

## Reflection report on 'Where am I?' - Mees Bergshoeff



*Still, made in Iceland*

Like many people I find myself often lost in my thoughts. The world around me seems incomprehensible and that is probably because at that moment I don't understand myself either. Everything around me seems like a quest, even my own thoughts. It feels like my heart is broken, I just don't know what caused it. I find it hard to find the right words to describe this feeling. This is a feeling that haunted me for a long time and I did not understand where it came from, I felt alone in this. But I found a friend whom I could share this feeling with. She had the same frustration of not finding the words to describe this loneliness in the room. It felt like a gift to know that I was not alone in this. Because of the related frustration and interest in each other and each other's work, we decided to Visualize this feeling together. We spent two months in Iceland finding ways to portray this feeling. Judith Butler had a beautiful designation of frustration: 'How do we understand those desires that we might call abiding, persistent, and that for many define their basic sense of self? How do we even understand that basic sense of self, when it exists or when it struggles to exist? How is that sense formed, and when does it take hold, if it does? Under what conditions is it dismantled or even shattered?' Ahmed, Sara (2016). 'Interview with Judith Butler'. *Sexualities*, vol. 19.

It's an experimental documentary that we make intuitively. I want to tell it as visually as possible, because giving words to this subject is so difficult and visual work appeals more to me. I hope to be able to search for the right words with more people and to open up the conversation about this. I hope that the viewer will pick up this feeling from our visuals, and it will result in a comforting recognition.

You're going to see several alienating settings in the film. It is four short chapters showing different stages of the feeling. Found, flight, desire and escape. We use ourselves as the subject and research. We took ourselves as the subject as we only know our own inner world and how they look and feel like. I hope that this personal visualization appeals to the viewer for recognition.



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I wanted to give it another layer, which is why I chose to use symbolism. We talked to a color coach and found out that the color blue symbolizes a lot for us, which is why it is a recurring color in all the chapters. The color blue represents the need for security, self-control, trusting your own insight and not being too emotional. The drying line symbolizes our desire and the clothes represent our characters, our own selves. So I tried to put the drying line in the deserted black landscape, to visualize my lonely desire that is lost in the void. Furthermore, a black horse also appears very prominently in the picture. The horse reflects the state of mind of the feeling throughout the film. The black horse symbolizes mystery, wildness and the unknown which refers to the undecipherable feeling, the ignorant and the longing.

I reversed the furnishings in the kitchen and bathroom scenes, the bathroom has the infill of the kitchen and the kitchen is furnished with bathroom items. This is because I tried to depict the confusion and alienation of your own environment.

Iceland is rich in nature and voids. The nature and landscape reflects the feeling of isolation well. This worked good because you have a lot of space and distinct natural phenomena such as mountains, waterfalls and the ocean that make you feel very small as a human being, makes you feel sublime. Iceland also brought me a lot of inspiration because we spent a long time in a closed village where most days the fog was so thick

that you couldn't see more than ten meters around you. This brought back the feeling of confusion which gave me a lot of visual inspiration for the film, such as scene shot in the dark forest where you get lost as a viewer, I will expand on this later.



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I was inspired by the experimental documentary "Het jonge sprookje" by Cassandra Offenbergh. I found this film interesting by mixing the use of real stories with Fictional scenes that reflect the feeling, such as the scream scene in the woods, which represents the character's frustration. This reflection of "the feeling" in images and fictional scenes I tried to apply in a scene where you as a viewer run through forest in the night. You sometimes find someone but then the character has disappeared again. For me this represents the search for "feeling". Sometimes you understand yourself or get closer, but then it slips out of your hands and you're lost in the dark.

I stumbled upon the book "Beauty" by Sagmeister and Walsh. The designers Sagmeister & Walsh explore the essence of beauty and the impact of beautiful design. Something I had been looking for some time, what effect beauty has on you. I have the idea that beauty has become a dirty word in our art academy. The approach to designing buildings, products, and graphics became purely analytical, the choice of materials entirely rational, the goal exclusively functional. While I have the idea that beauty underlying does much more to you than we are aware of. This book agrees, and has gone in search of beauty and its meaning. I tried to apply that is the shots of the film to add another layer to your unconscious experience, to add an aesthetic experience. I did that by looking long at certain compositions based on knowledge of the golden section and intuitively feeling what makes your underbelly bubble. I also started looking a lot at photography by Jeff Wall, the emptiness that he has in his compositions tell volumes for me.



Jeff Wall, Summer Afternoons, 2013



Jeff Wall, Insomnia, 1994

I have also found a lot of inspiration in fashion films. This is because they often revolve around a certain aesthetic that appeals to me, but mostly because there is often a metaphorical story in the images and they want to tell a story with clothing rather than with words, thus putting the story somewhere other than the standard narrative. Like the film of the brand Ninnamounah made by Lara Verheijden. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZza4NWytNc>



Ninnamounah made by Lara Verheijden

I find it hard to categorize the film, whether it's more an artistic film or for the larger audience. If I were to put the film in context with the films that most people now watch on streaming sites like Netflix or videoland, I would find it quite enriching but also out of place because it is not a narrative film. Which is what most people look at on a streaming site. In an exhibition space or museum it would fit better, because people often go there already to see something to actively use their brains, to let their brains be surprised with a new visualization that confirms their own thoughts. Still, I think it's a pity that I have the idea that the majority of visitors of museums or exhibition spaces is prosperous white in the Netherlands, and I would like to address more people with this because I think this concerns everyone and I want to open this conversation with everyone. I am curious how people from a different background than mine (white, affluent, green-left oriented) would react to this. Do they understand this issue as much as all my friends? Is it really a unanimous feeling? Or can other parts of the world communicate better than the often focused Dutch? I want to show the film in Sexyland, an open cultural center in Amsterdam North, where more people come than the Dutch. I would like to combine this screening with a lot of festival submissions so I will observe the reaction in other parts of the world. Furthermore, the online world is also a free haven for everyone, but you do lose

control of the intimate experience I want to create, but this could definitely promote it as well.

Furthermore, the motivation to make this film is in relation to today's society that lately you hear more and more about people getting burnout and especially young people between 20-30. Could this be due to the pressure we put on ourselves without understanding what is going on inside of us? Could we maybe fix that a little bit by listening to ourselves better and knowing what is being said inside ourselves? I have the idea that in our Western European society we are not able to explain our feelings and this is going to work against us, because we lock ourselves up more in our thoughts, we do not know how to express ourselves which causes more stress for some people. I have noticed in myself that this leads to a vicious circle. You don't manage to verbalize your stress, which causes even more unspoken stress, which in turn results in your brain being temporarily burned out and blocked. So I'm making this film to work with people to better recognize unexpressed feelings. Many of the people I spoke to about this feeling recognized the unfamiliarity of the feeling, not knowing how to talk about it and therefore not knowing how to resolve it.



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## Source list

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Jeff Wall, Mimic, 1982