AR lives (wt)

A treatment for a Horror Feature Movie
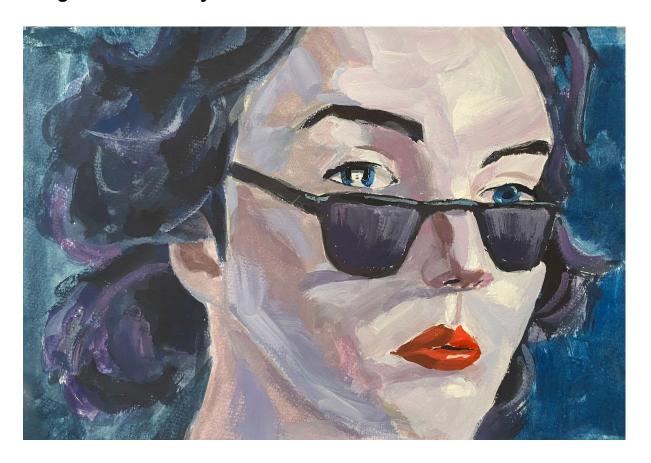
- An autobiographical ghost story
by Jinglin Huang

善有善报,恶有恶报 *- what goes around, comes around*

WEISSFELD FILMS

"Augmented Reality lives"

Short Synopsis:

"*AR lives*" is about a ghost which is killing people while they are playing an AR Game.
The ghost is transferred into an algorithm that checks the internet background of the players:
If they harmed other people online, it is punishing them.
The main character Lien is an Asian woman working in a European game developer studio.
She experienced the ghost in her childhood and accidentally brings it into the game, so now
she has to try to find out what the ghost is about, before it comes back haunting her.

Outline

"AR lives" is a ghost story, with an autobiographical background of her author.
The movie is about online gamers who are dying while playing an Augmented Reality (AR) horror video game in the metaverse. Strange circumstances are giving people a heart attack in real life, while playing the game.

Our main lead *Lien* is a character designer in the game, and is investigating the deaths. She finds out that a ghost which visited her in the past has jumped into the game.
Perversely, the game becomes more and more successful because there are rumours that people died from playing the game. Everyone on the internet wants to survive #TheDeathChallenge.

Lien fights to remove the ghost from the game, but no one takes her seriously, because she is an Asian in the western world, where ghosts are non-existent.
She is using all her social media channels trying to prevent people from playing this game. There is an internet shitstorm hitting her so hard, that she is not just rejected by her company and friends around her, but also by the whole internet. She feels like the loneliest person on the planet.
But she is still scared the ghost will be haunting her again, so she needs to enter the metaverse to fight the ghost in its own habitat…

Inspiration

The story is based on real experiences from my childhood in China.

Children have simple and pure minds. Their view of the world isn't coloured by the prejudices of adult rational thinking - they experience what they experience, they see what they see.
Adults interpret signs of paranormal activity differently. Adults may dismiss these signs as just a dream, in accordance with their analytical view on the world.

As a child, I liked to sleep on my side, as I could hear my heart beating.
I heard 'her' steps, with her high heels, walking on my side, getting closer and closer.
She arrived, she came to visit me every night, and she had a weird smile.

My mother, like most traditional Chinese parents, told me 'there is no such thing as ghosts'.
She didn't want me believing in the supernatural.
One day the ghost suddenly disappeared from my life - my mind wasn't pure any more, because I went to school and got educated, and took on adult beliefs.

I grew up, finished school and university and then moved to Europe, to work as a 3D designer. I began working in the Augmented Reality field, which brought back memories of 'out of body' experiences and inspired me to bring this unforgettable experience to life.
This is a story for everyone who is interested in the metaverse or who has had similar experiences, no matter if they are from Asia, Europe or elsewhere in the world.

Plot summary

Lien has a nightmare from her childhood in China.
She sees a young girl who comes to visit her every night. The ghost visits her often, and she remains scared of ghosts even as an adult.

Lien moves to Europe and becomes a 3D Artist when she grows up and designs characters for AR video games. Painting and drawing help her to process her childhood nightmare and make her a good horror game character designer.

Then one day, her colleague steals the design for her nightmare character and releases it in the new AR horror game without her permission.
The AR game becomes wildly popular and the AR company becomes successful overnight following the release. But behind the success, no one from the AR company takes her warning seriously, that this design is dangerous.

After the AR horror game goes viral, some players start mysteriously dying of heart attacks. When everyone thinks that these were just accidents, Lien is scared that the deaths are being caused by something else - the ghost from her childhood is back in our world.
She begins fighting to remove the character that was created by herself from the game before more people die. But because the character goes viral - and the heart attacks generate even more publicity - she encounters resistance from the company, who have too much to lose.
Lien on the other hand needs to keep her job to remain her right of residence in Europe. If she loses her job, she is not allowed to stay and has to go back to her home country, which is a disaster, because she built up her whole life including, friends, relationship and work in Europe.

