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El Gris Perfecto
(The Perfect Grey)

(Video Drama)

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A Final Year Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Supervisor: Mr Kym Campbell
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Part One: Abstract

*El Gris Perfecto (The Perfect Grey)* is a narrative short film shot and produced by B+W Films, as part of the group members’ Final Year Project (FYP) at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University. B+W Films consists of four undergraduates – Ho Chang Yong Edwin, Thia Hui Min Grace, Ang Miao Fang Felicia and Trixie Yap Sher Li.

Supervised by Mr. Kym Campbell, the film took approximately a year to complete. *El Gris Perfecto* tells the story of a Singaporean-Spanish boy who embarks on a journey of self-discovery in Barcelona. It focuses on the ambiguity – symbolized by the colour grey – that is present in human relationships, and is a concept rarely explored in a Singaporean context.

This final report documents the entire year’s journey on the making of this project, from the beginning (conceptualization) to its completion (post-production and marketing). It also provides insights on how we overcame obstacles during the course of the project, as well as the reasons and rationale behind certain decisions made in the project.
Part Two: Introduction

2.1 Origins of B+W Films

With the concept and theme of grey in mind for our short film, we decided to name ourselves B+W Films, simply because grey is a colour combination of black and white.

We wanted to keep the name as simple as possible, in line with our film’s underlying exploration of the simple relationships we form with people around us, which unfolds as a result of chance and natural circumstances. In addition, we aspire to surpass the norms of narrative drama films in Singapore, and decided to represent ourselves with a group name that was more unique.

2.2 Title of film

*El Gris Perfecto* means “The Perfect Grey” when translated to English. The title is derived from a line delivered by one of the characters in the film, that “grey can be perfect too”. During a conversation between the protagonist Juan and his Spanish friend Jose, Jose remarked that “life does not have to be black or white, grey can be perfect too.” Jose was talking about being contented with an ambiguous relationship he was in, and this sentence had a profound impact on Juan. The title of our film was thus derived from this notion.

The main philosophy behind the film is about how there are no straightforward answers to many things and we often have to deal with this grey area in relationships and decisions in life. Grey is used as a symbol of such ambiguity. Therefore, we felt that *El Gris Perfecto* made the most apt title for our story, as it provides a hint about the essence of the film.
2.3 Story inspiration

As a team, we wanted to create a moving visual poetry about self-discovery and life. The philosophy and inspiration behind the film stemmed from our viewpoints of life. We felt that many things in life are beyond our control and they happen without a reason. Therefore, we decided to incorporate this quality of uncertainty and spontaneity into the film; that sometimes, one simply has to live in the moment and temporarily forget about everything else. Many of life’s defining moments can occur anytime, and stories and people, they come and go. Eventually, all these different experiences come together and make up life.

In addition, we are often unclear about many aspects in life. Decisions may not always be right or wrong - sometimes they may fall into a grey area. There are also many questions in life to which there are no clear answers. However, being human, we often go through emotions of uncertainty and dilemma, and being forced to accept ambiguity is something that many would be uncomfortable with - as with the lead character Juan. Hence, this concept of grey is the first overarching theme that we wanted to portray in the film.

We also want to highlight the small moments in life, such as the simple joys of walking down the streets, exchanging smiles with friends, or conversing with strangers. In the film, such seemingly insignificant moments, such as glances and emotional reactions, will be have a more lingering presence. We wanted to portray how moments like these may seem unimportant at that specific point in time, yet are an instrumental part of one’s everyday life. This can bring about a sense of reality for audiences to relate to.
Set in a different country, there are also elements of Spanish culture present through our film’s mise-en-scène. There are certain references to Spanish lifestyles and landmarks, especially those of Barcelona, such as the flamenco-inspired music and a scene of La Sagrada Familia, an architectural icon of Barcelona. Our film also adopted similar settings from *All About My Mother*, a famous Spanish film. This location used, Placa del Duc de Medinaceli, is a symbol of Juan’s journey, as it is implied in the film that the Placa is a place that meant a lot to him, suggesting that he previously saw the film and felt an affinity with it. Through the Singaporean character of Juan, audiences will also get a sense of cultural differences between the East and the West.

2.4 Target audience

*El Gris Perfecto* explores overarching themes of grey, coming-of-age and a journey of self-discovery for an individual who has not travelled far in his life. These themes are highly identifiable by youths above the age of eighteen, especially when they reach a crossroad in life but lack the sense of belonging to anywhere. Through the portrayal of an emotive journey in search of something meaningful, the protagonist’s point of view can be understood not only by youths but also by people of different ages, since a majority have gone through such soul-searching processes albeit in different ways. The film, however, has a few scenes that denote sexual references, which may be unsuitable for individuals below the age of 18. Therefore, we are hoping to attract an audience aged above 18, who will be able to genuinely appreciate the nuances within the film and relate to this narrative well.
Part Three: The Story

3.1 Story premise

*El Gris Perfecto* delves into the thoughts of a 21-year-old boy who embarks on a journey to understand his mother after her untimely death, by retracing the trip she made to Barcelona in her younger days. By retracing her steps and through the characters he meets, one of them possibly being his father, he realizes how it must have felt for her to have lived her life in such a carefree manner. His solo journey to Barcelona signifies a step out of his rigid comfort zone and black-and-white way of thinking.

The story is told through the eyes of Juan and documents his subtle character development during the trip. These changes are illustrated through his various visits to different locations in Barcelona, as well as through his interactions with other characters. The interaction between Juan and his temporary housemates Jose and Isabel makes him reconsider his initial concept of relationships having to be clear-cut and definitive. The final scene sees Juan interacting with a bartender who might possibly be his father and the following uncertain closure to this relationship further highlights Juan’s acceptance that not knowing the answer might be a better option sometimes. It also cements the fact that Juan’s journey to Barcelona is ultimately, a journey of self-discovery triggered by his mother’s death. He eventually chooses to leave all the characters he met in Barcelona behind and moves on with his solo journey.

During his stay, Juan undergoes a subtle and gradual character development, from an uptight and reserved individual, to someone who lives more for the moment. Juan’s initial
character traits are juxtaposed against Jose’s quintessentially laid-back character, who appreciates ambiguity in relationships.

Juan’s character is representative of many Singaporean youths today. Living in a small and relatively conservative society, the cultural adjustment that Juan goes through is something that many go through as well when they step out into other countries. This is an emotional dimension that audiences can identify with.

*El Gris Perfecto* lets audiences into the world of a youth who faces a coming-of-age, as well as a struggle with identity, which is highly prevalent in society today. The film also illustrates the pains of growing up, as well as the struggles of coming to terms with the death of a loved one.

### 3.2 Story themes

The film primarily revolves around the theme of coming-of-age and ambiguity in life. Coming-of-age, in this sense, refers to the attainment of recognition or maturity, while the theme of grey has been previously explained in the story’s inspiration. We aim to weave these two themes together in the film via the protagonist, Juan. He gets to know more about himself through a journey to discover more about his mother. By taking the first step out of his comfort zone, just as how his mother had always encouraged him to, he learns from the people he met that ambiguity can sometimes be a better option than having clear-cut answers. This revelation helps him to deal with his confused thoughts over his sexually tense relationship with Jose and Isabel, as well as what to do when coming face-to-face with a man who might possibly be his
father. His final decision to leave these relationships behind without demanding a clear-cut answer from them demonstrates his acceptance that ambiguity can be an ideal state, as well as his determination to move on with his journey.

3.3 Synopsis

Juan is devastated after the untimely death of his mother, Marie, with whom he was very close to. He decides to take a break away from Singapore.

He does not know anything about his father, except that his mother met him in Barcelona. Being half-Spanish, he has always felt an intrinsic connection with the city, and was inspired by the colourful backdrop of Barcelona in the Pedro Almodovar’s film *All About Your Mother*. He hence decides to travel to Barcelona.

Juan discovers more about his mother during his time in Barcelona. He also develops a unique friendship with the people who hosted him there - Jose and Isabel.

*El Gris Perfecto* is the coming-of-age story of a boy who discovers more about his mother and life, in Barcelona.

3.4 Research

With our two major themes being coming-of-age and the idea of grey, we looked into several movies to get a grasp of these ideas. Our references mainly came from movies that were not based or shot in Singapore, because films in Singapore dealt very little with the topics that
we intended to have within our film. Hence, we researched upon films that dealt with decisions made after the death of a loved one and in general, death as a causal motivation for a main character’s actions.

Pedro Almodovar’s *All About My Mother* (1999) is the main muse of our short film. The other movies that we used as references for other significant parts of our film were *Le Temps Qui Reste* (2005), *The Dreamers* (2003), *Grande E’cole* (2004), *Quemar Las Naves* (2007) and *Douches Froides* (2005).

*All About My Mother*, which was also shot in Barcelona, holds particular significance as our short film makes subtle references to it. Firstly, *All About My Mother* explores similar themes of death, a mother-and-son relationship, and self-discovery via the missing link of a father who was never present in the child’s life. We took inspiration from the film’s structure and tried to make the issue of his mother’s death a resonating point throughout the film.

Secondly, the Placa del Duc de Medinaceli was a key location in *All About My Mother*. Juan makes several references to it in the course of our film, and the film opens with him displaying his desire to visit the Placa. Our film hints that *All About My Mother* and the Placa holds personal significance for Juan, who had previously watched the film and felt drawn to it, perhaps as a result of being able to relate to the themes of this iconic Spanish movie. As such, the Placa is also a key location in our film, as it is a vital representation of the relationship between Juan and his mother. Juan’s desire to visit the Placa, instead of other Barcelona landmarks,
shows how his mother’s death was a causal motivation for his trip to Barcelona, a place which holds much intrigue for him.

In addition, our film takes inspiration from *All About My Mother*, as it is also a highly character-driven film. We aim to portray the subtle nuances of a character’s internal struggles and development, which are expressed not only through the acting and staging, but also through the details in the film’s set design and wardrobe.

*The Dreamers* was also an equally crucial film as it broached on the topic of a ménage à trois and the complex relationship between three people – the twins Theo and Isabelle and the Californian student, Matthew. We have also included a ménage à trois as we believe it to be crucial for story development, as it is the culminating point of the ambiguous relationship and sexual tension between the three leads, symbolizing the idea of grey. It also drives the character development of Juan, as this coming-of-age journey to Barcelona leads to him pushing his internal boundaries by experiencing several moments of extremity and spontaneity. We took inspiration from *The Dreamers* when shooting our ménage à trois scene, such the strategic placement of mirrors and muted lighting to create a sense of reverie and surrealism.

