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Senior Projects Spring 2018

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

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## a dream of nothing in 10 chapters

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**Senior Project Artist Statement**  
**William Wrubel**  
**May 2018**

*a dream of nothing in 10 chapters* is a meditation on two characters and the twilight of their tenuous, romantic relationship. The unnamed protagonist has trapped themselves in their near-bare, white-walled bedroom, waiting for their lover to return. While waiting, they write about a fragmentary dream, their relationship, and a mysterious piano player who lives next door. Eventually their lover comes home and the two interact in complete silence, finally leaving the room together to go to the sea.

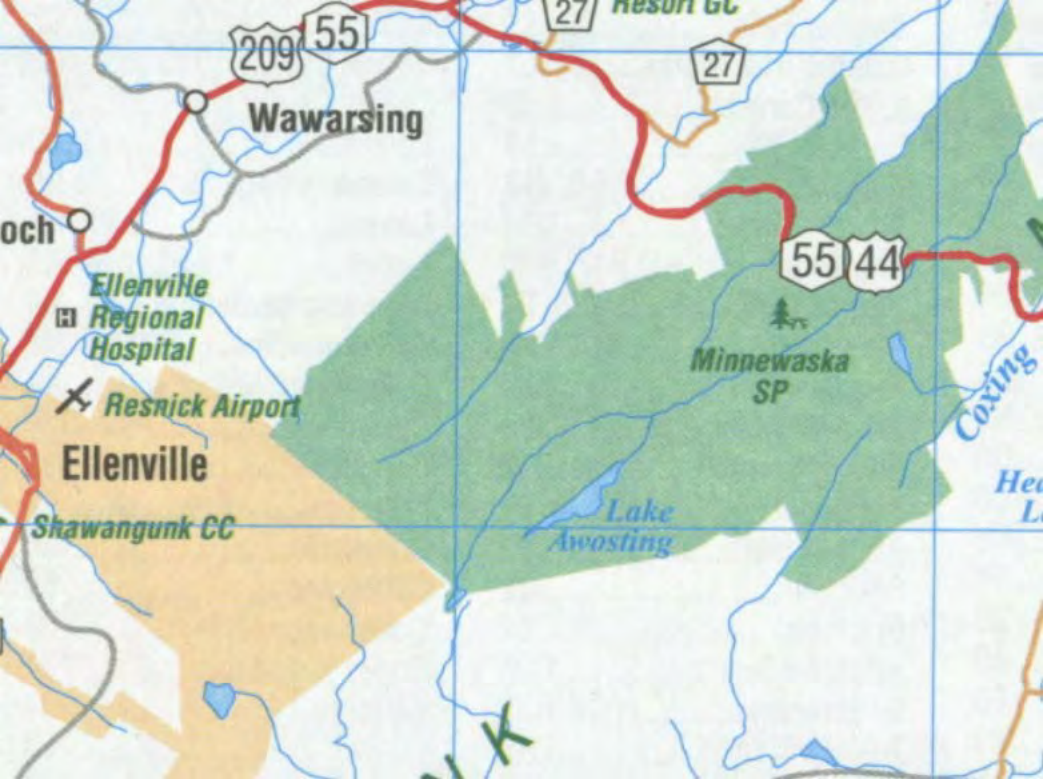
But this film is no more about the story than the images that tell it, or refuse to. Sometimes the characters and their narrative will disappear, and in their place are magnified studies of objects, space, and found images. The film becomes a puzzle, a collection of fragments that occasionally fit together but more frequently are at odds with one another. In both form and content, this film is an exploration of the dialectical opposition between the still and the moving, the interior and the exterior. Long, unbroken pans are contrasted with fleeting and fragmentary sequences of photographs; one character's isolated and contemplative indolence is contrasted with the other's unthinking movement through the world; interior monologues combat with sounds that imply the exterior world: distant voices, children playing, and a constant stream of traffic.

And since every dialectical relationship presupposes a potential synthesis, what, one might ask, is the synthesis that this film proposes? Nothing. Two poles clash, destroying themselves, and in their wake leave a void, an absence: the tangible darkness of a dream half-forgotten. In the end of the film, the two characters meet and leave the room together to drive to the ocean. Their journey there, and their subsequent arrival, goes unseen, but in lieu the camera pans through the empty room, dwelling on the characters' absence from it. The final shot, as seen from a distance: refracted headlights pass over a crookedly hung postcard of Monet's *Ships Riding on the Seine at Rouen* while sounds of the tide and playing children swell into the soundtrack. One imagines the two characters watching the sea in silence, and in looking at the sea one imagines the infinite: the perceptible impossibility of everything imaginable, or its apparent nullity. The crashing of a wave might as well be a momentary explosion of silence.

Having worked in both film and photography simultaneously throughout my time at Bard, this film could be seen as my own attempt to reconcile these two image-making processes, which are at once similar and drastically different from one another. *a dream of nothing in 10 chapters* is a realization of my own struggle to make stand-alone images that move and co-exist with others, to add emotional depth to conceptual gestures, and to play into narrative convention without abandoning certain experimental inclinations.

Though this statement has largely focused on the visual, this film has also taken much from the literary. One author who has stayed with me throughout this project is Maurice Blanchot. I'll leave you with a quote of his, the first couple lines of his essay *Two Versions of the Imaginary*, a work that has influenced my own thinking about the ideas that this project deals with.

“But what is the image? When there is nothing, that is where the image finds its condition, but disappears into it. The image requires the neutrality and the effacement of the world, it wants everything to return to the indifferent depth where nothing is affirmed, it inclines towards the intimacy of what still continues to exist in the void; its truth lies there”



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