

COMMUNICATION DESIGN
PROJECT 2

VISUAL NARRATIVE

of Kolarian Customary Folklore

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Guide
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IDC

School of Design
IIT Bombay
2018

Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where other ideas & words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources.

I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty & integrity and have not fabricated, misinterpreted and falsified any idea/data/fact/source in my submission.

I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom permission has not been taken when needed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Priyanka Purty'.

Signature:

Priyanka Purty
176450005

Approval sheet

This communication design project entitled “Visual Narrative of Kolarian Customary Folklore” by Priyanka Purty, 176450005, is approved in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master of Design in Communication Design.

Project Guide:



Chairperson:



Internal Examiner:



External Examiner:



Date: 14 December 2018

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I would also like to thank Niraj Samad, Anil Pingua and Sanjay Tudu who patiently heard my every idea and provided their inputs & concerns on the same. Also thanks to my friends and classmates.

Lastly thanks to my family for their love, encouragement and firm support.



Priyanka Purty

14 December 2018

Mumbai

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Abstract

The project attempts to reinterpret and create original content based on the Kolarian Customary Folklore for the Ho speaking population of India. The project also aims to generate a contemporary folklore which is intertwined with the old and the new.

Furthermore it explores how landscape and soundscape can be employed to set up an ambience to effectively express a visual and aural narrative.

Introduction

Along with Mundari (1.1 million speakers) and Santhali (7.6 million speakers), Ho is a Munda language of the Austroasiatic language family spoken primarily in India by about 1.4 million people as per 2011 census.

The Ho also known as the Kols, resides primarily in the Kolhan region, a southern hilly part of Chota Nagpur Plateau which covers much of present day Jharkhand state as well as adjacent parts of Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Chattisgarh.

Having close affinity to Australoid race, the Ho people have a distinct culture and lifestyle which is slowly declining. to name a few, due to migration, mainstream education and amalgamation with other religion and cultures. The Ho people like other Australoid people have close association with their land and environment and for many years have suffered from the 'resource curse' which is threatening to take away all that is left of the Chota Nagpur Plateau and Kolhan.

One of the key part of their culture is the veneration of the dead. Their respect and closeness with the land and their ancestors can be found in their folk stories, songs, architecture and customs.

Ading is a sacred house for the ancestors in the residential complex of a Ho household. This is where the *Bonga* which can be roughly translated into spirit of a late family member is ushered into three days after the burial. *Keyadari* is a custom which can be roughly translated into the calling and ushering of the late family member's *Bonga* into the *Ading*.

This customary folklore can be interpreted as a narrative to preserve familial values as Ho people have been a very close-knit community. For many decades, this has been endangered due to seasonal or permanent migration for economical and/or educational reasons.

The project aims to explore the connection of present day migration or living away from one's own culture and homeland, its effect on familial values, and reconnection with one's root and identity intertwined with the custom of *Keyadari*.

Objective

The aim of the project was to construct a contemporary narrative based the Kolarian customary folklore, *Keyadari* which expresses and reflect the close bond shared by the Ho people with their land and community.

- Create an original visual narrative based on Kolarian customary folklore, *Keyadari*.
- A contemporary story which is an amalgamation of the old and the new.
- To produce an experimental visual narrative in form of a film based on this story
- To comprehend, communicate and explore the subject of self-identity and its co-relation to community and landscape.

Design Process

Initially the story was about the protagonists travelling back to their homeland and reflecting on the childhood and reconnecting with the past. The narrative was snippets of events and memories of which the custom of *Keyadari* was a part of.

This was further developed into a narrative about the protagonists who returns home to visit her dying grandmother. The Grandmother's desire to see her granddaughter one last time and calling and ushering of the *Bonga* during *Keyadari* mirrors the two parts of the narrative.

The story was further developed into three sub narrative:

- The protagonists returning home
- The Grandmother desire to meet her Granddaughter
- A childhood event/memory shared by both the characters

In the end these three sub narratives converge into one during *Keyadari* custom.