*Le Temps Qui Reste* is a poignant film that features the beach as a meaningful location for the lead Romain, who is sentenced to a premature death sentence by an illness. He later revisits the beach, which holds many of his fondest childhood memories, and incidentally passes on there. Similarly, the beach is a significant location in our film, and a recurring motif that represents the relationship between Juan and his mother. Hence, the beach scenes captured in *Le Temps Qui*
Reste will serve as an appropriate reference for us when shooting our beach scenes. We intend to recreate the effect of soft, dappled sunlight, as well as the use of poignant dialogue and a focus on facial expressions, in order to bring across a quietly emotional scene.

These reference films, like our film, heavily explored human relationships and one’s internal state of mind. Hence, they played an instrumental role in inspiring our team’s distinctive cinematic style, which we feel will help bring across the character-centric and nuanced themes of our film.

In addition, Edwin had previously lived in Barcelona for seven months during his professional internship. His stay there served as a big part of the research process, since he was able to immerse himself in the Spanish culture and bring across these cultural elements in the film. During his stay, his personal observations of the Spanish people and their lifestyle made him realise several differences with our Singaporean lifestyle. One of his biggest takeaways is the Spanish way of living life for the moment, taking time off to build relationships with other people, as well as living a slower pace of life in order to enjoy the little joys it brings. In terms of language, Edwin picked out the different ways in which the Spaniards greet or speak to each other colloquially, and incorporated these authentic elements in the screenplay.

Edwin’s long stay there also allowed him to research on other production issues, such as locations. As the film has influences from Spanish cinema, his internship in the Spanish film industry allowed him to meet different professionals in the field, giving him the chance to
appreciate the film culture there. This offered him a first-hand perspective of the different influences that shape Spanish cinema, which is then reflected in the team’s film product.

3.5 Characters

Juan Rodriguez Cheng

Juan is a 21-year-old undergraduate majoring in film because he loves cinema. He is of mixed descent, with a Singaporean-Chinese mother and a Spanish father. His mother brought him up single-handedly and he does not know the identity of his father. He is only aware that his mother developed a short-lived romance with a Spanish bar-owner during a trip to Barcelona in her younger days, and returned to Singapore to conceive him. Somehow, Juan never experienced the urge to uncover the truth about his roots or the identity of his biological father. He has always been contented to have his mother around, as she is both a maternal and paternal figure to him. Juan sees himself as a true-blue Singaporean and is completely detached from his Spanish roots. He is a typical Singaporean student - preoccupied with excelling academically and blending in well into the Singaporean society. However, this is not who his mother hopes he will become. She has always encouraged him to step out of his boundaries and to live life more vicariously.

Juan loses his mother to a car accident on his 21st birthday, while she was rushing home to celebrate the occasion. After her untimely death, Juan makes a radical decision to leave Singapore, taking a year-long break from school. Inspired by his mother’s words, he wanted to discover life outside Singapore. Most importantly, he wanted to understand his mother in the process, by retracing her footsteps. He decides to make Barcelona his first stop, as it was the city
he had always dreamt of going to, having felt an intrinsic connection to it. He also fell in love with the city's colourful backdrop after watching *All About Your Mother* by Pedro Almodovar.

**Marie Cheng - Juan's Mother**

Marie is a free spirited lady. She has also shared this carefree attitude towards life with her son Juan, and hoped that Juan would not become someone who conforms blindly to societal norms. Marie shares a close relationship with Juan despite being a successful and busy career woman. She owns numerous art galleries around the world and often travels for business purposes.

During her youth, Marie spent a couple of days travelling in Barcelona and met a Spanish bar-owner. She had a brief romantic affair with him and returned to Singapore, unaware that she was pregnant with Juan. However, Marie did not regret her unprecedented pregnancy and has not tried to look for the bar-owner since. She constantly reminds Juan that she never once regretted having him, and not does see the point in searching for Juan’s father as relationships come and go, and such is life.

**Jose Garcia Gonzalez**

Jose is the brother of Juan's friend, Alvaro. He lives in Barcelona. Jose is requested by Alvaro to host Juan at his apartment, because Alvaro happened to be away.

Jose is 20 years old and studies Art History at the University of Barcelona. He shares an apartment with two other housemates, Isabel and Cristina. He appreciates artistic culture, such as
cinema, photography and literature. He is a liberal, open-minded and humourous person who enjoys cracking jokes and is the live wire at social gatherings. However, being around Juan tends to bring out a slightly more reserved and introspective side of Jose. Due to Juan's unfamiliar character, he is intrigued by and drawn towards Juan and is eager to show him around Barcelona. Simultaneously, he has ambivalent feelings towards Isabel and cannot decide if he sees Isabel as a friend or more than that.

**Isabel Christina Sin**

Isabel is a 20-year-old undergraduate. She is Jose's course-mate and housemate. She is originally from Asturias but is in Barcelona to complete a bachelor’s degree in Art History at the University of Barcelona. She is typically Spanish - extremely carefree, open-minded, and loves partying. She is evidently infatuated with Jose. When she is with Jose, both of them behave in an intimate manner, and this suggests that they are more than platonic friends. She is never shy to show her affection for Jose in front of others. Although she is uncertain about the way Jose feels for her, she accepts their ambiguous friendship, because there is no need for commitment as she continues to live a swinging single’s lifestyle.

**Juan Rodriguez - Juan's Father**

Juan Rodriguez is the protagonist's father. He owns a bar called Juan's bar, which is a popular hang-out spot for locals in Barcelona. He is single and spends most of his time running the bar. 21 years ago, Juan had a romantic affair with Marie while she was travelling in Europe. He is unaware that he has a son after that brief affair with Marie.
Part Four: Final Script

4.1 Final story structure and analysis of story development

The initial script had in total about 35 pages. Therefore, we believed that our scenes could fit into a 24-minute time frame as the script was dialogue driven. At that point of time, we felt that the different subplots would help to push our narrative.

After our six-day shoot, we had the first rough offline cut that was edited in chronological order. It turned out to be 45 minutes long, which exceeded the project’s timing requirements. Hence, we had to review and decide which scenes were not vital in pushing our narrative forward. During our editing, we felt that the pacing and rhythm seemed to be on the slow side but we desired to achieve a film that would run at a comfortable pace without the extreme turning points that are usually present in typical Hollywood films. Our initial aim was also to lean towards the slow and tempered structure of European art films.

However, we came to the consensus that audiences may feel bored and lose interest quickly as they watch the film if the pace is too slow. Hence, we decided to deviate from the original script and change the narrative structure to strengthen the storyline. We utilised flashbacks to heighten the film’s pace. By diving straight into the story and then proceeding to fill the information gaps with flashbacks, it will better capture our audiences’ attentions in finding out more about our film’s characters and their back stories.

In the opening title sequence, we see a black screen with Spanish music in the background and Isabel saying, “Here in Spain, everyday is a fiesta no matter what. Juan, welcome to Spain!” Audiences then see glasses clinking. Subsequently, we see the three main
characters of the film waking up to a hangover while they lie on the sofa the next morning. The opening establishes the locality of the film and also the mood of the film where every day is a fiesta, more accurately a fiesta of life. At this point in time, audiences are still unsure of these characters lying on the sofa. They only see the relationship development of Isabel, Jose and Juan afterwards in the following scene. Then, the film establishes the fact that Jose and Isabel share a closer relationship, whereas Juan is considered to be an outsider who met the duo recently. The friendship between the three of them blossoms through their outings together. Audiences can infer that Juan is still relatively reserved because of his outsider status, while Jose and Isabel constantly express their attraction for each other through their body language. There is also the underlying presence of some sexual tension between Juan and Jose. This can be seen when Juan calls it a night after the pub outing and Jose tells Juan that he is glad that Juan is enjoying his time here in Barcelona. During this story juncture, the audiences are still unsure of Juan’s backstory. He still seems like a mysterious character to the audience.

The next day, Isabel disappears but the audiences are not in the know yet. Juan and Jose set off to the beach - one of our film’s central motifs. The audience starts to uncover more about Juan and the motivation behind his trip to Barcelona in this scene. He regards the beach as a comfort zone and thus, opens his heart to Jose. In return, Jose also encourages Juan to step out of his comfort zone and the duo ends up skinny-dipping in the freezing winter sea.

After the beach scene, Juan and Jose reach home. They start to drink some wine. Juan, now being more comfortable with Jose, decides to question Jose about the relationship between Isabel and Jose. Here he says a line that represents the fundamental philosophy of the film -
“Sometimes life does not have to be black or white, grey can be perfect too.” The film’s pace increases after this turning point.

Following which, Isabel runs into the house crying before Juan has a chance to respond to Jose’s line about grey being perfect. As Jose comforts Isabel, his action further emphasises his close relationship with her. The scene slowly develops into a ménage à trois after both male leads comfort her. Audiences may be confused by this sudden and strange turn of events, since a ménage à trois should be the last thing on Isabel’s mind given her current predicament. However, the film has established Isabel as an individual who requires a lot of physical contact. In the Spanish context, physical contact such as giving kisses and hugs are expressions of love and concern. Isabel needs such physical contact in order to feel love and attention. Therefore, she is the initiator of the ménage à trois, given her natural emotional response to any physical touch. This leads to her executing the physical behaviour that helps her to unwind and de-stress whenever she feels down in spirit. Her actions also signified the philosophy of living for the moment.

Juan dawns upon the realisation of his act the next morning. He reflects and recalls events that have occurred the past few days - how the trio met and developed an unlikely friendship. He decides to leave Barcelona that evening. Isabel had already left for home in the morning and Jose is left alone at the apartment. Juan writes a note to Jose, telling him that he finally understands the meaning of “grey can be perfect too” as he does not need an answer to what has happened between the three of them. Audiences see a montage of the empty apartment and streets - a symbolic representation of Jose’s empty heart. The montage sequence also represents the cycle
of life and how people in one’s life come and go easily. This friendship started off with three individuals but with only one remaining individual left at the end.

The flashbacks were initially two full scenes from our original script. Due to timing and narrative constraints, we decided to trim it into two short flashback scenes since some information were not as essential and could be removed. This helped in speeding up the pace and the building of tension towards our climactic act.

After Juan’s leaving, the sub-plot unravels. He goes to the bar which the three of them visited two nights ago. At the bar, he realizes the man at the bar might be his biological father, from the dangling clause planted in the beach conversation where his father’s name and occupation was revealed then. However, Juan did not express any desire to acknowledge or confirm the man’s relationship with him, since he is beginning to believe in Jose’s motto, where grey can be perfect too. He is aware that all along, the purpose of this trip was to retrace his mother’s footsteps as the first step in his journey to discover himself and not to search for a father who was never present in his life. He then decides to leave all these hanging relationships behind, accepting that it is fine to leave them in a state of ambiguity, and move forward on his solo journey of self-discovery. This further emphasizes the film’s main theme and plot.