The ghost is one of several characters that players can choose within the game, alongside other scary characters - an axe murderer or monster animals, like a huge bear or an alligator.
The real ghost eventually crosses over into reality from the game, and can even be seen without AR glasses. It's visible in the last moment before the player dies.
But not everyone dies when they play the ghost character - it's up to Lien to find out why.

She cooperates with her best friend Clair from her company's IT department to delete the character from the game and put an end to the mysterious deaths. As their boss denies them access to the game, Lien has no option but posting everything she knows online.
The internet is insulting her for the fact that ghosts are non-existent. Also, her friends and boyfriend don't believe in the supernatural and are turning their backs against her.
She needs to cross borders, she never crossed before. When trying to delete the code, Lien needs to enter the metaverse and see the ghost again, which is haunting her now.

Because fighting a ghost is useless, Lien starts to search for the background of the horror character. She finds out that the ghost is one of the first victims of online bullying. The ghost was once a young girll who committed suicide, because she was insulted by a lot of people during the early days of social media. Lien can identify with that, because she was recently insulted online, because *ghosts aren't real.*

Lien realizes the whole background is related to her mom, who lost her mind in Lien's teenage years and has been sent to a mental hospital. The ghost was a student of Lien's mother in high school and asked her mother for help while she was getting bullied. But Lien's

mother didn't know what to do, as the internet was new to her.
After her death, she came back as a ghost to haunt Lien's mother, eventually driving her mad. She also visited Lien, like in the very first ghost scene.

Lien goes into the game trying to stop the horror character from slaughtering people, by using words rather than weapons.

In confronting the ghost, Lien figures out that in her teenage years, she also bullied herself other people online. She is not as innocent as she believed throughout the whole movie. She needs to pay the price for that.

Humans may forget, but the internet has unlimited memory.

Picture collection (Paintings)

These are some of my paintings to put you into the mood and atmosphere we are going to create.

Reference movies

Pulse (2001 - Dir: Kiyoshi Kurosawa)
"Pulse" is taking the internet (at that time) and it's problems as the base. The internet is the killer and represents the bad things of the internet.
People die because they become lonely on the internet. Just like our movie, on one hand, curious and taking fresh technology, on the other hand the primal human fear of something new.

Come Play (2020 - Dir: Jacob Chase)
"Come Play" is about a child, who has problems talking to others. He is using tablets and phones to express himself. This movie is trying to use the new technology of AR with telephones and tablets, to create a monster, which is living in a parallel world.
The movie builds an interesting base, but then mostly stays on traditional horror paths. We want to take this basic idea to the next level: Using AR Glasses (have a look at the paintings) to create a whole new world around you, which is then being destroyed by a ghost which is hunting people.

Ju-on: The Grudge (2002 - Dir: Takashi Shimizu)
"Ju-on" is the most classic Japanese Horror movie.
This movie is inspiring a lot, because the killing scenes are so creative. One example is the scene, where the woman is laying on her bed and being scared of the ghost, hiding under the duvet. Then suddenly the duvet is lifting and moving to the woman, then showing the ghost is under the duvet, laying directly on the woman.
This shock effect is one of the best in horror cinema, which is the baseline for our killing scenes. Also, in this scene, there is no blood at all. Our movie follows those basic principles of Japanese horror cinema, that blood is not necessary to be scary.

Director's note

In order to be a good horror movie, you need to build up an atmosphere, a scary atmosphere. Set-design, lighting, costume and makeup is an extremely important part to achieve such an atmosphere. So, I need to get really close with these departments.
But the leading of the actors is also extremely important. If the actors are acting too big, for example by shouting too much, the scene quickly becomes unrealistic. We can all recall these moments in horror movies, where a shouting main actress ruined the atmosphere and the movie.
So I need to find the thin red line between acting scared and atmospheric, but also not too much over the top.
On the one hand, it is crucial to build an atmosphere for the genre. But it is also crucial to not get bored, because we don't want to create a slow burner movie. The line between atmospheric and boring is tiny. It is great that in the script you have these AR Video game sequences, which you will experience from the point of view of the player.
These horror sequences always bring the audience back to the horror genre, while also unfolding the story and the mystery of the ghost and Liens relationship to her.

Our movie combines the best of both worlds, atmospheric storytelling and fast horror scenes. As my last two movies were a slow burner apocalyptic movie and a fast comedy, I can use what I learned in both to create something great.

- Michael Kleinfeld

Realization

The visual design of the ghost is a mixture of two concepts for ghosts that you know from other horror movies. In my childhood, I saw the ghost as a clean person having pure white skin and black tidy hair, almost too clean for a human being. So in the beginning scene, Lien is seeing this ghost clearly.

Later in the film when the ghost appears in the AR Game it is looking morelike a failure in the algorithm by appearing in one corner in one second and in another corner in the next second. Later on, when Lien fights the ghost and it becomes real in the opening scene. This also gives the audience a hint of whether the ghost is in the real world or not.

Example scene:

A guy is playing the game while he is live-streaming. He chooses the ghost as his opponent, so he is running away from the ghost, enjoying the thrill and sharing that to his live stream audience.