Narrative Style

This is an attempt to create a non-linear experimental film intertwining three sub narratives into one. Initially this narrative structure grew organically as the author noted down how the information of the narrative will be delivered chronologically.

The resultant visual narrative structure, in a static image, may be visually described as a braid. Braiding has been a big part in the craft of household items of the Ho people. Apart from hair braid which synonyms with femininity, braids can be seen in household items such as a grass-cot, *jhadu* or broom, grass-mat. It symbolises strength, reconnection and spirituality as in finding oneself. This brings us to the next part of the project which is Symbolism and Metaphors.



Braid (Source: Chris 73/Wikimedia Commons)

Symbolism and Metaphors

The film has minimal dialogue and is filled with symbolism and metaphors some of which are as follows:

- The name of the protagonist is Rimil which means Clouds in Ho language. Clouds symbolises luck and hope due to the connection that clouds brings rain to water the crops. It is also a motif for immortality and a fusion of water and air, sky and earth.
- The Grandmother herself symbolises the disintegrating culture and lifestyle of the Ho people
- The long never ending journey of the protagonist depicts symbolically the farness, separation and long distance from one's own homeland.
- Braids or brading, appear regularly, sometimes directly (close-up) and sometimes indirectly in form of an household item (long shot)
- Water symbolises innocence, purity and higher wisdom whereas its reflection may symbolise self-identity
- The contrasting presence of factory/mines in the middle of vast natural landscape symbolises the resource curse.
- The empty snake like asphalt road slithering between hills symbolises the establishment of more factories/mines in the the name of development.

Synopsis

A non-linear visual narrative about an oblivious and distant girl as she returns to her village after many years to meet her dying Grandmother. As she travels back, she revisits her childhood memories, her roots and self-identity. A story about reconnecting with family, animism and veneration of the dead practised among the Ho community of Kolhan.

The film is in Ho language and has minimal dialogue and incorporates folk songs to efficiently evoke the emotion and ambience of the story aurally and visually.

The title of the film in Ho language, ‘Gonoera Dosturko- mise beteta’ can be roughly translated into ‘Funeral Customs- a reunion’.

The script went through four revision and eventually the fourth draft was used to make the film. Initial storyboard was made for the first draft of the film. Prologue of the script (in English) can be found in the next page.

Script

FADE IN:

(PROLOGUE)

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE COURTYARD -
TWILIGHT

(Visual Treatment- Warm, Low-key and mysterious)

The flickering golden light of a dying bonfire fills a semi-dark courtyard, casting a dancing like shadows of the crowd, including RIMIL, seated around a group of women in front of a doorway. The group of women are walking in circles and singing a Ho tribe mourning melody.

WOMEN

It's cold outside. Please come back home.

There are insects and animals outside. Please come back
home....

As the song fade away, an OLD WOMAN among the singing mourners walks across the doorway in front of a door, knocks and asks—

OLD WOMEN

Has she arrived?

CUT TO:

EXT. RAILWAY STATION - DAWN

(Visual Treatment- Cold, desolate low-contrast and Dreamy)

The cold early morning mist floats upon a desolate railway platform. RIMIL, a 21 year old girl, is sitting alone on the platform. She is wearing jeans and sweatshirt. She is carrying a backpack and a big trolley bag. She seems to be looking for someone who is nowhere to be found. She is shivering with cold and is trying to call someone on the phone.

VOICE FROM PHONE

The number you are trying to call is out of your coverage area.

RIMIL, impatient, gets up, hangs her backpack, drags her trolley bag and is seen leaving the Railway Station.

