Proposal
Class Project
04-26-2001

"Private Dining"

**Summary Statement:**
“Private Dining” is a dramatic narrative film/video that embodies the challenging of a commonly held societal convention: the social aspect of eating. Rather than simply discouraging and opposing this common communal experience, the main character of the story leads a rather revolutionary movement that advocates an antithetical system in which eating is an isolated and private affair, while excretion is an acceptable institution for social gathering and place for public forum.

Since the ridiculousness of such a movement and such an ideological challenge are quite obvious, there is a distinct satirical element present throughout the film/video (although it will always be implicit). Due to this, the overall theme asks a different question: it asks viewers to make all kinds of ideological challenges, to question all that they have learned, to understand why things are the way they are, to reject or reaffirm tradition, but to certainly reject "tradition for tradition's sake."

**Background and Need.**
In modern culture, dining is one of the most versatile communicative activities. People dine for business meetings, celebrations, weddings, love affairs - but most importantly - just to eat. Although this is an activity that may occur alone, it is primarily a social pursuit that is shared by cultures across the world. In contrast, the bodily process that occurs as a result of the digestive one is almost equally as socially unaccepted across cultures. What is the cause of this? The initial answer to this is rather intuitive. Eating is pleasing to many senses (visual, taste, smell, etc.), while defecation is often considered repulsive in these categories. This raises another question: are our standards for excretion based on our criteria of eating? Why must we keep giving this activity a negative connotation?

There are a number of reasons why this ideological challenge is both necessary and feasible. Although two men (for example) may have a discussion in the bathroom, it is generally not a planned activity or one intended to accomplish any other task than the one at hand. Cultures in history have varied in their positions on other issues such as public and group sexual activities. The bathhouses of Ancient Rome paint a clearly different picture than hotel rooms of modern America. The Romans might scoff at Americans and ask why they shun a bodily process that makes them feel good. In addition to this, it is often the case that young boys engage in
group-urination activities on such outings as camping trips and hikes. Could it be the case that these children exemplify a natural tendency of man that is later suppressed by cultural pressures? If so, why discourage an activity that could very well prove vital to creating good relationships with family members and peers?

If one does not accept these aforementioned goals as real world implications of adopting such a philosophy (implications that they are not intended to have), one can still see that the case for this movement could be made on film/video. The true necessity for this project stems from the lack of questioning that occurs in people of all ages today. A common trend exists amongst the members of the targeted audience (which happens to be college students): family and peers teach them a certain side of the political/economic/social/religious/philosophical dispute, and then they learn to follow the opposite pole once they arrive in college. The problem here lies in the fact that many never actually took the time to decide for themselves — many people are unsure about the philosophy by which they live their lives. Private Dining offers a philosophical movement that viewers almost certainly will not adopt. Because of this, the only meaning that is available to them is that of philosophical movements in general, and the ability of one person to change their world around them. Traditional film/video genres frequently play on cultural conventions in order to have an efficiency of meaning and an assured audience. There has never been a more appropriate time in film/video history to reject these conventions.

**Approach, Structure, and Style.**
The style is not conventional. At some points the film/video displays a synthesis of different conventions, while at others the style is fundamentally innovative. For example, the opening scene begins with a “Classical Hollywood” style dialogue that includes adherence the 180° rule and the use of such things as establishing shots. In contrast, scenes such as the movie theater scene in which the director (myself) is yelling at an audience for laughing at something that is not supposed to funny (although ultimately it is) show the opposite of the style spectrum.

Structurally, the film/video will follow the pursuits of the main character in his quest to reverse the social roles that eating and excreting play in everyones’ lives. From his first acquisition of the idea, through his comprehensive campaign and movement, all the way to his final battle fought in the Pit. Different clips that display the mindset of those involved in the campaign give the narrative a postmodern quality. Overall, it is a dramatic narrative film/video with elements of satire, and with a large amount of experimental qualities (examples of which are covered in the style section of this treatment).
Budget.

In-Kind Contributions:

<table>
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<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canon XL1 Camera</td>
<td>$150/day</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MiniDV-500 lines Resolution)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sachtler Video 18 Tripod</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>$250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sony 8&quot; Color Field Monitor</td>
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<td>$200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portable Light Kit</td>
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<td>$300</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3 Arriflex lights and stands)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Package:</td>
<td>$160/day</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$800</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Shure FP32 Mixer, Sennheiser Shotgun, 2-Tram Lapel Mics, Micron Wireless, XLR Cables and Headphones)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Cut Pro Editing System</td>
<td>$300/day</td>
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Total In-Kind Costs: $2900

Personal/Other Expenses:

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<tr>
<td>MiniDV tape</td>
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<td>$100</td>
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<td>VHS tape (for final version)</td>
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<td>8mm Camera</td>
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Total Personal Costs: $191

Total Expenses: $3091

Shooting Schedule.

May: Casting and acquiring crew.
     Finalize script.
     Work out logistics of props/ location shoots.

Early June: Shooting (5 days reserved for equipment).
     On location scenes (to be shot on separate days): Davis Library,
The Pit, screening room, front porch.

Late June: Begin editing (2 days reserved on Final Cut Pro station).

**Equipment List.**

Canon XL1 MiniDV Camera  
Sachtler Video 18 Tripod  
Sony 8" Color Field Monitor  
Portable Light Kit: (3 Arriflex lights and stands)  
Sound Package: (Shure FP32 Mixer, Sennheiser Shotgun, 2-Tram Lapel Mics, Micron Wireless, XLR Cables and Headphones)  
Final Cut Pro Editing System  
MiniDV tapes  
VHS tape (for final version)  
8mm camera  
8mm tapes

**Previous Credit and Experience.**

Joe Bagadonuts is a freshman at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is a Communication Studies major with a Media Studies and Productions concentration. Justin’s production experience stems from basically 4 areas. First, Justin has been making VHS shorts as a hobby for about 5 years, using VHS-C and 8mm cameras and a 3-VCR post-production system. These have ranged in length from half a minute to over an hour.