The ending of the film shows him walking to the beach. Audiences are left to interpret the outcome of this story. We know that the character of Juan has come to a realisation about life and will move on. His next step, however, is not revealed and there is no closure to these relationships he had left behind.
4.2 Motifs

1. Beach

One of the main motifs in the film is the beach. It functions as Juan’s memory playback of the best times spent with his mother when she was still alive. The beach is also a link between Juan, his mother, and Barcelona, through the photograph of a beach that was taken by his mother when she was in Barcelona. Juan later revisits the beach with Jose and musters the courage to skinny-dip in the freezing seawater, breaking out of his boundaries just like what his mother had always wanted him to do, creating new memories for himself at the beach. Hence, the beach is an underlying motif connecting Juan, his mother, and his journey of self-discovery and exploration in Barcelona.

2. Grey

Grey is another motif in the film. The film is about how grey, representing ambiguity, can be perfect, in contrast to something as clear-cut and well-defined as black or white. The play of colours using a monochrome palette of greys, blacks and whites is constantly being reflected in the film through the costume and set design. This creates a subtle visual reminder of the underlying theme of grey for the audience while watching the film.
Part Five: Casting

The film looks at youth with very strong characters and taste in terms of their lifestyle preferences and interests. They belong to the “indie” subculture and are very into arts, fashion and design. They are part of a generation into an individualistic arts scene and have a certain style that carry through their dressing, surroundings and music tastes. They express themselves in many different ways - think the main characters from The Dreamers but a contemporary version.

5.1 In Singapore

5.1.1 Casting call

Initially, the group received a “sponsorship” offer from Fly Entertainment which we considered but dismissed subsequently because of the exorbitant costs that we still had to include such as a business class ticket for the actor and a hotel suite. Hence, we decided to select the following online avenues to post casting calls and scout for potentials – the Actors Asia Database, a Yahoo! Arts community group, and Mandy.com, a film and television production directory.

On the Singapore side, we only required to cast for the lead role of Juan Rodriguez. We wanted a male actor in his twenties with Pan-Asian looks, in order to display Juan’s Spanish-Singaporean heritage. Our image of Juan is someone who possesses boyishly exotic looks, with a certain bashful and almost awkward air around him. The role of Juan was extremely important, as it was not only the lead role, but also the character that embodies the entire theme and flavour of this coming-of-age and cross-cultural film.
5.1.2 Auditions

The audition process consisted of three processes. Firstly, the actor had to do a short self-introduction. Secondly, he had to act out an excerpt of the script that was sent to him a few days in advance of the audition. We selected scenes that had more dialogue and were more emotional to gauge his acting skills and diction. Lastly, there was an improvisation exercise, which required the actor to react to an impromptu feeding of lines. This allowed us to assess how well the actor was able to take directions and react to different situations. The auditions were shot using Edwin’s Canon 5D, to enable us to do multiple reviews, especially on aspects such as voice and accent, subtle facial expressions and body language, as well as how telegenic the actor was.

We looked at artiste profiles on AADB and personally sent emails to shortlist them for a casting call. In addition, we also posted an open casting call on the websites mentioned previously, stating the film synopsis and actor requirements. Possibly as a result of it entailing a free trip to Barcelona, we received overwhelming response. We proceeded to do a first round of filtering by reviewing each portfolio, but unfortunately most were unsuitable for the role.

Our first round of auditions took place at two locations, Trixie’s home and a tutorial room in campus. The locations were chosen as they were well-lit and sufficiently roomy. We auditioned a total of four potentials, and narrowed our choices down to two actors.
5.1.3 Selection and confirmation

The decision between the two finalists was definitely one of the most harrowing decisions our team had to make. As this marked an extremely poignant and important learning process for us, we would like to elaborate on this issue.

One of our finalists, Nicholas, is a Eurasian born and bred in Singapore. Being half-Chinese, he was effectively bilingual. He also had a fluent but localized accent when speaking English, which viewers could relate to. However, he had a tendency to over-act and was unable to bring out the shy and awkward nature of Juan. The other finalist, Nelson, is an Australian who has lived in Singapore for over a year. He does not speak Mandarin and had a slight Australian accent, which posed a huge challenge for our team. However, he embodied the character of Juan and was very adept at taking directions. In addition, he displayed an extremely positive attitude and was willing to go through voice training and post-production audio touch-ups in order to better portray the character. He also had past experience in adapting his voice to various accents.

After three rounds of auditions with the two actors, as well as hours spent watching and reviewing their casting videos, our team was divided as to whom we should cast. Making the choice was an extremely difficult decision for us, as either option would result in considerable challenges in creating the film we envisioned. However, both actors were the two best options out of a considerably small pool of candidates. The divided opinions in the group led to much deliberation and extensive weighing of options. Although this process was time-consuming, it was essential due to the gravity of this decision. After days of reviewing and discussion, we decided to go with Nelson as we felt that his acting style was more suitable for our film’s genre. He also displayed an extremely positive attitude and was willing to put in hours of practice to
adopt a more neutral English accent. In addition, he had this inexplicable way of embodying the bashful and slightly awkward nature of Juan.

5.2 In Spain

5.2.1 Casting call

Instead of putting out open casting calls, we worked with our contacts in Spain to access a few talent agency websites and looked through the profiles to narrow our choices down. Given Spain’s extensive film and television industry, we had a much larger pool of actors to choose from. In addition, professional actors in Spain were willing to participate in this project despite the low remuneration, as it was a rare opportunity to take on an English-speaking role in a cross-cultural film project, and an interesting way to expand their portfolio.

5.2.2 Auditions

Auditions in Spain followed the same process as previously mentioned. Our contact in Spain conducted and filmed the audition before sending us the footage for us to review. We had approximately two or three potentials for each role. This time, our group decisions were unanimous in the selection process.
5.2.3 Selection and confirmation

**Alejandro Munoz as Jose**

Alejandro was the obvious choice for the character of Jose - he possessed a confident, laid-back charm that was characteristic of Jose. In addition, he is very telegenic and charismatic on-screen. His looks and personality also provided a contrast to Nelson’s clean-cut and more uptight image, further emphasizing the difference between the two characters.

**Mar del Hoyo as Isabel**

Out of the three actresses who auditioned, Mar impressed us with her ability to emote and cry on cue. This was crucial as the character of Isabel is very expressive and has many emotional scenes in the film. She was also experienced and comfortable with her body in front of the camera, which was important especially during the intimate scenes.
Francesc Pages as the Bartender

Francesc is an extremely experienced actor with a powerful screen presence. In addition, his resemblance to Nelson was coincidental but appropriate for displaying their ambiguous father-son relationship.
Part Six: Pre-Production

6.1 Budget

With advice from our supervising professor, Mr Kym Campbell, as well as from previous project groups that have embarked on a film project, we knew that it would not be an easy task to obtain money. Moreover, there was a high possibility that our film proposal would be rejected on the pretext of its rather controversial storyline and the fact that it was to be shot overseas. True enough, out of the sixty proposals that were sent to the various foundations in Singapore, all of the organisations rejected our proposals.

However, we were still adamant on sticking to our budget of SGD$27,000 (taking into consideration currency fluctuations) since we did not want to compromise on the camera and equipment rental, which were key in achieving the effects that we wanted in the first place. Since most amounts of cash would be paid in Euros, we decided to ensure there was spare cash in case we had to spend it in unforeseen circumstances. The amount was budgeted for a six-day shoot with no downtime in between and no projected days for pick-up shots since we simply could not afford it.

We contacted a coordinator in Spain, Laura, to help us with liaison work - location viewing, as well as camera and equipment quotations. This assisted us in deciding whether or not we should continue using the Red One camera or if there were alternatives, and also the number of crew that we should engage. In addition, we managed to engage help in Spain through our director-of-photography, Borja. He managed to help us source for manpower from his previous working partnerships and engaged camera operators, focus pullers, gaffers and electricians for the shoot by blasting shout-outs on Facebook. The project being a rare collaboration with a
Singaporean team, thankfully allowed a good response. We are indeed very fortunate to have these two coordinators helping us with liaison and translation work, as well as procuring an efficient and professional crew to work with us. It was easier and more convenient for them to coordinate and liaise in Spanish, as it was de facto language in Barcelona. They also aided us in standard operating procedures (SOP) in Spain’s film industry, such as advising us on location permits.

Moreover, all the crew participating in this project were pro-bono but they knew that we were an independent short film project with minimal resources. We did propose an offer agreement to pay them when we had earned enough from film festivals, but they were more interested in adding this film to their personal portfolios instead. We were really grateful for all their help, especially since many were professionals who sacrificed paying jobs to help out in ours. In terms of item inventory, we tried to bring as much as possible from Singapore to cut down on costs in Spain. For example, we printed all the necessary documents in Singapore and brought along production materials and stationery, in order to lower the petty cash costs.

Since the bulk of our shoot was inside a rented apartment, transportation was not a major cost. The bulk of the budget was taken up by equipment and camera rental - SGD$9,000. In order to save costs, we did not hire any manpower during pre-production for location preparation and shifting of equipment. We did the shifting by ourselves. The apartment was located on the fifth floor with no lift and we had to be extremely careful, especially with the fragile light bulbs and camera lenses. It was a grueling experience, but we managed to save on movers’ costs.
6.2 Sponsorship

We applied through the usual channels of Lee Foundation, Shaw Foundation and most foundations that were in the Singapore’s grant-making list. However, all the proposals were rejected in the three-month pre-production period. Since we were desperate for cash, we also tried applying to local community divisions, but our project was deemed unfit for promoting any sort of community welfare in Singapore. A big part was because the project was essentially not Singaporean and did not have a Singaporean selling point since we would be filming it completely in Barcelona. Furthermore, there were also suggestive themes of sex, partying and alcohol that were less-than-desirable for the conservative Singaporean foundations and government organizations. We had already pre-empted such responses and were prepared for the rejections, but still felt that it was worth a shot to try.

In addition, throughout the five months of searching, we also tried approaching production companies (i.e. Akanga Films) and camera equipment companies (i.e. Canon) to aid in easing our budget. However, our proposals received either rejections or no replies. As a last resort, we decide to help a production company in Singapore with their wardrobe and earned SGD$600 that was unanimously agreed to be used for production. We also approached audio post-production studios for help and managed to get full sponsorship from Studio MB, which would save us almost SGD$5000.

Subsequently, to cover our accommodation during our stay in Barcelona, we approached the Catalonian Tourism Board through the help of Mr Kym Campbell and Mr Tim Clark. Through a string of emails and visits down to their office, we managed to secure a month of
accommodation and saved more than SGD$2000. We also made an agreement with the Board that we would allow their materials to be included within our press kit for film festivals.