Characters

LIST OF CHARACTERS

- RIMIL- Protagonist, a 21 year old college girl
- YOUNG RIMIL- 7 years young Rimil

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

- GRANDMA- RIMIL'S Grandmother, a 75-80 year old.
- JABNI- RIMIL'S Mother, a 55 year old Ho woman
- PALO- RIMIL'S elder cousin.
- YOUNG PALO- 8-9 yrs young Palo
- YOUNG PALO'S FRIEND- 8-9 yrs young girl
- MAN IN THE FIELD- a man in his 30s, working in the cropfield

- WOMAN IN THE FIELD - a woman in her 30s working in the cropfield
- MOURNERS- mourning women usually headed by an older woman to carry out the funeral rituals.

Among Ho community, funeral rituals are usually carried out by women of the family and village. There will be mostly old people in crowd to reflect familial and antiquity but also the deteriorating nature of Kolhan culture.

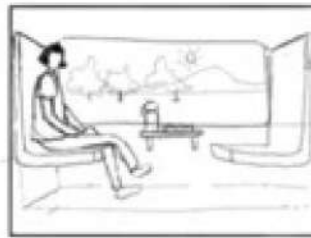
Storyboard 1

Project Name Wandering Cloud

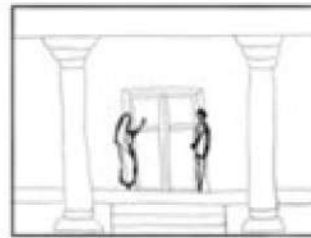
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By Priyanka Purty

Date _____



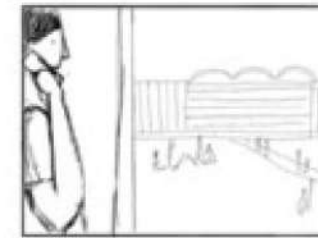
Moving train. Countryside
passes by outside the window



Rimil and the old woman standing
outside an entrance door.



The old woman knocks and asks-
"Is she back home?"



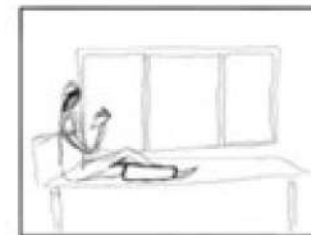
RIMIL talking on the phone



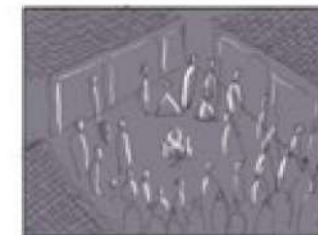
RIMIL arriving at the station



RIMIL and her cousin drives back
home and meet with an accident



RIMIL is bedridden as she has
broken her leg



Women singing folk song.
There is a bonfire in the middle.

Storyboard 2

Project Name Wandering Cloud

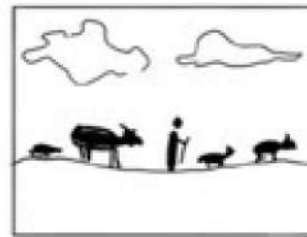
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By Priyanka Purty

Date _____



Collecting ash from the
extinguished bonfire



The cattle herders guide the
cattle's and goats back home



Sun sets followed by scenes
of the landscape



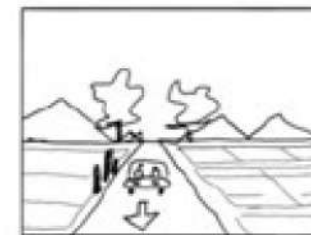
A frog jumps into a pool full
of lotus flower



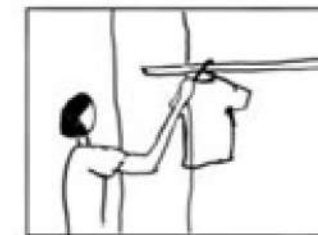
Funeral rituals begin



The old women knocks and asks
if she is back home



A car drives on the road



Rimil takes out her luggage
and keeps her clothes in the
cupboard

Pre-Production

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	
DATES	(22 NOV)	(23 NOV)	(24 NOV)	(25 NOV)	
DAWN	1,2,3,4	1,2,3,4			
MORNING		11,12,13	11,12,13		
AFTERNOON		5,6,7,8	5,6,7,8		
DUSK	14,15,16	14,15,16	9	9	
NIGHT			10	10	