The ghost is jumping from one corner to the other. As one camera is filming the player's face another device is capturing his AR glasses screen.

He is making a break from the game and talking to his audience, switching off the AR glasses but not taking them down. While he is still wearing the glasses, sharing his opinion on this game, the ghost suddenly starts coming into his view again.

He is hitting the switch off button again, but nothing happens. This ghost has a different appearance now, looking more human, pure skin/tidy hair, and is no longer jumping from one corner to the other, just slowly coming closer to him.

From his point of view, he is slowly taking off the glasses and still seeing the ghost coming for him. He jumps up and leaves the frame of the live stream camera. You can hear him fighting and running until, you can see In the background of the camera, he is suffering from a stroke or heart attack, and it seems like he can't breathe any more. The chat from the livestream is exploding.

Cut to, half day later:

Lien sees an online article that a streamer died and is shocked by it…

Rules

You may ask yourself, why isn't everyone dying by the game?

Because of her past, the ghost is only hunting people who insulted other people on the internet. The ghost is part of the digital world now and as soon as a player starts the game, she is checking the whole internet for the players past.

Because we all have digital footprints on the internet, I'm sure there is a lot of stuff from us that we aren't proud of.. Lien finds that out in the development of the story, which helps her to stop the ghost.

Until the ghost reveals, she also insulted people in her past, which brings her world crashing down.

It's also a warning to everyone: Be careful what you post and write on the internet.

And be careful about the words you choose, which can hurt others, even if they are anonymous and even if you're not aware of the consequences.

Cast & Crew

For the lead actress, we are searching for a rising star from Asia. Horror films always need fresh faces and can make promising actresses into stars. (Amy Adams, Chloe Grace Moretz, Elisabeth Olsen…)

Having reviewed Asian media content and series extensively, we have two ideas for rising actresses from Asia :

-**Gingle Wang (王净)** - acted one of the main role in - *The Pig, The Snake and The Pigeon*
-**Kim Ji-won(김지원)** - acted one of the main role in - *Queen of Tears*

We remain open to new ideas and suggestions, however.

For the production of my script, I envisage Michael Kleinfeld directing the picture. I have a close working relationship with Michael, having recently worked with him on his first feature "*Sanitatem'*, which premiered recently at the Shanghai international film festival.
He and his team are able to create atmospheric pictures, where the atmosphere in "*Metaverse lives*" is an important driver to this movie.

Additionally, Michael has a strong interest in Asian cinematography, having travelled to Asia on a number of occasions.
He has contacts in the film and production industry in Germany/Europe as this is an international co-production and an international horror film.
It's an Asian/European movie, which combines all the strengths of European and Asian cinema. The European approach of telling a deep artistic story, the Asian filmmaking of celebrating blockbuster cinema and the South Korean, Taiwanese, HongKong and Japanese filmmaking of being extremely creative, especially in the horror genre.

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ENDING
<u>Final sequence of the film:</u>
Lien is trying to interact with the ghost in the metaverse. The ghost caught her and forces Lien to watch what happened to her. She is seeing this from the AR perspective, meaning she cannot walk in the scene, but can turn her head 360° and watch really specifically. We are seeing the hate and the suffering of the girl from all the internet bullying she received. We end in a classroom and watch the ghost talking to someone, then Lien turns around and seeing this was her mum, who couldn't help the ghost in her suffering. Furthermore, we are seeing the girl hanging herself and dying.

Lien is feeling guilty of her mother's failures, and wants to apologize to the ghost. But the ghost is not in the mood for forgiveness, she reveals Lien also did internet hate to other people, which Lien already forgot.
For this, the ghost is trying to kill her now. She is touching Lien which gives her some kind of stroke, where she can't breathe, similar to the ghost's death itself.
But Lien is touching the ghost's hand in this procedure, so we flip perspectives. We are showing the internet hate by other people towards Lien, because she tried to stop the ghost and commented about this online.
Now the ghost is also feeling guilty about what happened to her and hesitating, maybe it's wrong to kill her?
Only seeing the next flashback, Lien apologized to the person she did online hate speech in her teenage time, in person.
The ghost steps back and we as the audience are not sure if she already killed Lien or not. Lien is hardly breathing.
POV of Lien: We are seeing the ghost has forgiven her and changed her facial expression for the first time,, from the weird smile to sad face. Then leaving the metaverse by flying into the sky, it almost looks religious, while Lien almost closes her eyes. After the ghost leaves, Lien is out of consciousness, as the screen turns black.

POV: Lien is waking up in her apartment walking around being a bit confused, because something seems different, but she doesn't know what, what it could be.
She checks all her stuff, but everything is in the place it should be. She is trying to come down, sit on the couch.
As suddenly, a player spawns. He is immediately scared of her and trying to hide somewhere. The camera leaves the POV, showing she is a ghost in the metaverse now. Jumping back to her face in close up: She starts smiling like the ghost did before.
The end