

The Gentrification and Killing of Lucinda

Filming and Performances for "Fallen Blossoms"

PAM – Figueroa Street, Highland Park, Los Angeles. CA 90046

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A day after visiting PAM on Figueroa street in Highland Park, to watch a performance where James Cowan took part, I'm meeting Brian Getnick to propose taking over the space for a month, taking part in its residency program, and to mix performance & shooting for the second part of my film project "Fallen Blossoms".

Over coffee, we talk about the AIDS epidemic & the Homosexual's upbringing, race, class, sex & past lovers.

I just finished shooting the first part for "Fallen Blossoms" (the vintage part) and I'm leaving California the next day.

I'm inspired by Kristof Trakal's Powerhouse in which I took part in December, but I'm planning to create something that goes beyond a film/performance duality: Neither to make a performance that will be shown in a documentary I'd make about it, nor to invite an audience to be "extras in my cool film scene" like a mediocre kid, nor to have a live feed camera running through a performance as a hyper-reality "enhanced-eye".

Rather: to have a "pantheistic" experience, bifunctional simultaneity of a recording process and a live stage.

The story I'm telling this time is of a theater troupe trying to put up a show in contemporary Los Angeles. It involves James & Guo as a couple again, and a new character: Lucy, a privileged white post-punk girl they meet and hang out with.

My challenge is to create an experience that is psychedelic without being reflexive.

May 21-31

As I haven't found a place to stay until June 1, I'm camping at PAM in the 10 days before the residency begins. No one is using the space (Brian is in Berlin).

There's no shower— I'm going to the pool almost every day.

During the days, I'm getting to know the neighborhood better. I "discover" (columbused) an American-Vietnamese café with a gentle Barista who inspires my writing - I sit at the corner and write; I also hang out at a Latino local café with pamphlets for local lawyers, language courses and socialism. I discover a nice garden next to the 110 Freeway, explore York & Figueroa streets with their fabulous shops and surprised by the high frequency of big budget ads that are being filmed in the neighborhood.

After two nights at PAM, I'm meeting the studio's neighbor, a white European woman who expresses a fearful surprise upon seeing me there. But then she immediately apologizes a couple times. Her continuous apologies give me the impression that at the first moment of our meeting I was racially profiled by her and that she became conscious of that after she remembered being introduced to me by Brian a few weeks back and that this is why she kept apologizing. This encounter makes me paranoid for a couple of days: While high on Adderall that I found in my car's trunk, I'm developing a scenario that I misinterpreted one of Brian's text messages and that I'm not allowed there. Later, after writing him, I receive an explicit permission to stay there.

I'm gathering the potential cast & crew: Ramzi Hibri (my ultimate collaborator, producer&cinematographer, Michael DeMaeio (a musician friend of Ramzi), Rebecka Jackson (a friend of Lydia), Paul Outlaw (from Brian), Robert Sherman (who is known for this: <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/2740> - tipped by Tony since I needed a person his age and experience. I hunt him at a bar in West Hollywood), James Cowan & Guo Li of course, Patrice Thebeast Roth and then Archie Archieband (from Ramzi), Johanna Deeb (from Michael), Tony Product, Rollin Hunt, Alex Chau, John, Julian, Harry Hains.

During the time I camp at PAM, I'm having sex with two men:

One is a 40-something Latino man whose house, where he lived in the last 15 years, is about half a mile from the space. I'm not very attracted to him but I allow him to lick my balls for a

long hour in his bedroom while watching what was running on his TV prior to my arrival: High-Heels by Almodovar.

He works at an Italian restaurant in Beverly Hills. Following my request, he recommends me two restaurants in Highland Park: One Mexican, "Villa Sombrero" and one Italian on Aldama and York.

The other is a young man of 22 who lives in the Valley with his parents and works as the personal assistant of a writer of a famous sitcom.

We're picking up Tacos from the van nearby the space and he teaches me about Horchata. We take the food and go up to the space where I suck his cock. The whole meeting lasts no more than an hour from the moment of meeting until he departs.

At the beginning of June I'm moving to a room in Echo Park.

June 2-June 25

Residence at PAM begins June 2.

Together with Rebecka, we build two main sets in that room, one after another: For the first week, a dark black-walls theater space and then turn it into an "eclectic living space" – the place where Lucinda & Charley live.

