

- This paper is part of a larger **practice-led research** project around the making of <u>fiction</u>.
- As a practitioner and educator in filmmaking practices, my research has begun to focus on the **process** of fiction production and its implications around **equality** and **inclusion**.
- My research is still on going and therefore this short paper represents the initial stages of the project.
- Utilizing **process-led reflexive praxis**, my objective is to explore and foster a **deeper engagement** with fiction production within film and media.



Immensely complex product

"A film is an immensely complex product, integrating numerous art forms (such as writing, design, and performing arts), and the scope for combining the inputs in order to achieve new content varieties are, in Caves's (2000) words, infinite."

- Mark Lorenzen,

Article: Creativity in Context: Content, Cost, Chance, and Collection in the Organization of the Film Industry

- Films are immensely intricate artefacts to **create**, as those of you who are involved in production will know, it encompasses a **spectrum of challenges** from the development of an idea, right through to the final product.
- What interests me in the quote from Mark Lorenzen's is, although film production is complex, it offers <u>scope</u> for new content creation with infinite potential.
- However, I want to suggest that the reality is, within narrative fiction, there is **limited** room for **experimentation**.



- Fiction can serve as the **imaginative** manifestation of our ideals, fears, and aspirations concerning **identity**, **desires**, and **actions**.
- However, for emerging filmmakers lacking reputation or financial resources, navigating this landscape presents significant challenges to innovation and creative risk-taking.
- And a medium that has so much potential becomes increasingly **formulaic** and **predictable**.
- While there have been breakout moments, there is a **narrow understanding** of what makes a **good story**.
- There is also a complex network of gatekeepers and

processes that **inhibit** new and ground-breaking work.

- So, despite the **infinite potential** of the medium, the film industry largely adheres to **narrow forms of storytelling**, which restricts **different** creative voices.
- My overall argument is that we need to change the dynamics of the production process, as well as who gets to take a leading creative role in these productions.



- While the term **friction** had not been explicitly employed in the context of my research from the start, it has emerged as an **apt descriptor** for the challenges inherent in both the collaborative creative process, and in understanding the driving force behind the narrative conventions employed in this story.
- Because I am presenting you the film as an output, I am limited on time, so I want to briefly focus on the notion of friction as an alternative to the notion of conflict.



- **Conflict** is a narrative **cornerstone** to storytelling and continues to be a key component that shapes narratives and engages audiences by creating tension, suspense, and resolution.
- Although friction and conflict are **related concepts**, they are often used **interchangeably**, however, they are **distinct**.
- **Conflict** typically refers to a more intense and direct clash or disagreement between parties.
- It frequently involves **opposing** interests, goals, or values, which, within a narrative, typically culminate in overt confrontation, hostility, or struggle.

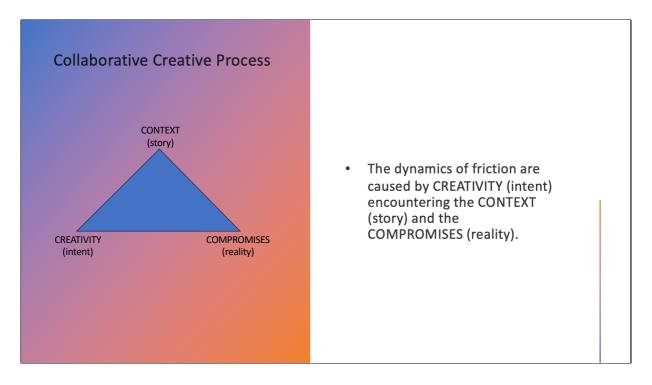
- Whereas friction generally refers to tension, disagreement, or resistance between individuals or groups.
- It can also arise from differences in opinions or values.
- As opposed to conflict, friction can be relatively mild and may not necessarily escalate into **open confrontation** or hostility.
- However, we are taught that this is not so good for stories.
- My aim with this film was to experiment with the narrative form of the story creating friction but not outward conflict.