Initial Schedule: Scene-Day-Time Table

The film was shot in real and multiple location in Kolhan, Jharkhand in nearby location within 20 Km of Chaibasa, a small town in Kolhan. The sites were shortlisted according to their distance from each other so that the shooting could be done efficiently and in time since most of the film was shot is natural light. The location also had to be near the location of the cast and crew.

The crew consisted of most of my friends and family. The crew are local residents and non-trained actors. The main actor playing the protagonist was contacted through facebook. All of them spoke in Ho language. Due to harvest season, the women who were cast as mourners could spare only one day for the shoot and the schedule was chaged accordingly. Same was done for the child actors who were cast as young protagonist and her cousin and friends because of their ongoing school.

A budget of ₹ 50,000/- was made for the film. Eventually the film was completed in under budget and we managed to spent less than ₹ 50,000/-

















Equipments

Initially we had planned to rent cameras and sound equipments from Ranchi, the nearby city but the vendor declined the last minute. We had planned to borrow a friend's equipments in case something like this happens. So we ended up using minimum and locally available resources. List of the equipments are as follows:

Camera

Canon 5D Mark III

50mm Block Lens (with Macro filter for close ups)

85mm Block Lens

Digitek still photography Tripod

64 GB SD card

Sound

Zoom H4N

Rode NTG2 microphone

Electricals

200 Watt tungsten naked bulb

Principle Photography

The principle photography commenced on 22 November 2018 and finished on 26 November 2018. Even though the shoot was well planned, we were faced with numerous last minute change for example the actor playing the role of Grandmother refused to act at the last minute because of the nature of the film as it dealt with death. We were faced also faced with lighting issues, as we had planned to shoot in soft natural light. The *keyadari* customs takes place during dusk but due to time constraint, in the film it takes place at night using artificial lighting.