But we also shoot transitional sets as transitional phases of the story.

Ramzi, the film's producer and cinematographer, moves into the space with Michael - Since they have to leave their house in Valencia. They decided to also bring all their stuff – furniture and everything – merge it into the eclectic set, and live there throughout the shooting / performance period. This turns out to be a great arrangement, not only because they're happy to have this free hangout spot in L.A, but also because by habituating the room, turning it into a living space and having their friends around charges the filming / performance process with an awesome jolt of energy.

We rehearse June 6,9,12 and shoot June 13,14,16,17,18,20,23,24.

Shoot mainly at PAM but also a little around L.A and Valencia, as required by the story.

In regard to PAM, beyond interactions with the street and the neighborhood during the month, and in addition to allowing walk-ins during the whole shooting period, three evenings (June 14, 16, 24) are more officially open to the public and intended for it.

Evening #1 – June 14

Theater Scene



Duration: 90 minutes

Participated: Guo, James, Patrice, Archie, Paul

Musicians: Tony, Michael

Slides and lighting: Ramzi

The scene is a “theater scene” = A theater piece that the characters in the film are putting on. I don’t point the camera at the audience, but the energy of the audience is well apparent in the performance of my actors.

For both the dramatization of the performance to the attending audience and for the fragmented motion pictures that I will later compose to tell the story of my film, I cut the original scene of about 5 minutes into bits. With each of my “action” announcements, Michael and Tony, the musicians that I hooked up together, start to play, until the “cut” comes.

Together we are creating a meditative repetitive performative filming process. I’m cutting the scene in the following order:

[CU James, hand of Paul]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating: This room is

[CU James, hand of Paul, frontal]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating: This room is

[Medium James, hand of Paul, others in bg]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating: This room is

[CU Archie]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating: This room is

[Patrice in front, Archie in back]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating: This room is

[Close to James, others in bg, frontal]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating: This room is –

We didn't even ask to see it before we paid
You should always ask to see it before
I didn't know it then
But the room is ok
For cum on the wall

[CU Paul, Patrice in bg]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating: This room is –

We didn't even ask to see it before we paid
You should always ask to see it before
I didn't know it then
But the room is ok
For cum on the wall

[MED James profile, Paul in bg]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating: We didn't even ask to see it before we paid
You should always ask to see it before
I didn't know it then
But the room is ok
For cum on the wall
His cum on the wall
I'm not sentimental
I was
When I was young
Sentimental due to an over-indulgence
In my own experiences

[CU Paul]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating: But the room is ok
For cum on the wall
His cum on the wall
I'm not sentimental
I was

When I was young
Sentimental due to an over-indulgence
In my own experiences
My only experiences being drug experiences
There's no point in looking back
You have to break the self
I choose unconscious freedom
Suddenly I'm here
Suddenly I'm there
By measuring the distance it becomes infinite

I am dying
I'm dying

[CU Patrice, James out of focus CU, front]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating:

But the room is ok
For cum on the wall
His cum on the wall
I'm not sentimental
I was
When I was young
Sentimental due to an over-indulgence
In my own experiences
My only experiences being drug experiences

[CU Patrice, James out of focus CU, front]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating:

But the room is ok
For cum on the wall
His cum on the wall
I'm not sentimental
I was
When I was young
Sentimental due to an over-indulgence
In my own experiences
My only experiences being drug experiences
There's no point in looking back
You have to break the self
I choose unconscious freedom
Suddenly I'm here

[CU Patrice, James out of focus CU, front]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating:

But the room is ok
For cum on the wall
His cum on the wall
I'm not sentimental
I was
When I was young
Sentimental due to an over-indulgence
In my own experiences
My only experiences being drug experiences
There's no point in looking back
You have to break the self
I choose unconscious freedom
Suddenly I'm here
Suddenly I'm there

[MED James, Paul & Patrice in BG, projection]

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating:

But the room is ok
For cum on the wall
His cum on the wall
I'm not sentimental
I was

When I was young
Sentimental due to an over-indulgence
In my own experiences
My only experiences being drug experiences
There's no point in looking back
You have to break the self
I choose unconscious freedom
Suddenly I'm here
Suddenly I'm there
By measuring the distance it becomes infinite

