[Black screen]
[Animated title text appears]
[VoiceOver begins]

[This essay is about process. Which is often not research, sketches or anything to do with the project itself but the unrelated happenings and thoughts of everyday life. It features two publications that I made this term.]

[Video begins. Flipping through publication 01]

When I moved to London last year, everything felt a bit strange, at first . I wasn't a fish out of water, exactly, but I wasn't comfortable either. Moving here felt like the next step in my career as an illustrator except it didn't feel that way at first. Anyway, that is not the point of this essay.

There's a cemetery in the neighbourhood where I live. Back in September, I would often go there for walks. One day, as I was walking, a strange schoolboy seemingly appeared out of nowhere. Maybe it was because the skies were grey, or the cemetery was empty at the time, or that I was new here or that I was listening to too many supernatural podcasts - but I got scared and ran.

In retrospect, it was hilarious and this silly little anecdote became a part of my first project on the course.

Recently, I came back to this moment again for an animation project. It was like coming full circle.

Animation is kind of like a collective experience when you watch it. One moving image made up of several smaller static images. Several individual parts in sequence that make up one movement. Or as Max Wertheimer deduced from his experiments, we perceive the world in organised wholes, not in parts. The whole isn't "greater than the sum of its parts". It's simply different. The in-between parts do exist, however, hidden in plain sight. It's kind of how I feel about animation as a discipline. Invisible to an audience, the labour, the effort, the mishaps keep adding on to form this one triumphant [running animation appears on screen]

final story. In fact, the success of a good animation depends on how undetectable and mysterious these components can make themselves in the whole.

[Black screen]
[Video begins. Flipping through publication 02]

I worry about if I put too much of myself in the work I do and I've been pondering over that during this year. Is making every project about myself a way to get away with not having more meaningful and "critical" conversations about the world of design? Or am I not putting myself in the work I do effectively enough, choosing instead to hide behind images, ideas and discourses to avoid having my feelings be put up for critique?

It's why when I'm asked to write about my work, I am often at a loss for words. Literally. I hate writing. It's also why I am an illustrator, I think. Drawings are my escape from having to describe feelings with words. It's like exposing my vulnerabilities but also staying ambiguous. Hidden in plain sight.

There's a really short chapter in Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities* in which a traveller spends 7 days walking through the woods to arrive at a city which he cannot see yet. But in order to actually reach the city, he must climb ladders that are high as the clouds. The inhabitants are strange and the customs, different. It reminded me of when I first moved to London, the long and terrible flight, the 10 days of lonely quarantine after that. Living in this big city, but not being able to see it. The book you see on screen are frames of an animation based on that chapter. I liked the idea of turning half a page of words to a full book of images. Elongating and stretching the story.

In a way, I see all work as autobiographical. Because there's all this other stuff I'm doing and not doing and going through that contributes to every project. For example, did I go to sleep at a reasonable time the night before? Did I doom scroll during a work break till I got a headache? Did the sun outside make me abandon my work and go for a distracting stroll instead? Did I have to do a month's worth of laundry? More importantly, did my brain cooperate with my desire to be productive that day?

When we explain the ever-elusive "process" to people, we rarely speak of these details even though they very much influence the outcome. Like frames in an animation, they remain limited to the creator's knowledge, contributing to the larger picture but existing outside of it. In fact, I have pretty much accepted procrastination as a part of the process. I need a period of time before beginning every project when my brain just marinates in the information and does nothing. Unthinking.

Funnily, I think I procrastinate because I perceive my world in collective wholes as well. An end product. A long term goal. A final key-frame when I have my sh*t together but to get to that point, there are all these small things I need to get through first which just feel like a lot of steps.

There's also the question of what role I want to take up as an illustrator or designer or animator. Where do I fit? Am I supposed to situate myself somewhere in a cultural identity, a medium, or an objective discourse? What position should I work from?

Or maybe, all of this is me reaching and connecting dots that don't exist. Unnecessary intellectualising, if you will.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that I may not have an emerging position just yet.

[Invisible Cities animation appears on screen]

Although I am asking a few questions here. I think my position changes depending on where I am standing at any given moment.

References

Calvino, I., 1997. *Invisible cities*. p.77. Translated from Italian by W. Weaver. London: Penguin Random House

Reinfurt, D., 2019. *A *New* Program for Graphic Design*. Distributed Art Publishers, pp.101-107.