Despite our futile search for monetary sponsors, we managed to find some corporate companies through Edwin’s uncle. They were willing to sponsor us a cash cheque since there was a tax rebate for corporate companies who sponsored final year projects. We managed to get SGD$12,000 in total from those sponsors. Moreover, in early November, we submitted our proposal to the Media Development Authority (MDA), in their latest scheme for short film projects. Since this was submitted a month before our shoot date, we did not dare raise our hopes up. However, we were extremely delighted when we received news in January that we were granted a total amount of SGD$10,000 from them.

We have also submitted an application form for the Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund and are extremely thankful for the SGD$8,000 from them. In total, we had SGD$30,000 of monetary sponsors. This was in addition to all the non-monetary funding that we had already received previously. We were really quite fortunate because the bulk of our sponsorship did not come in until we were done with the six days of shoot in Barcelona.

### 6.3 Hiring and recruitment of crew

As mentioned previously, we engaged the help of a coordinator and a director-of-photography to help us with the sourcing of crew members. When we went through the needs of our film, we realised that it was very important for us to engage a crew that had prior experience because we were ambitious enough to plan only six days for the entire shoot despite the fact that
we had about 35 pages of script. This meant that the crew had to be fast and efficient so that we are able to finish shooting all major scenes in the script. Moreover, we rented equipment that was only for professional use (i.e. the Red One camera) and it was important that our crew was able to maximise the potential of these resources. To ensure that the project would remain under our control, we limited our professional crew to the director of photography, soundmen and electricians. With our rented equipment, the professional crew did not have to bring any of their own equipment, which made logistics a lot easier to handle.

We also sourced for help in other departments through Edwin’s contacts since he previously did his internship there and had a few friends who had helped him on individual occasions. While they were not professionals, they had previously helped out in various short films and were familiar with the procedures. All were willing to help us out of good will and some, such as the stills photographer, even brought their own equipment to help us save costs. We also decided to save costs and overlapped departments such as wardrobe and art direction; make-up and hairstyling. It helped to minimize lobo time on set and maximised location use.

For art direction and wardrobe, we combined manpower and engaged a freelance wardrobe coordinator - Edu, who had previously worked with Edwin in his previous projects in Barcelona. Edu also roped in his friend, Iria. Both aspects were very important in ensuring that the setup was appropriate to the storyline and had a Spanish vibe to it. It was a complicated job that usually requires more manpower. However, both of them had prior experience and understood the requirements for art direction and wardrobe easily. They effectively managed to juggle between both departments, despite complex interior shoot requirements as we rented a
shoot apartment with many original furnishings and required much shifting of furniture for setting up.

In the make-up and hairstyling aspect, we engaged the help of Africa, a freelance make-up and hairstyling artist who was willing to help us and brought along an arsenal of her own beauty and hair products, helping us to save costs significantly.

As for still photography and behind the scenes video graphing, we managed to engage the help of Ariana, who was a student at a local arts university. Edwin contacted her and she agreed to be on set a few hours each day to capture stills. She was studying photography and it did help that we did not have to brief her as in-depth since she had done the same kind of work before. These stills were subsequently arranged for the FYP report submission.

Since we provided only food and accommodation to most of the crew, we felt that it was important that all of the help we received were mainly from goodwill or interest. We understood that it was not practical for some of the professionals to help us without being paid, but the equipment rental fees took up a large part of the budget and was not easy to reduce because we still wanted to make use of a professional camera to achieve better shots. Moreover, we did not have many contacts in Spain and hence, we trusted people’s recommendations, which turned out well enough.
6.4 Locations

Barcelona is a beautiful and magical city, where things are always happening. Being the capital of the Catalonia region, there are many cultural infusions from Catalonia, Spain, the Mediterranean region and Europe. Therefore, we had a rough idea of our main set locations. They were mainly Barcelona landmarks or places with a strong Spanish vibe - the iconic La Sagrada Familia landmark of Barcelona, the beautiful Spanish architecture at the Gotico or Barceloneta area, an apartment that is of Spanish character, a Spanish bar and the beach. The key location, Placa del Duc de Medinaceli, is a reference to one of Spain’s most famous contemporary film by Pedro Almodovar, *All About My Mother*.

We initially toyed with the idea of shooting the lead character in Singapore, packing for his trip. However, our final decision was to base the entire film in Barcelona to bring out a strong Spanish aesthetic throughout the film. During pre-production in Singapore, we could only rely on pictures of places and Google-map locations that seemed suitable for our story premise. In addition, Edwin and Trixie have previously travelled to Spain and were familiar with certain locations. Edwin also viewed some locations during the course of his seven-month professional internship stint in Barcelona and shortlisted the above few locations. Subsequently, the entire group sat down together and viewed the locations online before determining which locations would be worthy for scouting during the first week of pre-production in Barcelona.

In addition, the SOP for obtaining location and parking permissions within Spain was different from Singapore. Being in a foreign country, it was especially important to closely follow their protocol for obtaining location permits. One of the prerequisites for obtaining a location permit to shoot in the flat, the beach, the bar and on the streets was that the applicant
had to hold a Spanish identification card. This ruled out all four of us. Therefore, we approached our production coordinator Laura to help us with the application.

In Spain, all public filming permits went through Barcelona’s Film Commission. This was unlike Singapore where filming permits are only obtainable through the different Ministries in charge of that area. However, for private locations such like our shoot apartment, we still had to go through the apartment rental company since the apartment was not publicly owned. After we had obtained location agreements and parking permissions from the municipal government to shoot in exterior locations, Trixie and Laura went to set up barriers to reserve parking two days before the exterior shoots to ensure that everyone could park safely and unload equipment swiftly on the shoot days.

In total, we planned for four days of interior shots and two days of exterior shots. Out of which, interior shots were scheduled to be filmed within a single apartment, including the stairway outside the apartment. We decided to use only one apartment to film all the interior at-home scenes to save costs on rental, as well as to decrease the hassle of searching for different locations since it would further increase fixed transportation costs.

In the months before heading to Barcelona, the team had already viewed some apartment locations on the Internet that were for short-term stays. We decided to rent a shoot apartment instead of using our sponsored apartment for the shoot to prevent any logistical troubles, especially since there would be a lot of people moving in and out, as well as noise control issues,
and we did not want to implicate our sponsor. Furthermore, the rented shoot apartment had a
Catalan feel and typical Spanish decor, which were appropriate for the art direction to work with.

We then proceeded to contact the owner of the shoot apartment and explained that it
would be used for a shoot. She agreed and did not charge us additional costs beyond the original
rental price, which was quite a good deal. To prevent complaints from neighbours regarding
noise pollution, Trixie and a production assistant managed noise control during the shoot,
especially in the morning and at night, when people are likely to be at home. The neighbours
were also alerted before noisy scenes, such as the party scenes. We could not continue shooting
after midnight in case of complaints, which limited our shoot time but also helped us to keep
track of time and not incur additional taxi costs for the crew after midnight when public transport
terminates.

For the scene where Juan is seen walking up the stairs, we could not use the stairway at
our rental apartment as it was too dark and claustrophobic. We had to use the stairway of our
sponsored apartment and thus sought permission before we could film there. As it was only a
five-minute walk from the shoot apartment, transportation was not a major problem, as we only
needed to transport some basic camera and lighting equipment over.

For exterior shots, we required a bar, a beach, a busy street, the La Sagrada Familia, the
Placa del Duc de Medinaceli and some streets near the Placa.
La Sagrada Familia was an iconic landmark that we wanted to include since it was an apt representation of Barcelona. This location was straightforward enough as we simply needed to obtain shooting permission for it. The only issue was deciding which part and angle of the vast structure to film. As for the scene where the trio goes out for a walk at Placa del Duc de Medinaceli, it was also relatively straightforward because we already knew the exact location we wanted to use. Therefore, we managed to request for and confirm the location grant and agreement beforehand.

However, the beach location where Juan and Jose goes skinny-dipping, was relatively tricky compared to the other locations. Initially, we planned to use a deserted looking beach at the outskirts of Barcelona. After visiting a few sites, however, we decided to use the famous Nova Mar Bella beach instead, which was located within the city. This was because it was too time-consuming to travel out of the city, and it would be too risky for us to waste a shoot day. The four of us unanimously agreed to use a quieter part of the Nova Mar Bella beach.

The slow motion scene with Jose, Juan and Isabel running around a quaint street in Barcelona was also relatively complicated. We originally planned to shoot the scene along with the scene at the Placa del Duc de Medinaceli on the same shoot day, since they were located near each other. However, because we wanted the streets to be less crowded, with the focus centred on the three characters, we decided to shoot the slow motion scene on an early Sunday morning during the fifth day of the shoot, when the crowds are likely to be at home. The main Placa scene was shot on the next day instead, since the beach scene took up the entire afternoon of the rest of the shoot day.
In another scene where Juan is seen walking alone in the midst of a crowded street, we initially had the options of Passeig De Gracia or Via Laietana, the two largest commercial streets in Barcelona. However, after location scouting, we realized that it would be difficult to execute traffic control on these large streets. In addition, to facilitate transportation flow, shooting at these locations meant that it had to be our first shoot location of the day and we were worried there would be a lack of crowds in the early morning. Hence we decided to slot this short scene before the scene at the beach, at a shopping street near the beach. This saved transportation time, and there was also a decent crowd present as it was a Sunday afternoon. In addition, the sizes of the streets made it easier to control and direct the crowd.

Lastly, our team agreed on Bar Pastis for the bar’s set location, as Edwin had previously visited the bar and highly recommended it. It was relatively small and located along street of the main road. The bar’s interior had a unique charm, decorated with paraphernalia from all around the world, hence the only art direction and set design required was the bar’s sign. The bar counter design and wood beams were also typical of small drinking spots scattered around Barcelona. We made the decision before we embarked for Spain and filed for location permission immediately. Laura also helped us in contacting the bar owner regarding this and we negotiated a reasonable price of 150 Euros to rent his bar for about five shoot hours.

6.5 Cinematography

After much discussion, we all concluded that the film should possess an artistic European cinematic style. Since the story followed an anti-narrative structure, we wanted the film’s pace to go relatively slowly to allow audiences to gradually understand it from start to end. The plot’s
turning points will also progress at a moderately slower pace. The team also wanted to go for a photographic texture embedded within the film. The general colour scheme of our film would be of bluish tones and soft pastel tints.

Hence, factoring in all these considerations, we decided to use Red One (Mysterium X) camera mounted with the standard PL (Positive Lock) video lens which came in a package (made for Arri but could be mounted on the Red One) to achieve all these effects for our principal photography. The default lens was used because we felt that it was good enough to capture the visuals that we conceptualized, especially since we did not have many action sequences.