Paul: I am dying
I'm dying

MED top on Paul

Paul: I'm dying
Dying

MED Guo dancing, projection

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating OV: *There's no point in looking back
You have to break the self
I choose unconscious freedom
Suddenly I'm here
Suddenly I'm there
By measuring the distance it becomes infinite*

MED Guo dancing, projection

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating OV: *There's no point in looking back
You have to break the self
I choose unconscious freedom
Suddenly I'm here
Suddenly I'm there
By measuring the distance it becomes infinite*

CU Paul, Patrice in bg

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating OV: By measuring the distance it becomes infinite

CU Paul, Patrice & Guo in bg to MED James

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating OV: By measuring the distance it becomes infinite

Paul: I'm dying

CU Paul, Patrice & Guo in bg to MED James

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating OV: By measuring the distance it becomes infinite
I'm dying

CU Guo

Guo: I died in 1992
But I didn't know that in 1978

CU Guo

Guo: I died in 1992
But I didn't know that in 1978

Back in 1978
I was living in a street that was the edge of the city
My apartment on the fourth floor
looked to some small hills
dotted with bushes and a few trees

I enjoyed the view from my window
but rarely walked there

I was interested in the city, life, fashion and boys

MED Guo, Patrice, Archie in BG, James on left

Guo:

I died in 1992
But I didn't know that in 1978

Back in 1978
I was living in a street that was the edge of the city
My apartment on the fourth floor
looked to some small hills
dotted with bushes and a few trees

I enjoyed the view from my window
but rarely walked there

I was interested in the city, life, fashion and boys

MED Guo, Patrice, Archie in BG, James on left

Guo:

I died in 1992
But I didn't know that in 1978

Back in 1978
I was living in a street that was the edge of the city
My apartment on the fourth floor
looked to some small hills
dotted with bushes and a few trees

I enjoyed the view from my window
But rarely walked there

I was interested in the city, life, fashion and boys
One afternoon I took a walk, through the hills
down through some other hills
I kept walking, randomly choosing left or right
Quickly, to my surprise
I realized I lost my way and wasn't able to return

MED Guo, Patrice, Archie in BG, James on left

Tony reading, Guo repeats:

I died in 1992
But I didn't know that in 1978

Back in 1978
I was living in a street that was the edge of the city
My apartment on the fourth floor
looked to some small hills
dotted with bushes and a few trees

I enjoyed the view from my window
But rarely walked there

I was interested in the city, life, fashion and boys
One afternoon I took a walk, through the hills
down through some other hills
I kept walking, randomly choosing left or right

Quickly, to my surprise
I realized I lost my way and wasn't able to return
After a while I heard noises
Walking towards them I saw a man standing
suspiciously, staring at me
He was wearing nothing
But the fur of an animal
I wouldn't be able to recognize
A big machete in his hand

A moment passed, I smiled to him
What else could I do
Another moment passed
He didn't attack me. He smiled back.
He was a handsome man.

CU Paul, to MED Paul, James, Guo & others in bg,
Ends on Guo

Tony reading, Guo repeats:

Back in 1978
I was living in a street that was the edge of the city
My apartment on the fourth floor
looked to some small hills
dotted with bushes and a few trees

I enjoyed the view from my window
But rarely walked there

I was interested in the city, life, fashion and boys
One afternoon I took a walk, through the hills
down through some other hills
I kept walking, randomly choosing left or right

Quickly, to my surprise
I realized I lost my way and wasn't able to return
After a while I heard noises
Walking towards them I saw a man standing
suspiciously, staring at me
He was wearing nothing
But the fur of an animal
I wouldn't be able to recognize
A big machete in his hand

A moment passed
I smiled to him
What else could I do
Another moment passed
He didn't attack me. He smiled back.
He was a handsome man.

He took me to his village
where I could spend the night.
This was a small house
He, his wife, two beautiful young sons,
one maybe about 16 the other about 14
and a daughter, 12 years old.

At night,
he crawled into my bed and sucked my cock.
He had a technique that I,
being the city-slut that I am,
never felt before.
I came in his mouth,
I tried to kiss him but he stood up and went away.