Secondly, Justin has acquired a large amount of technical knowledge and experience from school. In high school he obtained experience with his school video projects, which were well known and widely appreciated. At UNC-CH, he has taken Comm014 (Introduction to Media Productions), Comm041 (Media Criticism), and Geog006F (American Cinematic Places). These courses have enhanced his knowledge of both the technical and aesthetic aspects of film and video production. For this summer and next fall, Justin is registered for Comm010 (Communication and Social Process), Comm034 (Audio/Video/Film Production and Writing), and Comm139.001 (Experimental Video). These courses should provide a substantial amount of additional knowledge and experience.

A third avenue of experience comes from his computer and web-based experience. Justin has developed a number of web sites using HTML, JavaScript, and Macromedia Flash. He has also produced a few animations using Flash. In addition to web-based experience, Justin has experience working with still frame editing (especially in Jasc Paint Shop Pro), digitizing video, working with multiple video and audio formats, and doing non-linear digital video editing on Adobe Premiere.

Justin’s fourth area of experience is in Student Television (STV) at UNC-CH. In the first semester of his freshman year, Justin joined the show R.A.V.E.
where he obtained acting experience, camera training, and knowledge of the entire television production process. In his spring semester, he joined Student Television Police Department (STV-PD) where additional experience was gained. More activity and involvement is planned for next year.

**Treatment**

**[Opening Sequence]**
The film/video begins with music and a title sequence that tells the name of the project, the writer, director, producer, and major actors. Simple white text on a black background allows the audience to focus on the dialogue that begins before the last titles have been displayed (as the music fades out). When the last title does fade out, an immediate close-up cut to the initiator of the conversation (Titus) occurs, whereupon the audience learns that the two men are sitting at a table. It is only after about 10 seconds of the dialogue occurs (changing between close-ups on both characters) that the camera is pulled back for an establishing shot. This shot occurs from a higher floor in what the viewer now knows to be a library. The topic of the conversation appears to be Titus’ opinion on a recent film he saw (by explaining how he, “laughed, cried,” and how the overall feeling of it was “heart-wrenching). We learn from Dan’s final question that the conversation was actually about Titus’ recent defecation, "So after all that, you flushed it and didn’t even show anybody?" When Dan finishes saying this, there is an immediate cut to a toilet flushing followed by the main title sequence and music.

**[Action Sequences]**
One of the main action sequences occurs in the Pit in the middle of one summer afternoon. It is in the heart of Titus’ campaign, when a decent amount of support has been gathered across the campus. Titus has set up a large sign in the middle of the Pit explaining his campaign goals. Next to this sign, square in the middle of the Pit, there is a small portable toilet (much like a children’s training toilet) with a 3-foot high curtain going all the way around it. Here, the sign encourages people to give in to their desires and use this public restroom. Quite a crowd has gathered on both sides of the conflict. An 8mm camera captures this factional, riot-like conflict in which Titus’ opposition attempt to hold him accountable for the mess that his movement is apparently causing them. The yelling eventually begets violence, and the scene ends with Titus’ Pit display being destroyed by the opposing faction.

To emphasize the seriousness of the film/video, I also want to insert a quick 4-5 second clip in which I (the writer/director) am at a movie theater cursing at a crowd who is laughing at some supposedly dramatic part of the film/video (that is actually satirical).
[Characters]
Titus is by far the most highly developed character. The story follows him through his growth as an individual, and his growth as a social figure for change. Along with this, the issue of Titus’ mental stability is kept near at hand during the entire film. The main quality to be captured in the character of Titus is the fact that he is simply one ambitious man who will go to any length to achieve his goals. Other characters include his friends (such as Dan) and his opposition.

[Conflicts]
The central conflict centers on the opposing factions that represent the two sides of Titus’ campaign, which at first, appears to be Titus versus the world. Later, when his movement has been set in motion, quick sequences of his efforts will be contrasted with scenes that show his opposition and their negative campaigning. The scene will embody the conflict that exists: should people eat in public and use the bathroom in private, or the other way around? What is the cost of challenging such a convention?

[Stylistic Features]
There are a number of interesting stylistic features to be employed that illustrate either the creative genius of Titus’ campaign, or his slipping from mental stability (whichever the audience sees it as). One such element of style is the handheld 8mm “news-like” footage at the Pit scene. By using this camera, the action that takes place is highlighted, and the reality of the conflict at hand is revealed. A second interesting stylistic feature is a television commercial that Titus is supposed to have made for his campaign. At some seemingly arbitrary point in the story, when the campaign is well off its feet, there is a sudden cut to this commercial that is not explained in terms of the scenes immediately proceeding or following it. The viewer is expected to feel as if Titus' mission is really happening, and this is merely one more avenue through which he is spreading his message. The lighting will be natural outside, and three point on inside scenes.

[Resolution]
Directly after the Pit action sequence, a crossfade to a title screen will let the viewers know that 200 hundred years have passed. In this future, it is night and some children are huddled behind a bush in front of someone’s front porch. They take a steak out of a plastic baggie, and proceed to drop it into a brown paper bag, giggling all the while. One of them creeps up to the front porch, sets the bag down, lights it on fire, rings the doorbell, and runs off. The old man who comes out of the house quickly stomps the fire out, looks at the contents of the bag, and says under his breath, "EAT! Damn kids!"