Although the camera was expensive and took up a fair amount of our budget, it was necessary in maintaining the quality and colour intensity of our shots. The colour when shot with the Red One would also be easier to colour correct. Moreover, the camera’s frame rate could be adjusted to an optimum of 120fps, which we desired for a few of our slow motion scenes. Working with a Red One, however, meant that our subsequent workflow process would be more tedious than using other cameras during to the use of special codec. Subsequently, we had to download the Red Quicktime codec in order to view raw footages. In addition, we could only edit using the proxy files, which were of lower resolution. However, the changes made would ultimately be available to the raw files, since the Red programme was such that changes made to one file would be applied to the rest within the package that have the same file name.
Since we used a set of prime PL mount lenses, we had to make use of a Steadicam, especially for shots that were outdoor and dynamic. For example, during the scene at the Placa, the three characters would be walking around and conversing. The slow motion scene at the streets would also see the three of them jumping around and playing. The Steadicam was also used for the party scene. The mobility of the camera enabled it to move around the circle of conversation between five people, capturing each character on screen. It gave an aesthetically pleasing quality to the shots because it provided dynamism to the characters’ expressions and movements.

Given the fact that European films and culture influenced our storyline and its development, it was natural for us to be influenced by European-produced narrative dramas. Some scenes have a soft pastel tint to it, with more muted colours showing up as the narrative proceeds, in order to visually communicate our theme of grey. We wanted colour to be a subtle hint for audiences to interpret Juan’s character change from black and white to grey, as well as to distinguish which shots were flashback moments and which were at present time.

We utilised a majority of mid-shots, medium close-up shots and close-up shots for our film because we wanted to bring the characters closer to the audience, so that it was easier to emote for and along with the character. Allowing the audience to see more of the character’s expressions via close-ups will also help to generate a more intimate connection. To prevent audiences from feeling claustrophobic, we made sure to include wide shots and cutaways of scenery, such as the city view and a view of the streets. The widest shot in the film that included characters was the scene where Juan and Jose went skinny-dipping, in order to show the
magnitude of that daring act. It also created aesthetic appeal by capturing the vastness and beauty of the Mediterranean Sea.

Long takes, which were used as master shots, were common in many scenes - the conversation scene at the kitchen, the scene at the sofa with the three leads having a hangover, and another scene at the sofa when Isabel runs home crying. These long takes were part of a stylistic decision and also allowed the audience to have an in-depth perspective on simple everyday moments/movements. Moreover, we wanted to showcase these simple sequences in a deliberate manner to allow audiences to have a deeper understanding and interaction with the characters.

Some conversations, such as the one between Juan and Jose at the beach, used simple shot-reverse-shot sequences but were edited to create a brooding and reflective mood, by emphasizing the nuances in each character’s body language and facial expressions. These also helped in establishing character development.

6.5.1 Slow motion

The use of the Red One camera also meant that we could select different frame rates of up to 120 fps for our slow motion sequences. Therefore, we shot these slow motion scenes by testing out different speeds to see which was best suited for each scene. Shots with slow motion were those that highlighted the small but significant moments in life, or moments that could happen in a flash but are memorable enough to be remembered in every small detail. These sequences emphasized the relationship and intimacy between people, such as Juan dancing with
Jose and Isabel at the party, the three characters running around and playing at the streets, and the ménage à trois sequence. In addition to highlighting these moments, an emotional dimension accompanied with these shots since the slow motion emphasized each nuance in expressions and body language, allowing audiences to better absorb what these characters are going through. For example, for the scene with Juan, Jose and Isabel running down the street, we shot it with the Steadicam at a frame rate of 75fps. This slow frame rate highlights the friendship between the three and shows how Juan is growing comfortable with them. At the same time, their positions also indicate an invisible distance between him and the other two characters - something that would be less obviously seen if it were shot in real-time.

6.6 Mise-en-scène

6.6.1 Art direction / Production design

The film was set in modern day Barcelona hence we did not have much problems searching for props and items. An issue, however, was the apartment set-up. Since we wanted to incorporate the Barcelona culture into the film, we had to search for an apartment that was fitting of this cultural setting and incorporated such Catalan architecture. It was a difficult task because many inexpensive apartments were already modernized and our budget constraints did not allow for excessive set decoration.

During the conceptualization of the film, our team agreed to use the apartment as a primary location shoot, because it is the place where the three characters interact the most. Hence, it is within the apartment that such interdependency is played out, and it is also the location where their relationship starts and concludes. The two main interior locations were the living
room and Jose’s room, hence it was important to convey their youthful and artistic living style through its set-up.

At the same time, to emphasize Juan’s solo journey to Barcelona, we ensured that different landmarks in Barcelona were captured in the midst of the film. Less extensive set-up was required for our exterior scenes, as we wanted to make full use of the natural environment to highlight Juan’s footsteps in Barcelona.

An important prop required was Marie’s photograph of the beach, which represented her memory of Barcelona. It is also the physical link between Juan, his mother, and Barcelona, as well as a symbol of his journey in retracing his mother’s footsteps. The symbolic act of him deliberately leaving the photograph behind at the bar also suggests that he is finally able to move on to another stage of his self-discovery journey. The photograph had to look aged and the beach had to look like how it would have been twenty years ago. We managed to capture a shot of the beach without any buildings or landmarks, and effectively digitally manipulated it to create a vintage yellowed effect.

As for Juan’s bar, we all came to consensus that it had to be filled with lots of character and objects of sentimental value, characteristic of its owner. The bar also had to be small and homely, showing how the owner was contented to be living within the cozy world of his bar. The bar we chose was also well decorated and filled with an interesting collection of paraphernalia and curios from around the world. The only prop we required was a sign saying “Juan’s Bar”. Although we initially did toy with the idea of having a traditional vintage signboard because of
aesthetic reasons, it was definitely too impractical because we had to mount it and dismantle the bar’s original signboard. We hence decided on a simpler way - getting our art assistant to draw on a blackboard placed strategically near the bar entrance. Many bars in Barcelona also used such makeshift blackboards as signs, which enhanced its authenticity.

Finally, we wanted the different locations to have soft pastel tones in order to complement the film’s colour scheme. For interior scenes, we were looking at wood decor such as parquet flooring and wooden furniture for a rustic Mediterranean feel. For exterior scenes, we tried to incorporate similar colours by choosing places with wooden chairs (such as at the Placa) and soft natural colours (such as a secluded part of the beach) to facilitate our visuals.

Pastel tones to create softness on screen

6.6.2 Wardrobe / Looks

For the costume design, our wardrobe consisted of solid high-contrast colours brighter than pastels, so that the characters stood out against the background set. During our discussion, the team agreed that the characters should be differentiated via their clothing colours and manner
of dressing. This is a subtle hint to audiences that the characters’ clothes are an extension of their character traits. It also helped in providing an additional character dimension, since they would be wearing the same colour swatch throughout the film.

For Juan, his clothes displayed a boyish traveller’s style, consisting of jeans, pullovers, a backpack, Converse shoes and a leather jacket. His wardrobe mainly consisted of monochromatic colours in a plain and simple aesthetic. Befitting of a well-to-do Singaporean youth, his look is neat and preppy, with a short and clean-cut hairstyle. We wanted to portray
Juan as someone with a more strait-laced character who has a clear-cut approach to life’s decisions.

Jose’s style was inspired by James Dean, whose look matches Jose’s laid-back, suave and confident character. His dress sense is effortless but stylish, especially when compared to Juan. His colour scheme is also more outstanding than Juan’s, but less flamboyant than Isabel. We styled Juan’s hair unkempt, with an out-of-bed style to further enhance his casual charm.

Amongst the three main characters, Isabel’s dressing is the most eye-catching. We dressed her mainly in bright primary colours. Her scarlet coat and rouge red lips made her stand out. The look also defined her character and made her a fashion statement. She is depicted as a playful and flamboyant character with an open-minded outlook in life. Her hair is slightly mussed to create a more free-spirited and wild child vibe.

The wardrobe items were not difficult to acquire since they were everyday wear. The large backpack that Juan carried around was slightly more challenging to find, but we managed to find one after asking around for help.

In general, we tried to highlight the stark colour contrasts between Juan and the two other Spanish characters. The team felt that wardrobe was an important factor in differentiating our characters and their respective behaviourisms, which can further exemplify and depict their causal decisions.
Part Seven: Production

7.1 Scheduling

As the entire production took place in Barcelona, it was imperative for us to plan the schedule months before the actual filming. Firstly, there were many logistical arrangements that required urgent confirmation, such as our flight details and itinerary, as well as the time frame for our accommodation, which was sponsored by the Catalan Tourism Board. Secondly, the cast and crew we were working with were industry professionals and had multiple work commitments at hand. It was crucial for them to be informed about the exact dates they were required on set, in order for them to coordinate their schedules accordingly.

The only time window available was the entire December vacation, with provided us with four weeks to complete pre-production over the Spain side, production, as well as a part of post-production. We ended up extending our stay by a week due to unexpected delays in the post-production process.

After arriving on the 3rd of December, we planned for around three days of pre-production. The first day was for us to settle down and take care of basic necessities such as getting mobile phone plans and Wi-Fi, to better facilitate our work processes there. On the second day, we scheduled a pre-production meeting with our main crew from Spain, in order to allocate duties and to map out a more detailed production schedule and timeline. We spent the third day doing location scouting with the production and direction department.
Production would take place over six days, from 7th – 12th December. The first four days would be interior shoots at a rented apartment within walking distance from our accommodation, while the last two days would comprise of mainly outdoor shoots at four separate locations within reasonable distance of each other.

On the first day of the shoot, we planned to shoot the scenes where Juan first arrives in Barcelona. These shots are not central to the story’s climax and seemed easier to execute, hence allowing us to gain some footing and orientate ourselves during the first day of production, especially in a completely foreign environment. We also inserted the scenes with Juan in a taxi at La Sagrada Familia during the first day of the shoot, as these scenes are relatively short and consist mainly of cutaways and close-ups inside a vehicle, hence minimal crew was needed on set. The rest of the crew and the production department would be able to set-up for the next scene while the principle camera and sound crew were filming the taxi scene. It was too risky to put them together with all the exterior scenes during the last two days of the shoot as there would be too many separate locations in one day.

On the second day of the shoot, we planned to complete filming the scenes where Juan first arrives at the apartment, as well as the party scene, which would be time-consuming due to the kind of shots and the amount of extras we had.

For the third day, we planned to shoot the intimate sex scene. Having it on the third day would give the actors some time to be comfortable with each other. After we wrapped the shoot
on the third day, we planned to review all our rushes so far, so that we could slot in anything that needed re-shooting on the following day, as it was the last day we had the apartment.