MED James, Guo on side, Rebecca in bg
To MED Guo, Patrice in bg

Tony reading, Guo repeats:

A moment passed
I smiled to him
What else could I do
Another moment passed
He didn't attack me. He smiled back.
He was a handsome man.

He took me to his village
where I could spend the night.
This was a small house
He, his wife, two beautiful young sons,
one maybe about 16 the other about 14
and a daughter, 12 years old.

At night,
he crawled into my bed and sucked my cock.
He had a technique that I,
being the city-slut that I am,
never felt before.
I came in his mouth,
I tried to kiss him but he stood up and went away.

MED Patrice & Archie, Paul comes, projection

Tony reading, Guo repeats:

A moment passed
I smiled to him
What else could I do
Another moment passed
He didn't attack me. He smiled back.
He was a handsome man.

He took me to his village
where I could spend the night.
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He, his wife, two beautiful young sons,
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he crawled into my bed and sucked my cock.
He had a technique that I,
being the city-slut that I am,
never felt before.
I came in his mouth,
I tried to kiss him but he stood up and went away.

CU Patrice, Archie, Paul

Tony reading, Guo repeats:

A moment passed
I smiled to him
What else could I do

Another moment passed
He didn't attack me. He smiled back.
He was a handsome man.

He took me to his village
where I could spend the night.
This was a small house
He, his wife, two beautiful young sons,
one maybe about 16 the other about 14
and a daughter, 12 years old.

At night,
he crawled into my bed and sucked my cock.
He had a technique that I,
being the city-slut that I am,
never felt before.
I came in his mouth,
I tried to kiss him but he stood up and went away.

Patrice, Archie, Paul

Tony reading, Guo repeats:

I tried to kiss him but he stood up and went away.

MED Guo dancing, projection

James reading, Patrice&Archie repeating OV:

I'm not sentimental.
I was
When I was young
Sentimental due to an over-indulgence
In my own experiences
My only experiences being drug experiences
There's no point in looking back
You have to break the self
I choose unconscious freedom
Suddenly I'm here
Suddenly I'm there
By measuring the distance it becomes infinite

Paul:

I am dying
I'm dying

MED shadow of Guo against projection

Silhouettes of James, Paul and Guo

Guo on the floor

Guo on the floor

Michael playing music

Tony playing music

Evening #2 – June 16

The naked young man in the window



Duration: ~ an hour

Participated: Julian, Patrice

For a key scene in the movie, we place a naked man on the big window on the first floor that is looking to North Figueroa Street.

Evening #3 – June 24

Party scene

Duration: 150 minutes

Participated: Guo, James, Patrice, Johanna, Alex

Musicians: Rollin, Michael

Slides and lighting: Ramzi

This is the scene where Nick & Kyle meet Lucinda for the first time.

We prepare a scene that starts with the (later in the film) murder of Nick and Lucinda and ends with the party scene (one of the film's first). We only have a couple of hours to rehearse, and most of us are dead tired after long days of shooting. During performance, the crew & cast are pushing the scene away from where I was intending to take it: Instead of a calm meditation on repetitive looks, affection and kisses, it is becoming sporadic and a little wilder.

At rehearsals, I ask James to repetitively read the poem "The Couple" by Tomas Transtromer. During the night this poem's reading and the music are in my opinion the only functioning elements in the whole evening. (The musicians later admit that they didn't even notice the drama behind their back).

As an ironic closure, and a repetition of a problem I succeeded to resolve on the very first day of shooting, it seems that part of my collaborators (in particular Ramzi) attempts to make "the thing that is itself in the same time of being its representation" – a reflexive space I was trying to avoid. The culmination of our weeks of filming and performing is as skewed as the preparations. Eventually, drunk and drugged collaborators of the crew (and not the cast) end up exhibiting scenes of passionate spanking and BDSM.

The Couple / Tomas Tranströmer

They turn out the lamp light, and its white globe
glimmers for a moment: an aspirin rising and falling
then dissolving in a glass of darkness. Around them,
the hotel walls slide like a back-drop up into the night sky.

Love's drama has died down, and they're sleeping now,
but their dreams will meet as colours meet
and bleed into each other
in the dampened pages of a child's painting-book.

All around is dark, and silent. The city has drawn in,
extinguishing its windows. The houses have approached.
They crowd in close, attentive: this audience of cancelled faces.

(Translated by Robert Robertson)