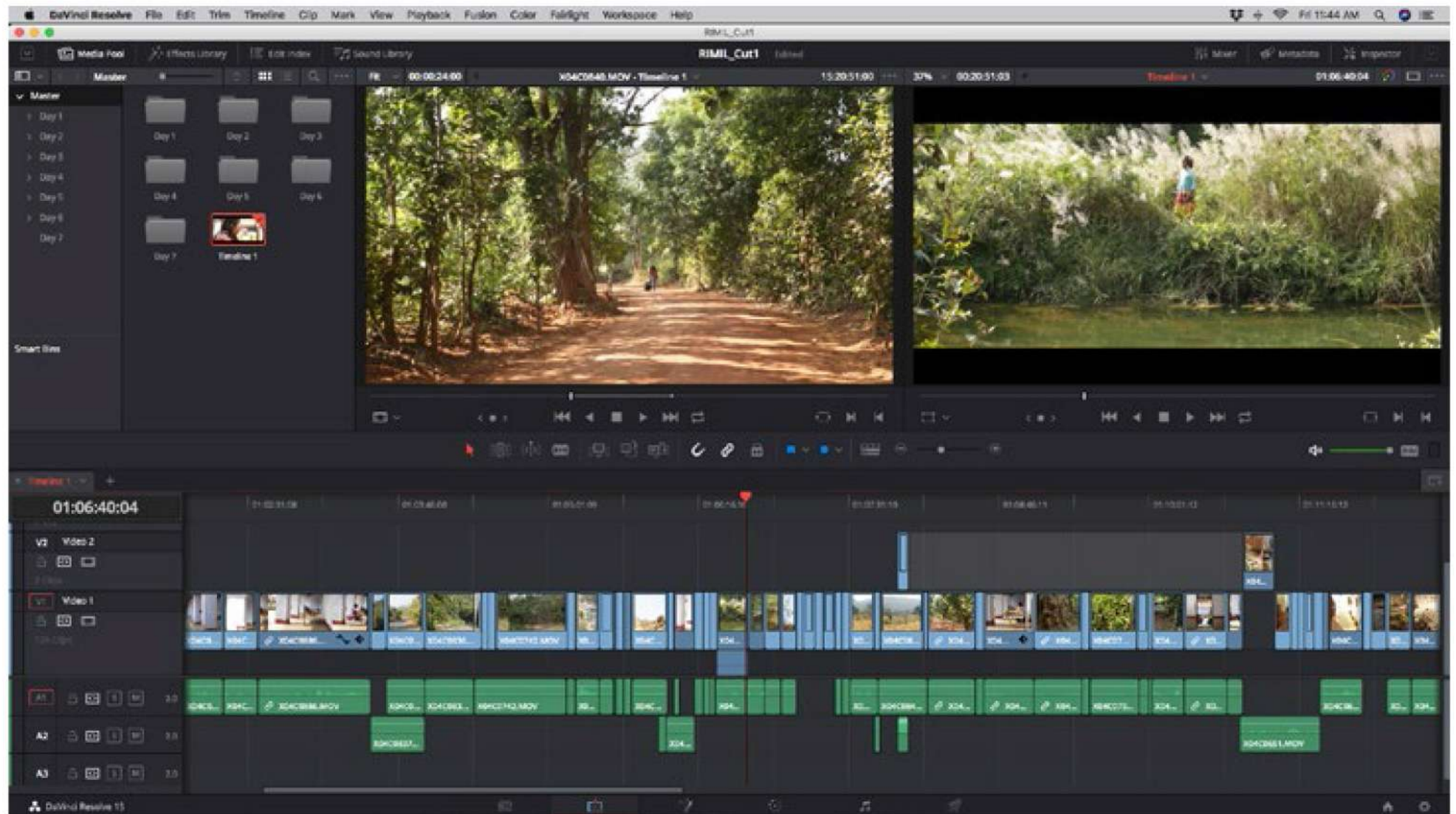
The locations were used for its accessibility and we also kept in mind that all locations even remote ones had a nearby place with electricity for charging of batteries and in some cases for electricity. In one case after the scene has been set with artificial lighting and the camera was about to roll, the electricity went out for two hours. Instead of waiting for the electricity, we decided to record folk songs and we managed to make use of the black out.