- About the Night follows the story of a young waiter, and a woman, who seeks solace in a late-night café just as he wants to finish his shift.
- As the director my pitch was: <u>Small act of kindness</u> <u>can change the world.</u>
- I was leaning into the notion of **small** acts **can** make a **difference**.
- The goal was to craft an engaging story that conveys life's complexity and engenders empathy, without having a <u>conflict resolution story arch</u>.
- I wanted to portray the story with minimal manipulation, fostering empathy without dictating

emotions.

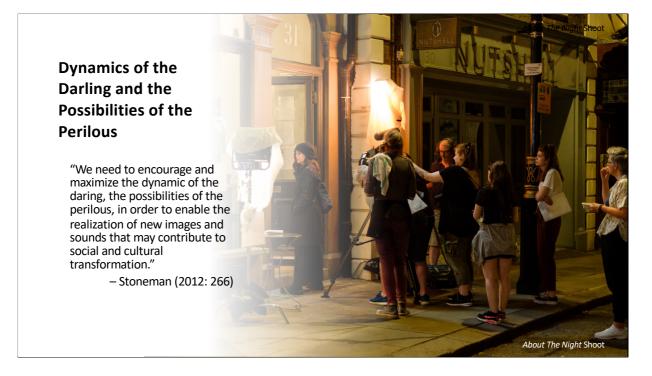
- My approach was to construct an <u>experi-ential</u> window on a moment in time, emulating the effectual tone of the script.
- The friction is **palpable** as Mia enters and sits down.
- There is no outward conflict, not even when Mia won't look at him and writes her order on a piece of paper.
- As the events unfold, there is a notable change in how Josh deals with her, from annoyed and frustrated to <u>acceptance</u>, despite calling his girlfriend and wanting to be home.
- There is no major **catalyst** other than wanting to be more like his mentor, the manager, and serve the **best coffee** he can.
- The challenge was to be mindful of not **over emphasizing** the **friction**, particularly in terms of **sound**, so that it tries to compensate for the **lack of conflict**.
- In fact, sound became key and it was important to work closely with the sound designer/composer who believed in the experimental nature of this film.
- When I was not brave she kept me true to our original aim of not telling the audience how to feel.



- Filmmaking is often seen as a kind of alchemy—a fusion of innate talent, craft skill, and serendipitous moments.
- However, this mystique is unhelpful, particularly to future filmmakers, it contributes to the 'cult of the director,' keeps creative 'workers' in their place, and overshadows the collaborative efforts of those diligently working to complete a film.
- It also masks the critical evaluative work that goes on at any given moment in a production.
- In closing, I want to point to the next stages of this research – critically assessing the collaborative

creative process that went into making this film.

- Here the notion of <u>friction</u> also plays a vital role, potentially serving as a constructive force for creativity and innovation.
- As a director you **creatively** negotiate your **content** with the people working alongside you, and all the **creative** decisions must triangulate with the **content** as you come up against the **reality** of your budget, and this inevitably means **compromise**.
- This collaborative way of working is constant and therefore this means the potential for **friction** is also constant.
- Understanding these major junctures, <u>creativity</u>, <u>content</u>, <u>compromise</u>, are extremely important, because who gets to take the main stage as the director finds themselves in an <u>extremely high stakes</u> <u>environment</u>.
- This then has a major impact on who gets to take that director's role, as well as <u>what</u> stories get made.
- Eventually this risk averse managing of creativity shuts down and limits new content varieties, rather than opening it out to <u>infinite possibilities</u>.



- Finally, this **risk averse** culture is very restrictive in terms of what we teach our students particularly if we are trying to be **radical** and **engender** the changemakers of the future.
- In fact, as Stoneman (2012) suggests here, both chance and risk play a major role in innovative work, and with chance and risk comes **friction**.
- Therefore, recognizing that filmmaking involves a myriad of creative and technical decisions, it becomes apparent that the creative decision-making process involved in crafting believable worlds and characters cannot be solely judged from a technical

perspective.

• Consequently, for me, this highlights the **importance** of more research from myself, and others, into the **fiction** filmmaking process.

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