During the fourth and last day of the apartment shoot, we planned for the straightforward interior scenes to provide buffer time for re-shoots or extra shots. We also had to wrap early in order to clean up the place and load all the equipment into the van to prepare for the following days’ exterior shoots.

The fifth day of the shoot consisted of three locations in the following order - the streets near the Placa, a shopping street near the beach, and the beach. We had to start early and ensure that transportation between the three locations were as efficient as possible, as we are unable to shoot at the beach after 5pm due to loss of sunlight.

The last day of the shoot started with the last exterior location at the Placa del duc de Medinaceli, followed by an interior shoot at Bar Pastis. The indoor bar shoot was planned during the later part of the day as lighting could be manipulated within the bar, while sunlight was extremely important in order to shoot in optimal conditions for the two scenes at the Placa.

7.2 Filming process

7.2.1 Lighting

The lighting in *El Gris Perfecto* was extremely important. Achieving an even and appropriately diffused illumination was the first and fundamental aspect in creating a soft and muted visual palette, which was then further enhanced in post-production.
For the interior shoots, lighting set-up was definitely the most time-consuming part of the shoot. The lights we used were mainly 2K and 3K HMI lights to enhance and create natural lighting for the scenes in Jose’s bedroom and the living room. As for scenes in the apartment’s corridor, we made use of Kinoflo lights since these were darker areas that did not have windows that could allow natural sunlight to pour in. The different uses of light helped in creating moods within different scenes.

We had several day-for-night scenes, which required a lot more effort in recreating the morning sunlight. For that, we covered the house’s windows with black, non-reflective gels and black cloth. In addition, the small rooms and narrow corridor made the task of placing the lights more arduous. Mirrors were strategically used in some shots to prevent the equipment from being caught on camera.

One of the highlights would be the party scene set-up. Because of the amount of night light required for this scene, we made use of a large overhead Chimera lantern light in addition to the room’s original lamp lighting. This was to ensure that in addition to soft illumination, we also had a main source of light that added another dimension. The overhead lamp was positioned strategically on top of the actors when they stood in a circle in the middle of the living room. It helped to provide a spotlight effect whenever each of them spoke and created a mise-en-scène that placed audiences’ focus on the characters within the shot.

The small space within the bar was another challenge we faced when setting up the lights. Furthermore, the wall behind the bar counter - which would be caught on camera - was mirrored,
and we had to be extremely careful that there were no reflections of any camera, lighting or sound equipment. A large Chimera lantern light at ceiling height was used to provide an even and soft illumination within the dark confines of the bar, without having extraneous cables or stands that would be reflected on tape. However, the sheer size of the lamp made setting up more time-consuming.

For the exterior shoots, we intended to make use of natural lighting. The weather was fortuitously sunny on most days even though it was winter, due to Barcelona’s dry Mediterranean climate. However, as there were significantly more constraints in being able to manipulate the lighting, we had to consider the optimum time of sun exposure and plan our schedule accordingly. For example, during the fifth day of the shoot, we had two outdoor locations – the streets followed by the beach. We had to finish shooting the streets scene by noon before proceeding quickly to the beach. The shoot at the beach had to wrap by 5pm, as we would begin to lose sunlight by then, especially since days were shorter during winter. This led to significant time constraints during the shoot. As a result, travel arrangements, lunchtimes and setting up times had to be extremely stringent and well-planned to ensure that the schedule runs smoothly.

Because natural light was used during the exterior shoots, the only lighting equipment we set up at the Placa del duc de Medinaceli scene was an extremely large diffuser around three metres in length, to prevent over-exposure and sunlight glare, due to the clear skies and low cloud cover in Barcelona. The scenes at the beach and the streets required minimal lighting equipment and setup time was reduced as a result.
Another challenge we faced was coordinating the lighting with the Steadicam. As mentioned before, the party conversation scene with the five actors talking made use of the overhead lamp, we had to draw a chalk line around them to mark the area to ensure that actors were moving within the light. However, as the scene involved a rowdy conversation, it was easy for them to step out of the line and subsequently be shrouded in darkness. The mobile camera further complicated this issue, and this seemingly simple shot took a while to master.

As we reviewed the rushes, the aspect that we were most satisfied about was the lighting. This was due largely to having a DOP who placed an extremely heavy emphasis on lighting, as well as having experienced grips and operators on set.

### 7.2.2 On-location sound

In order for audio post-production to run as smoothly as possible, we needed to achieve clean sound on set. We used boom microphones throughout the film as it provided clear dialogue without too much interference from actors’ movement, as compared to wireless microphones.

Some scenes gave us some trouble with sound. When filming the conversation between Juan and Jose at the beach, the actors were required to climb down a rocky breakwater cliff before taking their sitting positions at the shore. Due to their mobility, we tried using wireless microphones for the two actors but the microphones were extremely sensitive and amplified mild movements from the actors. It was also an extremely windy day, which caused interference in the ambient sound. The sounds of the waves also caused noise interference. A windshield was used over the boom mike to counteract this problem. In addition, due to the strong winds at the
beach, it was difficult to listen out for the actors’ dialogue. This was especially crucial due to it being a long and emotional conversation between the two main actors and we wanted to ensure that the dialogue was well emoted and accurate.

Another challenging scene was the scene at the bar. The bar was extremely small and its mirrored walls often reflected the boom mike and shadows of the sound crew. Furthermore, the bar was located at a public street near a road. Many takes were disrupted because of rowdy passer-bys or vehicle motor sounds. To manage this problem, our production assistant stood at the entrance of the street and requested passers-by to keep their volume down.

Furthermore, for the interior shoots, due to the small area within the apartment, there were challenges in coordinating the movement of both the video and sound crew. This problem was compounded by the fact that there were many interior Steadicam shots and the mobility of the shots led to the boom mike being captured on-screen at the slightest displacement. For example, during the scene when Juan first meets Jose and both actors walk down the corridor with the Steadicam following behind, it was a difficult feat for the sound and camera crew to manoeuvre and coordinate their movements within the narrow confines of the corridor and quite a number of takes had to be shot in order to capture the ideal picture and sound.

In addition, during the first day of the shoot, some interior sequences at the living room had the actors improvising their lines and it was difficult for the sound crew to track their dialogue according to the shooting script we provided. We had to remind the actors to not deviate too much from their lines in the script. This problem was compounded with some low-
lying lights and a large Steadicam moving through a small space, which made it difficult for the sound crew to move around with their microphones.

Our team brought along a Zoom H4 Digital Sound Recorder with us in case we needed to do ADR (Automatic Dialogue Replacement) with the actors in Barcelona. However, after reviewing all our sound recordings after the shoot, we managed to capture relatively clear dialogue and all the corresponding ambient sounds, and no ADR was required.

7.2.3 Challenges on set

We faced both technical glitches and non-technical difficulties on set, as expected of any shoot. The primary challenge was language. While most of the crew could understand English, some were not very proficient. In addition, the way they worked differed from how a Singapore production would work. This was an especially daunting challenge on the first day. Many of us experienced some lost-in-translation moments when we had to explain things repeatedly to get instructions across.

This language problem also manifested in the labelling of the clapper board during each scene change. Our script had many sub-scenes and it was difficult to communicate to the camera assistant regarding the labelling, because it was not in their standard procedures to label scenes with alphabets (i.e. 2A, 2B), but to only use numbers.

We also faced a technical camera problem on the second day of the shoot. The camera viewfinder was faulty and the camera assistant could not view images from it. It was not a major
problem as the camera was working fine and we could view the footage from the external monitor, but we wanted to solve the problem as quickly as possible as it was only the second day of production. Upon checking with the camera rental company, they gave us two options - either to change the entire camera or continue using it. As changing the entire camera would be too time-consuming, we opted to approach other rental firms to borrow a spare viewfinder as a temporary replacement.

The party scene on the second day of the shoot, although short, created many challenges. Firstly, extras were required for the scene. Although we managed to find some extras, the scene was pushed backwards because of time delays on the first shoot day that was brought forward to the second day. Hence, many extras had to leave and we had to make do with our crew members who were not needed on set at that time. This taught us the importance of being in control of situations and to always have a back-up plan. Furthermore, the number of extras during the scene was a challenge to coordinate, especially since the set location was small and cramped, hence blocking was extremely important.

Another challenging scene was during the first day of the shoot, when Juan is introduced to Isabel at the kitchen. The kitchen was extremely small and having three actors within that small space made it difficult to use the Steadicam. In addition, the soundmen had to stand outside the kitchen because there was simply no space, but at the same time capture the dialogue as clearly as they could. The small space also made it difficult to set up the lighting. Hence, these are the challenges we encountered when working in a confined indoor set.
For the exterior shoots, transportation of equipment and crew was the main challenge. We only had two rented cars and an equipment van for a total of 22 people and all the camera and sound equipment. Everyone had to either squeeze into a car or use their own transport. Thankfully, a few of our crew members had their own transportation and this facilitated movement, as well as helping to save on taxi fares. However, it meant that everyone would reach the destination at different timing and we had to give more buffer time during the schedule planning for everyone to gather and coordinate.

A general challenge would be the issue of fatigue amongst the crew, especially when a couple of shoot days lasted more than 12 hours. Despite the stress and tiredness, our team had to be focused to ensure that everything was going well. On the second and third day of the shoot, we wrapped the shoot after midnight and had to give a ten-hour turnover time for everyone before work begun the next day. This meant that we had to adjust our schedules accordingly.

In addition, our daily shot list had to be edited carefully every night after the shoot, to ensure systematic and strategic planning of our shots to maximize set time and reduce delays or errors. It was important that we were in constant high spirits to push production forward because it would not be possible for a pick-up shoot if anything went wrong, given our tight budget and limited manpower.

Another general challenge was the number of crew involved in this production. Given our limited professional experience in production, having to manage a rather large group of 22 was daunting, especially since many of them were experienced in the field. It was also a challenge to
pass on accurate instructions due to various communication chains present within the large group, especially when there were language barriers. We had to develop good rapport with them over a few days, and are very thankful to have worked with a crew that was extremely accommodating, friendly and professional.

7.2.4 Directing (written by Director, Edwin Ho)

Since the job of the director is to ensure that the film goes in line with his vision, I have to be involved in every creative aspect - from location usage, to casting and production design. For the film’s pitching process, I produced a visual treatment that was essential when pitching for funds as it contains what I wanted to convey and the film’s direction.

Cinematography / Production design / Wardrobe

As the director, I have always believed in giving the other direction departments creative freedom, in order to achieve a coalition of creative inputs but in a coherent manner. Prior to the shoot, I spoke to the different direction heads - the Director of Photography (DOP) and the Art Director, explaining the team’s creative vision for the film and directing them towards the direction I have set, yet allowing their creative freedom to flourish. In order to get my ideas across, I prepared a visual treatment and creative brief containing these directions in a detailed and visual manner so that the different directors can fully understand the visions and intentions.

