

MY
PRODUCTION
JOURNAL



Little France

THE FRENCH DIASPORA IN SERANGOON
GARDENS



Growing up in Serangoon Gardens with my grandparents, I first saw a French when I walked past Lycée Français de Singapour. It was a strange, almost alien sight amid the ahgongs and ahmas doing bird-singing competitions and Taichi nearby.

Having moved out a few years ago, I decided to go back to my roots and take this chance to document my childhood home and recount my experiences while discovering the answer to the question that has plagued me for so many years...

AND SO IT
ALL STARTED
WITH A
QUESTION...

Why is there a sizeable French community
in Serangoon, an area with so many old
Asian people, out of all other places?





Research

Composition of French expats

Most French expats are located at Serangoon Gardens although it is an ageing estate. They mostly like the "village" atmosphere, how it is close in proximity to French-owned stores and schools.

Locations of interest

Where do the French go to eat, have fun and socialise in Serangoon? What are some of the places I went to as a child and are they still around?

Similar documentaries

Other documentaries about this topic present a "sterilised" view focusing on the lives of these expats and didn't touch on how the locals and expats interacted—if any.

Number of subjects

Who are some prominent figures in the community? Is there anyone who would be willing to sit down with me? Could I narrate the documentary myself?

Locations



Lycée Français de Singapour



LPB Market



Serangoon



myVillage



Serangoon Gardens
Country Club

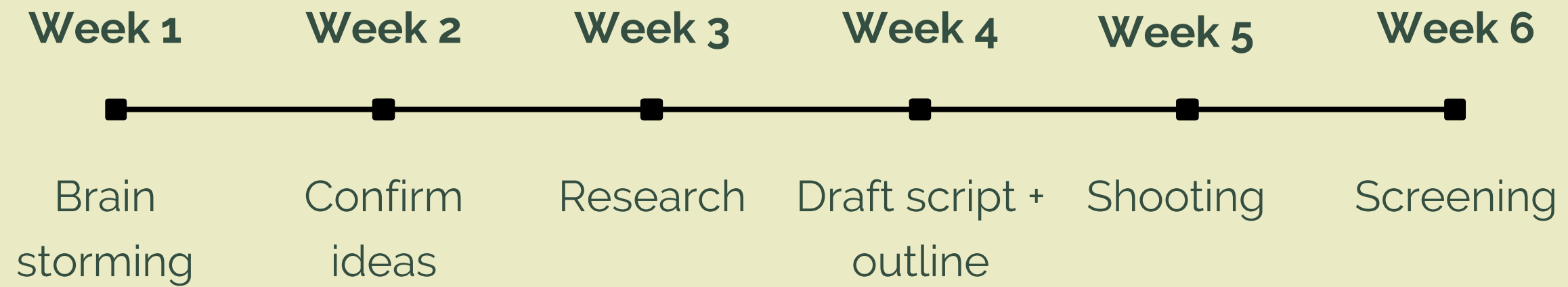


Bungalows @ Chomp Chomp



Execution

Timeline



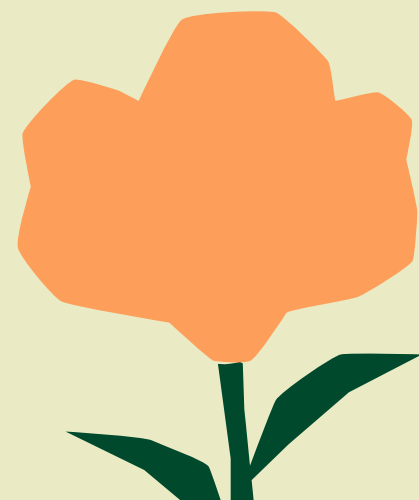


REFLEXIVE

+

OBSERVATIONAL

MODE



I knew I wanted to do a reflexive and observational kind of documentary from the get-go. I wanted to make viewers think about how they define a "home".

I also wanted to reflect on my experiences through silent footage of the Serangoon community.

EQUIPMENT

I used my iPhone 11 to take cinematic, wide shots.



EQUIPMENT

I had a Canon EOS1100D at home which helped me with getting more vintage shots.



I faced some challenges during the shoot where my French subjects had scheduling conflicts as they were out of Singapore and had exams. Thus, my documentary pivoted to centre around the bonds in the community and my childhood than the French enclave.

REFRAMING THE QUESTION...

How do these two distinct groups of people live together in harmony despite their differences?



And this naturally led me to think about the theme of “belonging” and how a “home is not a house” but the place where you feel like you belong.

week 1: 8 September

Originally wanted to do Samsui women but realised they had all passed on. Additionally, they mostly spoke Cantonese and their family is usually in China.

Remembered seeing French people around when I was living in Serangoon and realised I could document them while visiting my grandparents which I haven't done in a long time.

Did research on where they went, and why they are concentrated in that area. Also saw similar documentaries online and brainstormed about how I can include a more personal angle.

Decided on also talking about living there and witnessing the changes in the community.

