SENIOR DOCUMENTARY PROPOSAL
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Whether one is trying to find a good form of organization for some objects, for a series of images, or for their life… it is always an admirable pursuit. Take, for instance, Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus, the Spanish Bluebell, and the African Marigold… on first glance, these flowers look entirely different from one another. On closer inspection, however, Linnaeus found that they actually have the same tissue type. Two things that on first glance seem totally dissimilar… suddenly united, in a way. A beautiful accomplishment, I think. I would like to take this concept and extend it to architecture (rather than flowers) for my documentary. I have chosen two buildings that are completely different from one another. Or are they? I think – perhaps as a nod to Linnaeus and his work – that it will be an interesting challenge to – with close investigation – try to find some convincing similarities between these apparently dissimilar buildings.

I like the concept of the catalogue or the list, where you're initially bombarded with all sorts of information and then you take on the challenge of trying to find a way to organize it all together into some sort of coherent system. I like the reductiveness of that; I like the deconstruction, the basic form of organization. And this is what I'll be trying to do in this documentary: I'll be trying to find convincing ways to show that these different buildings are in fact quite related by accumulating all sorts of information related to the buildings, presenting it all in a visually interesting manner, (how? more detail below) and hopefully eventually finding some interesting parallels. Maybe in the end it'll be a success or maybe it'll turn out that I can't really find convincing similarities but that's OK because I think just watching the attempt will be interesting.

This was perhaps Mr. Aylward's main criticism of my proposal from third year; he felt that I should by pre-production already have figured out an argument that convincingly connects the apparently dissimilar buildings. On this note, however, I disagree as I feel that it really isn't necessary to actually find these connections in order to convey my point and the ideas behind this project: a nod to the pursuit of finding an organization for things. If in the end they just turn out to be totally different and a convincing similarity cannot be found, then that is fine. Because the point behind this doc is really just to pay tribute to the endeavor of *attempting* to find an organization for things, and the importance of that. Important how? Well, if we can find no way of organizing the things of our world together then it's just like a kind of chaos that we all have to put up with. I could have chosen any two things that seem different from one another to illustrate this, but I chose buildings as I feel that this would be a way to also touch upon one of my other big interests: architecture. So… I am confident that simply watching my attempts in this endeavor will be interesting and entertaining for the viewer and will certainly make for a very unique and adventurous project.

I like the concept of 'architecture as character.' The documentary's introductory sequence will show a variety of different, interesting buildings that can be found around Toronto: the Flatiron Building on Wellington Street, (Allemang, 1) the Inglis Plant on Liberty

Street, the Chapel of St. James-the-Less on Parliament Street, (Sewell, 210) the Symes Transfer Station off of Weston Road, the Don Valley Brickworks... these interesting buildings all have what I consider to be 'character' and 'personality' despite being inanimate objects and so I'd like to document them in the beginning. More specifically, this sequence will largely be comprised of exterior and interior montages of the said buildings, accompanied by voiceover conveying relevant information and possibly instrumental music (either original or public domain). After this, however, I will narrow my focus down to two buildings: Eric Palin Hall and Kerr Hall.

Both are Ryerson buildings but that is a very broad connection and so not what I'd call a 'convincing' similarity. Certainly in terms of design, structure, and look they seem very dissimilar… which is all that is necessary for the purposes of this doc, really. However they also happen to be very accessible and I've noted times when the buildings are usually quite uncrowded and quiet, which will be necessary for the shooting.

So the project will be about my attempts at finding similarities between these apparent dissimilarities (the buildings – both interior and exterior.) The camera will dwell within these spaces; e.g. many tracking shots of the interiors. I have purchased a wheelchair that I will use for this purpose – both buildings have very smooth and mostly level floors throughout, which will enable me to get some nice tracking shots with the wheelchair/camera combination. Through my research there will be an elaborate accumulation of architectural information; e.g. measurements and shapes and colors and this can be presented through both auditory and visual means as we explore the buildings.

To be more specific about the visual style: there will be no stock or non-original footage and few interviews. I may include a few brief comments from people on how they feel affected by the 'character' of certain buildings… for instance, the ways in which certain areas of architecture can provoke emotions/reactions/thoughts in people. (Relph, 4) So also to an extent the doc will touch on the concept of how architecture can sometimes have a sort of personality… how a space can sometimes be like a character. But mostly the visual style will consist of architectural photography (cinematography). This footage will be edited together in a fairly elaborate manner, which is where things will begin to get quite interesting visually. There will likely be split screen and/or visual layering techniques used to document the areas in a more visually interesting way, as well as some simple animation over the visuals. The audio will primarily be music and voiceover talking about what I'm trying to do with all of this architectural information that I've been accumulating and whether or not I'm getting close to finding an interesting similarity. I'm expecting these scenes to actually be fairly suspenseful as I predict to get closer with each attempt to finding a convincing similarity.

For instance, one scenario will involve what I'll call the 'Hallway Door Count', where I'll track the camera through a number of different hallways in both buildings and we'll see both via split-screen. The rationale is that it would be interesting to find that the buildings actually have the exact same amount of hallway doors altogether or on certain levels. As the camera tracks past each door, small numbered animations will pop up sequentially. From a rough count that I've already done, I know that the numbers are

close… and so I think it'll be a fairly suspenseful sequence to watch if I edit it together in the planned manner. Admittedly, this might seem to be an absurd and ridiculous kind of undertaking… but it's apt, really, as the act of organization – while important – is kind of absurd in a way, as man is unnaturally compressing the reality of nature into his own subjective fantasies. And also – just due to the odd nature of what I'm doing – I think this kind of sequence will be an effective way of instilling a subtle degree of humor and amusement into the project.

To provide a few illustrative examples of the basic visual style that I'll be going for:

These are stills taken from the film 'The Tulse Luper Suitcases, Part 1: The Moab Story' from my favorite filmmaker, Peter Greenaway. In the upper left, upper right, and bottom left frames you'll notice that there are multiple 'frames within the frames'. This is how I'll likely be presenting the architectural information I've accumulated – via smaller, animated frames within the larger frame of my movie. This should result in an interesting visual presentation of the otherwise dry statistical information. In the bottom right, you'll notice writing on the frame… this is another method for delivering the information in a visually interesting way that I'd like to at least experiment with.

The Ken Burns documentary about architect Frank Lloyd Wright will be relevant for me as the insights into Lloyd Wright's ideas on architecture will come in handy when shooting and editing. The fiction film *Liebestraum* is also of importance; I like films where buildings are characters and photographed as such and this is one of them. The photography of architecture in this film is of the caliber that I aspire to. Also, the documentary *My Architect* about architect Louis Kahn: Kahn's main architectural ideas

had to do with finding order in things (forms, light) and this is a concept that I'd also like to explore with my project. The fiction film *Life as a House* is another inspiration… the interest here being in how architecture (in this case, one particular beachside home) is used metaphorically. Shots of certain parts of this home carry meaning by themselves even away from any character. And finally the *Tulse Luper Suitcases* films which are an inspiration mainly with regard to how Peter Greenaway organizes his imagery: visual layerings involving many frames-within-frames; a technique I'd like to experiment with.

So, to summarize: the focus will be on trying to find specific, convincing similarities between two apparently dissimilar buildings. The 'agenda' could be said to show how seemingly different things in the world can actually be united and organized together in convincing ways if examined closely enough. As aforementioned however, this is neither a necessary conclusion nor one that I can guarantee. So more definitely, then, the agenda of this project could be said to be that what I'm doing here is essentially *paying tribute* to the endeavor of attempting to find an organization for things.

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