I was honoured to be working with the DOP, Borja Lopez, who is experienced and adept at lighting techniques. As the director, I would go through the shot list with Borja before each shoot day commenced, explaining the images that I want to achieve for each shot. In terms of
technical knowledge, I must admit that I am not as knowledgeable as Borja. It was the first time I shot with a Red One camera; hence I needed guidance from Borja regarding the camera’s technical aspects and functions. After letting him know the directions I was looking for, we would discuss the technical limitations and then devise a solution. For example, we were using the Steadicam instead of tracks, and some movement shots that I initially wanted would look smoother with tracks. As a result, I had to figure out how to work around this while maximizing the resources already present.

As for the art direction, it was the first time that our art director Edu Barcelo was working as an art director in a film set. He usually does wardrobe. Therefore, taking into account budget and manpower considerations, we also engaged him for the wardrobe department for our film. Being in charge of both wardrobe and art direction was a pretty heavy workload for him and his assistant. Although it was his first time handling the art department, he had previously worked on styling for many TV commercials in Spain, hence he knew how production and its various departments run.

Art department and wardrobe are closely intertwined. By holding both jobs, Edu controlled the whole production design. This would be difficult in a large production, but possible in a smaller production like ours. He is adept at coordinating the colour designs of both the set design and the wardrobe, as he is aware of my requirements according to the creative brief. Most of the time, I am happy with his work on set and regarding the wardrobe, I just needed to give him the final green light before he proceeds. Art and wardrobe for this film went really smoothly.
Directing actors / Rehearsals

The main lead was casted in Singapore due to the nature of the character, which needed a neutral speaking accent since it could not be achieved with Spanish actors who tend to have stronger accents. The actor, Nelson Clemente, is not a Singaporean but he fitted the profile of Juan’s Pan-Asian looks and did a good portrayal of Juan during the auditions. For me, the main issue was to work on his accent, as he has an Australian accent, being of Australian and Portuguese descent. I did not expect him to mimic the Singaporean accent and was aiming for at least a neutral accent, since the film is to be marketed to an international audience and the character needs to have a good command of English, instead of speaking Singlish.

To neutralise Nelson’s accent, I worked with him through improvisation exercises and made him practise with a recording of the script read by a Singaporean who had a good command of English. In addition, he was made to observe the mannerisms of Singaporeans so that his actions come off naturally as a Singaporean.

The other two main characters were casted in Barcelona. For the character of Isabel, Mar Del Hoyo was casted. I was introduced to Mar through a mutual friend before doing a screen test on her where I had a discussion with her regarding the character before conducting it. After which, I found her extremely suitable for the role and she managed to portray Isabel effortlessly.

Alejandro Muñoz played the character of Jose. He was casted via an actors’ agency through an online video casting, when I was already back in Singapore. I felt that Alejandro had eyes that could speak and this helped to convey Jose’s character as a more laid-back person and
someone who is not as physically expressive as Isabel. Hence this quality that Alejandro possessed really impressed me.

Upon our arrival with Nelson to Barcelona, there were only about four days for the actors to rehearse and gel together. I was naturally worried about whether the actors would have enough time to build rapport and be natural when acting together, as audiences are able to tell if actors do not have on-screen chemistry. However, after the first two days of their initial meeting, I was impressed with how well they managed to gel together within such a short span of time.

When working with actors, I prefer to let actors have their own interpretation of their characters, before I step in to direct them. I find it interesting and important for the actors to develop their own interpretation, as the actors can inject their personal view into the characters and this makes the acting more natural. It might also be an interesting side of the character I did not see in the first place. However, if the acting is going in a completely opposite direction of how I want it to be, I would step in to direct the actors.

During the first four days of rehearsals, I had repeated readings with the actors so that they were familiar with the scenes and their characters. I was more into working with the actors on the character moulding aspect and their relationship dynamics during the rehearsals. As mentioned previously, I did not have much worry with the art direction and lighting due to the competent DOP and art director, hence I was able to focus more on directing the actors on set during the shoot.
Before every scene, I would talk to the actors about the scene and explain what it is all about. Although they should know what is happening, I would explain to them at the actual location about the kinds of thoughts or reactions I wanted to see from them onscreen. When the actors, lighting and camera were ready, I would rehearse camera work with the actors. In this film, we used a lot of long takes; hence timing and positioning of the actors were essential, in order for camera movement, staging and sound to work together in achieving the optimum visuals and sound. Blocking of the actors is another important aspect for me, and I preferred handling this when the actors are in front of the camera, so that I can see the actual visuals on-screen.
Part Eight: Post-Production

8.1 Editing

Video editing is essentially the stage whereby the motion video footage and audio recordings are combined and pieced together to create a representation of our story to be interpreted by the audience. The nature of *El Gris Perfecto* is that of a narrative drama, therefore our team decided on utilizing a simple straightforward semantic interaction. Every arrangement of footage helps to formulate a narrative for the audience to grasp and comprehend. *El Gris Perfecto* tells a coming-of-age story via a linear structure and reveals flashbacks to fill in information gaps for audience to piece the puzzle pieces together as the story progresses, therefore continuity editing is critical for the film.

*El Gris Perfecto* follows an anti-narrative structure as the events are deliberately arranged out of chronological order in order to enhance the development of the character throughout his self-discovering journey. This was a challenge because of this anti-narrative structure, we had to be attentive to our editing style in order for the film to be understood by the audience without much difficulty.

In the beginning, we edited in accordance to the original script for our first rough cut, which was of a strictly chronological order, however the duration turned out to exceed the Final Year Project's stipulated time limit of 24 minutes. The length was an astounding 45 minutes, thus it was necessary for us to trim the film in order to fulfil the submission requirements.
In addition, we realised that our first rough cut did not manage to bring out our story to its fullest potential. Initially, we were fixated on being within the time limit, hence we only focused on eliminating unnecessary scenes and trimming the minute details that we overlooked and neglected the flow of our story.

We were advised to experiment in changing our entire sequence so as to obtain a smoother and stronger narrative flow. Feedback from audience testing were also collated at the same time as our review and facilitated in helping us to focus on specific points that we could improve on for easier narrative understanding. Therefore, we reviewed our original script, re-arranged our original scenes, omitted redundant scenes and kept the ones we felt were vital to tell our story of *El Gris Perfecto*.

Thus, the second main rough cut was completely reviewed and revised with a new sequence to facilitate a better narrative, with flashback segments constructed into it this time. In addition, cuts were more trimmed meticulously to shape a better rhythm for our film too. Therefore, after much experimenting, we have decided an anti-narrative structure was the best method to bring out *El Gris Perfecto’s* essence, which fell agreeably within the time limit as well.

8.1.1 Continuity editing

A common editing technique, termed by Bordwell since the 1930s, continuity editing helps to maintain the logical narrative structure of a film. This will thus help heighten the anticipation and excitement of the film for audiences, and it also makes sure that audiences will be able to understand the story easily. We made use of this technique for *El Gris Perfecto* from
the start of the film all the way to the build-up and subsequently the climax of the film where Juan makes his decision to leave.

In this case, we manipulated the scenes such that each scene leads to the next one and kept the story a bit more simple and easy to understand. It created a higher sense of urgency among audiences to know what would Juan’s decision be next after he arrived in Barcelona and what would be his next step be in trying to understand his mother or coming to terms with himself in this case. We also made sure that there was tension present in the various scenes included, i.e. the night after they went to the plaza and the bar, with Juan and Jose having an awkward conversation. This creates suspense for audiences to want to know what will happen next.

The only part where we did not make use of this technique would be the flashbacks nearing the end of the film.

8.1.2 Temporal discontinuity editing (Flashback montage sequence)

As mentioned previously, we made use of flashbacks to narrate the story before the opening scene where they wake up from a hangover. According to Bordwell, temporal discontinuity editing made a deliberate use of the ellipses where there is a reversal of time. To facilitate this, we did try to use the effect of fade-to-white to make our flashback scenes more clear and obvious for audiences’ understanding. However, this fade-to-white effect did not achieve the visual stimulation that we wanted our flashback to have. Moreover, it made our film
lose a bit of its visual qualities and colour because of this sudden transition. Hence, we removed it and tried to manipulate colour saturation in the flashback scenes to make it seem more obvious.

While these flashback scenes did make the narrative structure a bit more confusing, we felt that it was necessary to make use of this technique because audiences would like to understand and know Juan before the start of the story where the three of them wake up in the living room. Audiences may be thrown off-guard and be made to understand the flashing of different images that are not continuous but it will help explain Juan’s decisions. Moreover, it will not seem as if the ménage à trois was the only reason why he decided to leave Barcelona. It helps to provide a premise for understanding how Juan’s character evolved over time and what previous events led to these changes.

Through this scene, audiences will also be able to see the transition and difference from black and white to a greyer stance. It evokes their thinking and allows them to piece the puzzle by themselves to interpret the film’s intended meaning.
8.1.3 Ménage à trois (intercutting and visual effects)

The inter-cutting technique was utilized at the climatic juncture in the film, which was the ménage à trois sequence. The sequence consisted of two different scenes of the same event of the three characters engaging in a threesome, one in slow motion and the other in real time, intercutting to heighten the climax of the film.

The intention was to juxtapose reality and fantasy, whereby the slow motion scene represented the surrealism of the event in Juan's mind, while the real-time scene represented reality. The slow motion surrealistc scenes were coloured in low-key magenta lighting, in contrast to the more naturalistic muted lighting of the real-time scenes. It was aimed to intensify the pace of the sequence and guide the audience towards the climax of our film.

In addition, the inter-cutting of this sequence between real time and slow motion creates a short temporal disorder for our audience that embodied the climatic mental confusion in Juan's mind as well. The duration of this sex scene was also one of the issues that we faced during editing. Initially, the sex scene took up about two minutes of film time but we felt that having such a long scene did nothing to push the story further. Hence, we decided to cut it down to
thirty seconds and it made our narrative structure more coherent while explaining Juan’s decision in the next scene.

In addition, the ménage à trois sequence was the only scene where post-production effects were employed for the film. These strobe/flashing light effects were added to the slow motion part to add to the surrealism of the scene, as well as to bring across a mood of intensity and disorientation.

We wanted to create a psychedelic effect where audiences would be able to imagine and manifest a different array of experiences while watching this particular scene. As mentioned above, audiences will be thrown into a surreal state as the light flashes continuously for thirty seconds. This makes them also enter a state of shock somewhat, stimulated by the fast intercuts coupled with bright flashes.