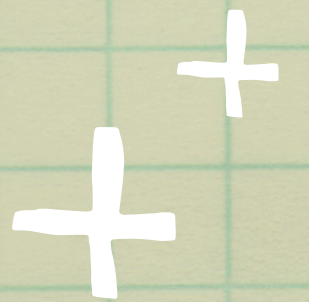
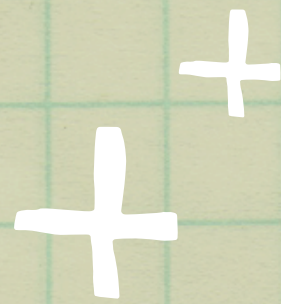
week 2 : 15 September

Confirmed the topic during class and started gathering footage I could use even if I didn't have a detailed plan yet.

Was in the area and found out there was a block party at LPB market but it was too late to get a ticket.

Went anyway and managed to get a photo of the sign for the party when it was 8pm.

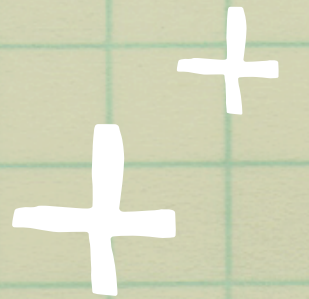
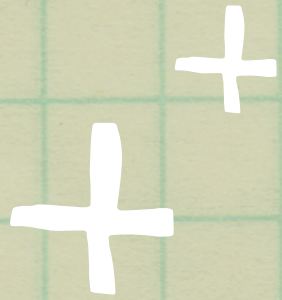
Took some videos and photos of the area with my iPhone in case I'll need it in the future.

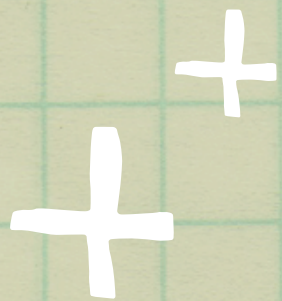


week 3 : 22 September

Borrowed a field recorder from Munwai.

Prepared for the test run tomorrow by reading up how to use the field recorder and planning the shot list and script. Also looked for inspiration online for the vibes and composition I was going for. Found a driver so I can travel around easier.





Went site recce with my camera and iPhone. Visited my grandma's house and took some shots to test out the framing and lighting in the house.

Found a small playground hidden within the Serangoon bungalow estates. Took some videos. Walked to Chomp Chomp to find and shoot French in the wild.

Too late to go to LPB market and French school (kids get out at 3 pm according to one video of a hairdresser with French customers.) Decided to go on another day and stay at my grandma's so I can start shooting earlier.

Found it hard to shoot and record audio at the same time but managed.

Also compiled the shots I had and edited them while I continued shooting next week.



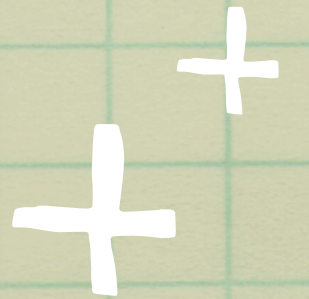
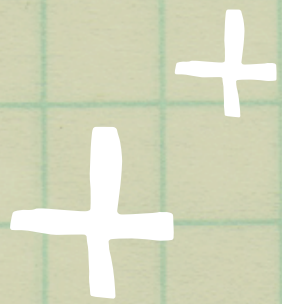
week 4 : 29 September

Went for another round of shooting at the French school and bakery. Camped at the school to get shots of the students walking past the school.

Shot in the bakery for a short while before the shop assistant chased me off.

Was hoping to get more shots at Chomp Chomp but realised I was too early. Went to myVillage mall instead which had more people to get voices of people talking.

Found a cool place behind my grandma's block which had a nice angle where you could see up the whole front of a HDB block. Got lucky and had a nice shot of three birds lined up in a row on the streetlight.

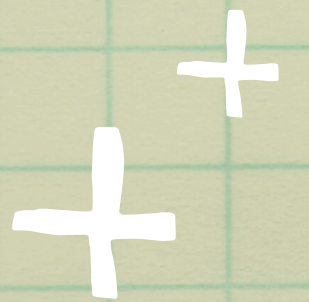
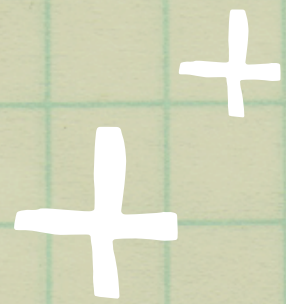


week 5 : 6 October

Spent the week editing and arranging the order of the shots, also colour-grading them in preparation for the screening.

Did some minor changes like getting more old family photos, and more photos in general to have more variety in the video.

Learned about audio balancing and the use of keyframes to add movement to images.





Look

MR. WES AND THE WHISPER OF A MEMORY

Incidentally, I was watching "Isle of Dogs" and was inspired by the striking visuals during the prepping of seafood sequence... Thus, I put some similar shots in my documentary.



God's Eye View





The style of quiet narration, ordering of content, and colour treatment in “Sans Soleil” was also what I envisioned for the film.

Sans Soleil
(1983)



Something that came out of an old photo book.



Little France
(2022)





Changes

Some changes I made to the documentary after the critique from the screening was to make the vocals pop more. I did this by increasing the volume. Next, I also changed the colour of the lettering for the scene with the red bench from red to white as I felt it blended into the background.

THANK U
FOR
READING