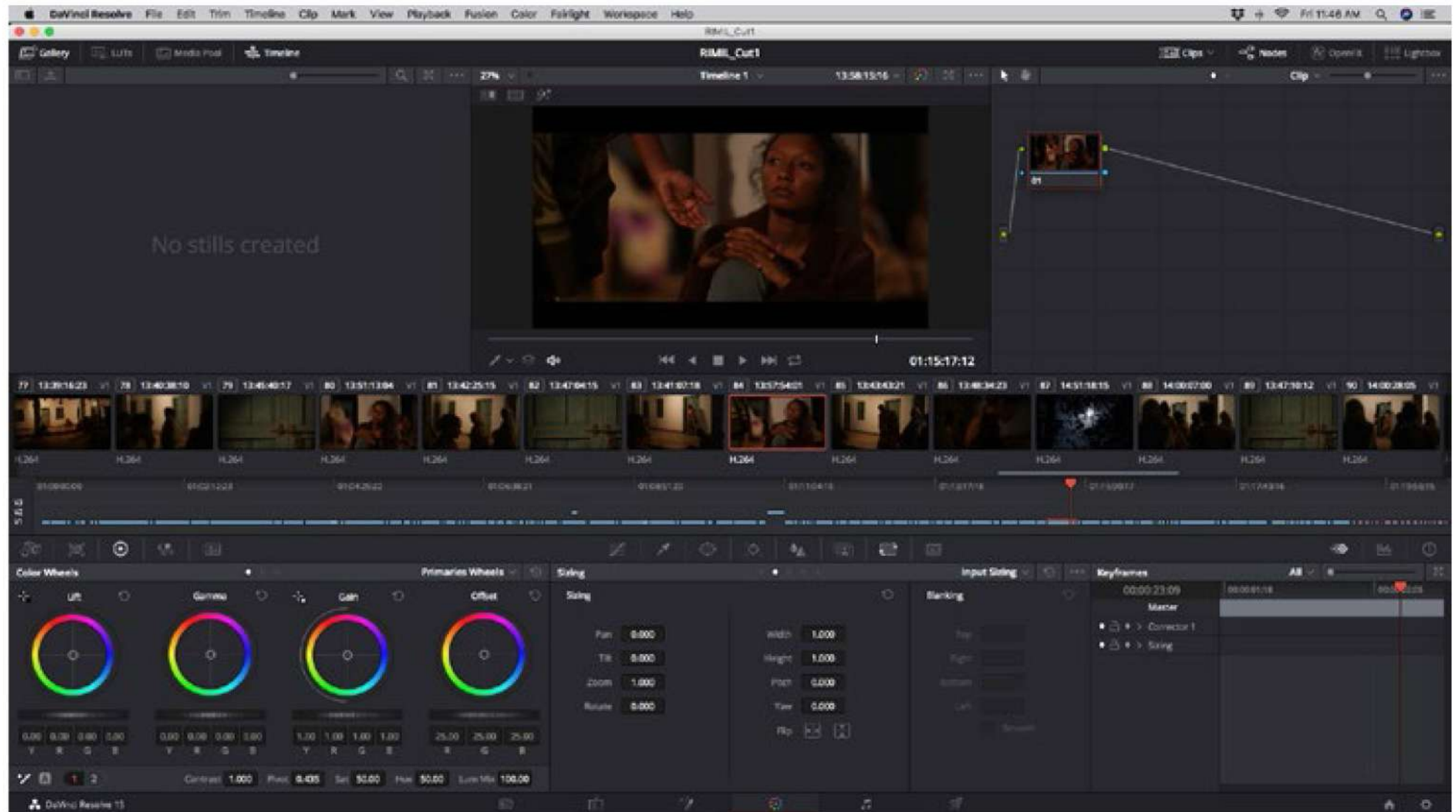
Overall the shoot was completed in time and under budget.

Post- Production

The film has been video and sound edited, colour corrected using DaVinci Resolve. LaCie 2GB external Hard drive was used for backup of 115 GB of video and sound media.

First cut of the film was of 45 minutes which came down to 30 minutes in second cut, 25 minutes on third and eventually 20 minutes on fourth cut.





Film References

Hukkle, a 2002 experimental Hungarian film directed by György Pálfi

about what looks like the daily life in a quaint village but is actually a murder-mystery.

Red Desert, a 1964 Italian film directed by Michelangelo Antonio depicts surreal industrial landscape which reflects the protagonists inner turmoil and anxiety.

Om-Dar-B-Dar, a 1988 Indian postmodernist film directed by Kamal Swaroop which employs a non-linear narrative and an absurdist story line to satirise mythology, arts, politics and philosophy.

Conclusion

This was my first time writing and directing a film and after initial self-doubt and hesitance, I can confidently say that I thoroughly enjoyed each and every moment of it. Filmmaking is a demanding process and even though one is prepared to the teeth, one is bombarded with various and unforeseen circumstances that one is never prepared for. Facing and solving these real time challenges has been exhilarating. One has to be prepared logistically and mentally to take up a challenge such as Filmmaking.

It has also taught me how to be a leadership and humilty at the same time. Teamwork and trust are other aspects of filmmaking. And the most important learning was how every small and big tasks counts to turn an idea into paper and then into screen.