

The time has ^{come} ... work has taken its toll
but mercifully the darkness endured shall
lead to an appreciation of the two
months that spread out before me...

I have heard rumor of a camel wrestling
festival in Turkey... I load my pack

I spend most of the time
staring into their eyes... windows
of purity and a that renew.
a sense of faith in humanity
a faith that seems to be
wary... that gaze

I have no images for this
part of the journey... just near
I found a hotel near off the
main roads + wild dogs and
The bed was crumb dusted
and there was -

it seems more run down
here... The buildings slouch and
people walk through the rain + fog with
heads bowed... I stay with
David in the apartment once
owned by his grandmother... we
do

A restless freedom seems to take hold as I spend days looking out into the vast ocean... I take long walks into the hills and meet shepherds who live with their flock... Their milky eyes relate to some ancient presence here... a restless freedom seems to take hold of me and the time comes for me to move on... back to nowhere.

Passages.

notes 11/02

Istanbul — pigeons after photocopy guys.
remove 2nd photocopy shot
start w 2nd Romanian kid shot
end w toy horse Then 1st Romanian kid shot

ISTANBUL

- Romanian kid 2 → accordion
- antenna vendor
- photocopy guys
- pigeons x 3
- fish in basket — start call to prayer.
- fishing on bridge x 3
- soccer kid on landing
- marble playing kids
- soccer kids 2
- kid in window
- toy horse
- Romanian kid 1 → accordion

inter titles

RUINS

landscape
pan around
cat shit
amphitheatres x 3
library x 3
empty road
hotel ruins — start V.O.
restaurant ruins
fishing x 2
ocean.

FRANCE

↓
end.

Canada Council Grant Application

Passages (Geneva-Istanbul)

Introduction

Passages is a 20 minute hand-processed experimental film journal assembled from rolls of black-and-white 16mm film that I shot recently on an overland journey from Switzerland to Turkey. It is a travelling meditation on the direction of our culture which places images of ruined Roman and Greek settlements beside simple observational moments that I shot in the cities, towns, and villages along the way. I am requesting support from the council to complete the post-production phase of the project.

Background

The project was conceived intuitively through the process of observing humanity in different cities and towns while travelling by train from Geneva to the south coast of Turkey. I had packed my camera and nine rolls (25 minutes) of film with no clear structure for what I would shoot during the trip. There was nothing in Geneva which moved me besides the sheer exuberance and beauty of my two and a half year old nephew who I spent Christmas with. The first roll would be used to document his awkward dance moves around the glittering tree... my sister and mother in the kitchen roasting almonds... my stepfather tending the bar...

The camera stayed buried in my pack until I reached Budapest, which seemed like a rusted gate leading me away from the pristine surfaces of Vienna. The wealth and prosperity of the West seemed covered over here by a layer of dirt and decay... a city still recovering from cold war trauma and its former status as a colony of the Austro-Hungarian empire... a palpable sense of history and change swirled in the heavy winter mist over the Danube. The markets bustled, the traffic was jammed and satellite dishes littered the skyline. Onward to Bucharest where 300,000 wild dogs roamed the streets in packs... where scores of gypsy children begged and hustled in the shadow of monumental catastrophe... where, as I walked the downtown streets, I felt a creeping paranoia unlike any I had ever experienced. The train station was a Kafkaesque kaleidoscope full of many more dogs and dishevelled men in different uniforms carrying handguns and insisting that I needed to purchase special tickets to board the train for Istanbul... leaving the city was a mirror image of arriving... from the endless rows of concrete Soviet era apartment blocks and razor wire there would emerge rail-side shanty ghettos where gypsy families would be huddled by small fires... out on to the expansive grey plains, massive factories belched orange and yellow smoke... the trees were bare and there were no signs of life. When the sun rose again I was in Turkey, heading south towards the ruined Roman city of Ephesus... it was there, while sitting in the empty 24,000 seat amphitheatre watching a family harvest olives in a nearby grove, that I started thinking about a film. It would become an observational documentary... a very subjective attempt to examine the intersection of the past and present... where we have come from... where we are going... how things have changed since these great marble cities fell to ruin and how our own of concrete and steel remain.

In the two months that followed, I would collect many small bits and pieces... street life in Istanbul... milky eyed shepherds in the Mediterranean hills... the echoing calls to prayer... fishing skiffs at sunrise putting out to sea... people on mobile phones... Kurdish kids giving straight razor shaves and playing soccer... more ruined cities... a confluence of tradition and technology which somehow renewed my faith in the idea that there is an essential humanism which transcends geography and language... which perpetuates our presence here in the moment. It is my hope that the film will embrace these ideas in a simple poetic manner and communicate the sense of awe that was inspired by the experience

Style and Technique

The images for the project were shot on black and white motion picture film with a 16mm Bolex camera while travelling from Switzerland to Turkey. Because I wasn't shooting material with a specific structure in mind, I would usually scout locations by walking through a town or a city or through a ruined settlement and make note of places that resonated on some aesthetic or emotional level. I would return with the camera on days when the light was good and sit and watch the simple ebb and flow of life. Sometimes I'd shoot and sometimes nothing would happen so I'd move on. Through this process, the images acquired a distinctly observational quality where the camera is static and the moments... of people going about their daily routines... occur in a very naturalistic way.

Upon returning to Toronto, I hand-processed all of the material in order to render the images with a shimmering, timeless quality. During the post-production phase, I plan to use the optical printer to further manipulate the physical and temporal quality of the images. The intention is to create two distinct textural worlds... one for the ruin sites and one for the rest so that there is an obvious level of separation between them.

Structurally, the film begins like a home movie... rich hand-held black and white images of an infant stumbling around a Christmas tree... we follow him into the kitchen where a mother and grandmother prepare a meal... the camera is continually drawn to the eyes of the child... clear and crisp, full of wonder and innocence... as deep and wide as the sea. There is a sparse voice-over which contextualises the place and time... that this is a point of departure. From my nephews innocent eyes we are soon transported across the eerie winter landscapes of Hungary and Romania en route to Istanbul and the ancient ruins scattered throughout Western Turkey. The voice-over drifts in and out and is woven with recorded sounds from between train cars... from the calls to prayer that blast forth from the mosques... and from a variety of street musicians who I recorded along the way. Over the footage of the ruins, the distant sounds from Hollywood epics like *Ben Hur*... *Julius Caesar*... *Caligula*... the chariot races... debauched orgies... and war. I also plan to conduct a voice interview with a friend that leads a team of genetic scientists in the south of France who harbours deep concerns over the ethics of genetic research. The questions will relate to the influence of contemporary science on the future of humanity... what must happen in order to sustain life as we know it... whether technology can 'fix' the problems we have created for ourselves... and his personal feelings about the the direction in which we are headed. By combining all these aural and visual elements, I hope to create an atmosphere of meditative contemplation... a film which does not try to answer any questions yet is imbued with a sense of the resilient beauty of humanity.