them and try to learn from each exercise.

We also had productions workshops that dealt with the techniques of creating certain genres such as suspense and mystery. These were again very practically taught and gave us the opportunity to think very quickly and produce short films with the techniques we would discuss.

The writing workshops were very interesting and explained the ways to create a story and the key moments within the process of storytelling. Editing using Final Cut Pro 7 was taught to us in a very practical way using example footage as well as our own footage shot with the school's equipment. The editing facilities and teaching aids were very helpful as we worked out how to use the various editing functions.

The school provided ample equipment including camera, tripod, lights and sound equipment. The first 4 weeks of the course introduced us to the use of 16mm film. We made our first few films using 16mm Arriflex cameras. This was an extremely valuable part of the process as it taught us about the discipline that is required in filmmaking. As film is so expensive, and in the Arriflex cameras you cannot see what you film until it is developed, it makes you plan shots more meticulously and think more carefully before recording anything. It also requires a lot of discipline with regards to measuring for light and focus and to understand the principles behind these things. Working on film first had a big impact on the production side of how we worked before we embarked on using digital cameras.

Working on digital is much easier and cheaper, but can often lead to shooting too much footage just because you can. Working on film is too expensive to do this and thus experiencing this alongside the digital method was very interesting and complimentary to my understanding.

Impact of this process

Attending this course came at a very opportune time in my practice. Having just made a short dance film before going to the New York Film Academy, I was very excited to be able to get more hands on experience and learn by doing. The course offered this to me in a way that really suited my level and way of working. It also helped me to understand and appreciate the various disciplines within a film crew which I think will help me in the future with the people I work with. In particular I feel more confident and equipped to talk to my future collaborators with a better technical knowledge base as well as a practical experience of their disciplines. I especially appreciate learning how to film and edit with confidence and take this into my future practice. I am also excited that I will have these new skills to work with other artists in a wider capacity.

Though the course approached film-making from a very western/Hollywood perspective, I found it valuable to understand the fundamental principles of visual storytelling and feel that I can apply this to my dance and experimental film work. The tutors were all practising professionals and this really gave a very current and relevant approach to the ideas and methods they were teaching us, as well as a depth from their experience. Since completing the course I have already had two work opportunities that have included directing, filming and editing, both for dance and non-dance short films.

Though I still have much to learn and experience, this course has stood me in good stead, with a solid grounding from which I can move forward with some very useful skills and a wider range of options to work with in my creative endeavours. Personally the course has been an invaluable step for me to experience, and given me the opportunity to see myself in a different context, both as a student again and in a different country. I felt living in New York has rejuvenated my mind and soul and I have made some lasting friendships, both personal and professional. I believe that time away from my regular practise is both useful and important to be able to learn and reflect. It is very easy to become all encompassed in a daily routine and place, and time away can help give a new perspective and energy.

Conclusion

In conclusion I feel I would highly recommend this course to those starting out within the medium of film. It is a costly program and living in New York has its challenges, but it was very much worth the commitment and effort, and I have left there feeling I have gained a lot of skills. Taking time away from your regular work can seem daunting, but I do feel it is important and can help with future decisions.

Photographs











Video Links

Music Film: Avenue A <https://vimeo.com/74483008>

Continuity Film: Table for Two <https://vimeo.com/78064774> Password: nyfa

Final Film: Dream Room <https://vimeo.com/77177972> Password: nyfa