The flashing lights effect will also add an emotional dimension to Juan’s state of mind. Flashes from the strobe lights represent the constant flashing of thoughts in his head where it is chaotic and inconsistent as mentioned previously. This is in addition to the confusion within his head that we intend to achieve from intercutting.
8.1.4 Colour scheme

In *El Gris Perfecto*, a carefully thought out colour scheme was employed throughout the film as well. As a team, we felt that the colour of every scene signified a particular mood of our main character, Juan. We believe this was essential for our story to be told in its full potential. For instance, the colour scheme of the beach scene with Juan and Jose was intended to be of a cooler colour, taking on a bluish tone. This was to create a sombre general mood that denoted Juan's melancholia about his mother. Despite the lack of her physical appearance in the film, she is a prime character for the development of Juan's actions.

A warmer tone was utilized at the scene where Juan, Jose and Isabel went out together. Similarly, this denoted the development of the relationship between the three characters. For the flashback scenes, we decided on a more desaturated colour tone so as to guide our audience that there is a change in chronological order.

In addition to these scene colour changes, we also had to focus on the ‘grey’ motif that we wanted to emphasize. For this to resonate throughout the film, we decided to make use of warmer and vibrant colours to signify his ‘black’ or ‘white’ take on life during the start of the
film. Subsequently, as the scenes pass, the colours became more desaturated and muted to signify his character change from a clear-cut individual to someone who is willing to accept ambiguity in life.

8.1.5 Data management

Our society may have grown dependent on technology, but there is always the possibility of a technology failure. In making films, documentaries or television series, backing up footage during production is extremely important. Therefore, for *El Gris Perfecto*, our team had set aside a part of our budget and invested in two Western Digital External Hard Drives of 3 Terabytes each. During production, we data wrangled all our R3D proxy and raw footages into both the hard drives, with one being the main hard drive and the other containing the duplicated footage for back-up. The main hard drive was utilized for editing while we were still in Barcelona. Once we were back in Singapore, we also utilized the school SANMP's as another extra back-up location as well. During the editing process, the FCP project file was constantly saved at every five minutes interval in the school's SANMP, as well as our editing hard drive, so as to prevent any unnecessary data loss.

Our data management plan allowed us to safeguard our invaluable raw footage, providing sufficient emergency back-up in the event of any unforeseen technological failure. Fortunately,
none of our hard drives failed on us, although we did encounter a minor scare when one of our
hard drives produced electric sparks whenever connected. In the end, we were quite fortunate to
have not experienced any data loss other than some corrupted files, which did not affect our final
editing. However, this still does not undermine the importance of having a contingency plan for
raw footage and rushes when in production, because unforeseen undesirable occurrences can
cappen at any point of time.

8.2 Sound Design

The sound design that we wanted *El Gris Perfecto* to have was a more natural and
simplistic one since it was not an action film that needed a lot of intricate sound design and
effects. Rather, we needed one that brought out the intimacy of the film and characters’ emotions.
Most of the sounds we wanted to insert or layer the film with were already recorded on set, such
as ambience and dialogue. Since our film had mostly interior settings, there was not much noise
disruption during recordings, because sounds such as the fridge running could be physically
removed. The only sound issues we had were in the bar and at the beach, as previously
mentioned. However, the dialogue was not affected in this case and we were quite lucky because
it would have been difficult for us to record any ADR after we left Spain.

In addition, we wanted our sound design to match how our characters were feeling at the
same time. We already had a very specific idea of what we wanted and just needed help with the
technical areas. Hence, we approached StudioMB to help us with it, since all of us were not very
familiar with sound design techniques. They agreed to sponsor us since it was a student film and
there were no specific complicated sound effects that we wanted to include.
Moreover, we decided that we should include three different tracks by Ladytron and Portishead within the film to suit the scene’s mood - these scenes were mainly the party and ménage à trois scene. Because of the nature of these scenes, it was important for us to insert music that would bring out the characteristics and purposes of these scenes. It was challenging in the first place when we had to synchronize the beat with the actions on screen when using Final Cut Pro, given the fact that these scenes were slow motion and did not display real time. However, we decided that even if parts of the song were to be cut off, they had to be done without being too abrupt to the audiences.

We also inserted music compositions at the start of the film to set the mood of the film and its environment. It allowed audiences to know that the film is set in Spain, since the music undertook a flamenco style. The slow motion scene where we see the three characters running down the streets in Barcelona included a small composition excerpt to illustrate the characters’ emotions during that point in time, as well as to provide a complementing classical soundtrack to the visually vibrant images onscreen.

Our challenge was more of trying to integrate sound design with our editing and to make sure that it gave an added dimension and depth, where audiences could feel the characters as well as their emotions.
8.3 Distribution methods

Previously, we had to come up with a marketing proposal for the various funding submissions and have already set our sights on various short film festivals around the globe. The DVDs will not be sold commercially but every crew and cast of the film will receive a DVD copy of the film (both the shorter and longer cut). To set our sights for this project at a higher level, we have also decided that we would screen our film privately and locally at independent cinemas like Sinema and Filmgarde. Therefore, we will be requesting for quotes from them once we have gotten the go-ahead from the school. Moreover, two songs have not been cleared for copyrights (at current printing) and therefore, we will not release or showcase any items until these copyrights have been cleared. All screenings or showings are also indefinitely for academic purposes unless copyrights are cleared. With regards to copyright agreement from Nettwerk Music Group for Ladytron’s Deep Blue used in the film, we have managed to secure perpetuity rights for film festivals and screening, hence it will not be a problem.
Part Nine: Reflections

Edwin (Director)

This film project has been my biggest undertaking so far where I am working in a locale that I am not totally familiar with and a whole crew of professionals. It is also the longest narrative that I have ever attempted as a director and a writer. The preparation took almost a year and it has been a long journey. I have learnt to constantly adapt to changes and limitations. This project has also further emphasize the believing in me that a film is just not the work of a director, it is the work of many creative minds behind the screen, everyone involved in the process is indispensable. It has further honed my skills as a director as I have to be constantly working on my feet, ensuring that the production in all aspects works so that I am able to get the vision that I am working towards. There was a lot of pressure and responsibilities on me, but as the director, I have to undertake all these things in my stride and work the best out of the environment that I am thrown in.

Lastly, I am very grateful to everyone who has helped out in the film in one way or another because of their firm belief in me. As a director, there will always be good or bad critics but one has to be clear of your own idea and work towards it rather than letting critics affect you. I have definitely grown as a person as well as professionally.

Trixie (Producer)

Having only been in charge of wardrobe, make-up and art direction previously in other shoots, I was never in the usual BCS track where films were a confirmed for final year projects. I was more of a cynic when it came to film projects since I could not see the idea of myself being
in charge of one. But thinking that it would be my last chance to try out something more fulfilling, I took a leap of faith and joined the other three on this well, rather tiresome but useful journey. At times, it really seemed like this project would never end and I would never graduate. This pain was intensified given the overseas nature of our film, which means we had to spend time communicating in broken Spanish just to get our message through to some of our crew. Moreover, this was the first time that I took on the role of a producer - handling a total crew and cast of 30, which was really different and exceptional. I learnt so much from all the professional and amateur help and I really appreciated the fact that everyone helped us out of good will. It was a very different environment in Barcelona where both crew and cast were never unhappy, neither did they bark at anyone (very unlikely in Singapore).

I am extremely grateful to all the help we have received and I would like to also thank my three other group mates for putting trust in me especially in times of desperation and critical need. Overall, *El Gris Perfecto* has increased my interest in film and allowed me to fully maximise my potential as a producer.

Grace (Assistant Director/Production Manager)

One and a half years of sweat, blood and tears later, our team finally reached the stage of penning our reflections on this long roller-coaster journey the project reaches its finale. From its very first conception, our ambitious plan to travel to Barcelona for our FYP was met with concern, doubts, scepticism and even derision. Sourcing for sponsorships was an arduous and painful process that led to much disappointment, worry, and above all, fear that we would not be able to fund a project of this level. It was also my first time taking on the role of an assistant
director, as my previous experiences in filmmaking were in the areas of scriptwriting and art direction. It was a daunting experience to work with such a large crew, many of whom are professionals in Spain’s well-established film industry. I have definitely learnt a lot from them and am filled with respect for their professionalism, dedication and patience.

In addition, we faced many obstacles along the way as a group. Difficult decisions had to be made and differences in opinions sometimes arose. At times, especially when working with people who had more experience in this industry, I was filled with moments of self-doubt. All these challenges were invaluable learning opportunities, and I’m glad to have taken a leap of faith into this project with my three other group-mates who have been pillars of support during this journey. Regardless of the outcome, having travelled all the way to Barcelona and working with a primarily foreign cast and crew is something that, in my opinion, already transcended the boundaries of most FYP films. At the very least, I can look back and know that we stepped out of our comfort zone and made the most of this project. Last but not least, I would like to thank Mr. Campbell for his encouragement and support since day one, and for believing in this project and us. There is truly no better finale for my education here at WKWSCI.

Felicia (Editor/Script Supervisor)

The conceptualization of El Gris Perfecto began in December 2010. It has been a long and arduous journey for all of us. At the beginning, as a team we tried to procure grants for our short film albeit unsuccessfully. It reached to a point of resignation for all of us when one month before the actual production, all we obtained were emails of rejection. Until, a glimmer of hope reignited our team's drive with the sponsorship of accommodation by Catalunya Tourism Board.
Personally, it was a bold step for me to undertake the challenge of being an editor for El Gris Perfecto. My experience in post-production was far from abundant, with only basic Final Cut Pro editing in limited prior school video assignments. Due to the fact that this is a relatively major student project, there was the inevitable presence of pressure to perform well. However, I saw this as a positive challenge and decided to take on the role ultimately because I believed that it would be a great learning experience for me. It turned out that I gained many valuable lessons from this project as an editor and as a teammate as well. I learnt not to be so narrow-minded when editing because competent editing could very well enhance a film's quality to a great extent. I also learnt to be more proficient with Final Cut Pro shortcuts, honing my technical skills. Over and above, I learnt that communication is the key when working in a team, and without an open and constant stream of communication, things can fall apart very easily.

The process of making El Gris Perfecto was both physically and emotionally challenging. I sincerely thank my three teammates for their patience, assistance and trust in me, and our FYP supervisor Mr Kym Campbell, for his guidance that made me reflect and improve on my editing techniques and everyone else who have shown support for me in many ways. It was undeniably a tough journey to bring this project into completion, but it was definitely fulfilling at the same time as I acquired various takeaway lessons from it. In addition, it was an honour and a privilege to have the rare opportunity to work with the Spanish crew who has demonstrated professionalism that commands my respect and admiration.
References


