Studio Work

1. Sound Collection

The experimental component of Bedtime Stories is my opportunity to create a sensuous environment for the viewer and/or listener of the film. To ensure that I put equal emphasis on both image and sound throughout production, I propose to use the framework of this course to form an online (interactive) sound library. I would record and collect a wide spectrum of sounds, ranging from the morning tunes of Addis Ababa to subtle movements of the traditional Ethiopian cotton cloth. In addition to these environmental recordings, I would like to explore the Amharic language. Instead of concentrating on what a person says, this would be the exploration of paralanguage – the harmonious connection of pronunciation and tone. These recordings could flow into the poetic, both content and sound wise.

The collection of sounds would be accessible to an online community interested in my project and process. There should be the possibility for interaction by responding to the sounds in writing or possibly by uploading your own sounds. This dialogue could nourish my collection further; suggestions and ideas could circulate on this open platform. An issue to consider is that of downloading the files outside the framework of our course.

At the core of this proposal stands the motivation to form an extensive resource that would allow for an entire sound mix of original recordings for the final cut of Bedtime Stories in May 2015. Furthermore, I would like to experiment with and change my usual production-mindset. By dedicating myself to the collection of sounds, I would flip my common approach of primarily collecting images first and dealing with the sound issues later. Since I am working with women who explore their environments through the evaluation of sounds on a daily basis, this approach would encourage me to be more attentive to their experiences. I also imagine this approach to be collaborative at parts. I have brought sound recorders for Aster & Bethi (Zoom H1) so that a collection of sounds from their end can further shape our work together. I am intrigued to see what the differences in our perceptions are.

I currently do not have a program dedicated to sound on my computer and it would be very difficult to find such here in Addis. The only resource I have is Garage Band. Consequently,
I would really like to explore the collection process of sound, rather than extensive sound editing. I however, anticipate that I will be intrigued to experiment with the collected sounds further and for such purposes I think that Garage Band could be efficient enough.

2. Previous Experiments

Last semester I began a similar sound collection, although on a much smaller scale. I decided to explore the poetic qualities that grow out of sounds when responding to them in words. Thus, I collected about 15 sounds that I then used as my inspiration for a poem. Each sound created a strong mood, feeling or other response and by listening to it over and over again, I began to capture those nuances in words. The final performance of the piece was a timed reading of the poem in response to a soundscape of the original sounds. Although I am taking a somewhat different approach with this project, I feel that my previous poetic engagement with sounds might be one of importance as the collection expands. I would like to keep a “sound diary” in which I record my responses to the sounds and how they might change from the time of recording to the time of multiple playbacks. Perhaps you could refer to this aspect of the project as an annotated bibliography to the collection of sounds, only that instead of being focused on academic research it would be very much focused on my emotional and physical responses. Additionally, I could then also record the responses I might get through the online sound library, and compare and contrast them with my own experience.

Research

Part of the research will address the technical know-how of how to construct, build and present an online sound library. I do not have experience in creating my own websites, so that I would need to experiment with options and explore what templates might exist already. Some of my friends have referred me to resources such as soundcloud or freesounds.com but there has to be done some more research exploring what the rights and regulations of these platforms are. If I upload material does it officially belong to the platform? Do they gain the copyright? What are the restrictions on downloading? Etc.

I would also like to conduct some research on previous projects of artists that may have explored the collection of “material” at its core. I have heard that many documentary filmmakers explore the concept of a sound library for creative and financial means, as they tend to travel to remote or unique places and are fortunate enough to collect seldom sounds. Often these libraries are a great resource for other productions that did not get the chance to visit the place. I would like to browse and explore such platforms in the realm of my own research.