

HEATHROW *Wonderers*

Treatment by Chris Hewitt

SMUGGLER

Puer

A low-angle shot of a woman holding a baby, both looking upwards. The woman is wearing a patterned orange top and a headscarf. The baby is wrapped in a textured orange blanket. In the background, a tall, modern building with a grid-like facade rises against a clear blue sky. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

This is a study of wonder. But what does that mean?

What is wonder?

I think it's about finding magic in things that feel familiar. To look at the world with curious, imaginative eyes. Seeing possibilities where others see nothing.

Airports are amazing places. In one way, transitory and unique. The space between two other places - neither home nor away. In another way, they are a melting pot of criss crossing lives and stories. A place of impossible dreams that have already come true (man's dream of flight), where new dreams are launched into the stratosphere every day. People leaving to start new lives.

Arriving to be with the ones they love. Traveling to places they never imagined they would get to see.



Airports are also one of the few places in life where all walks of people (excluding maybe the oligarchs) are subject to the same rules. You all have to put your phone on the tray. You all have to be at the gate on time.

So they are democratic, living places, and Heathrow is the definitive example. A local and global hub. A national institution.

Let's celebrate all the sides of it that never make the headlines. The things we take for granted, yet when we look at them closely, reveal themselves to be miracles.

I want to give you something poetic, inspiring and beautiful here. That makes us think again about Heathrow, not just as a place to pass through but as a fascinating place in its own right. I would treat the airport as a living organism. A place with veins, circulatory systems, a beating heart. And the blood running through it, of course, are the people.

The film will be all about people. Faces, hands, feet. Who they are, what they're thinking. Where they're going. An exploration of curiosity, contemplation, and closeness. Of imagination, dreams and innovation.

People of all ages, cultures and creeds. Humble, intimate human moments are juxtaposed with the epic, breathtaking beauty and scale of Heathrow as an engineering achievement.

The vast sheets of glass. Columns that go on forever. Elevators sliding back and forth. Trains circling. This combination of very natural, authentic and moving human moments with huge scale will make for something really special. A film that only Heathrow could make.

Here are some of the themes I want to explore:

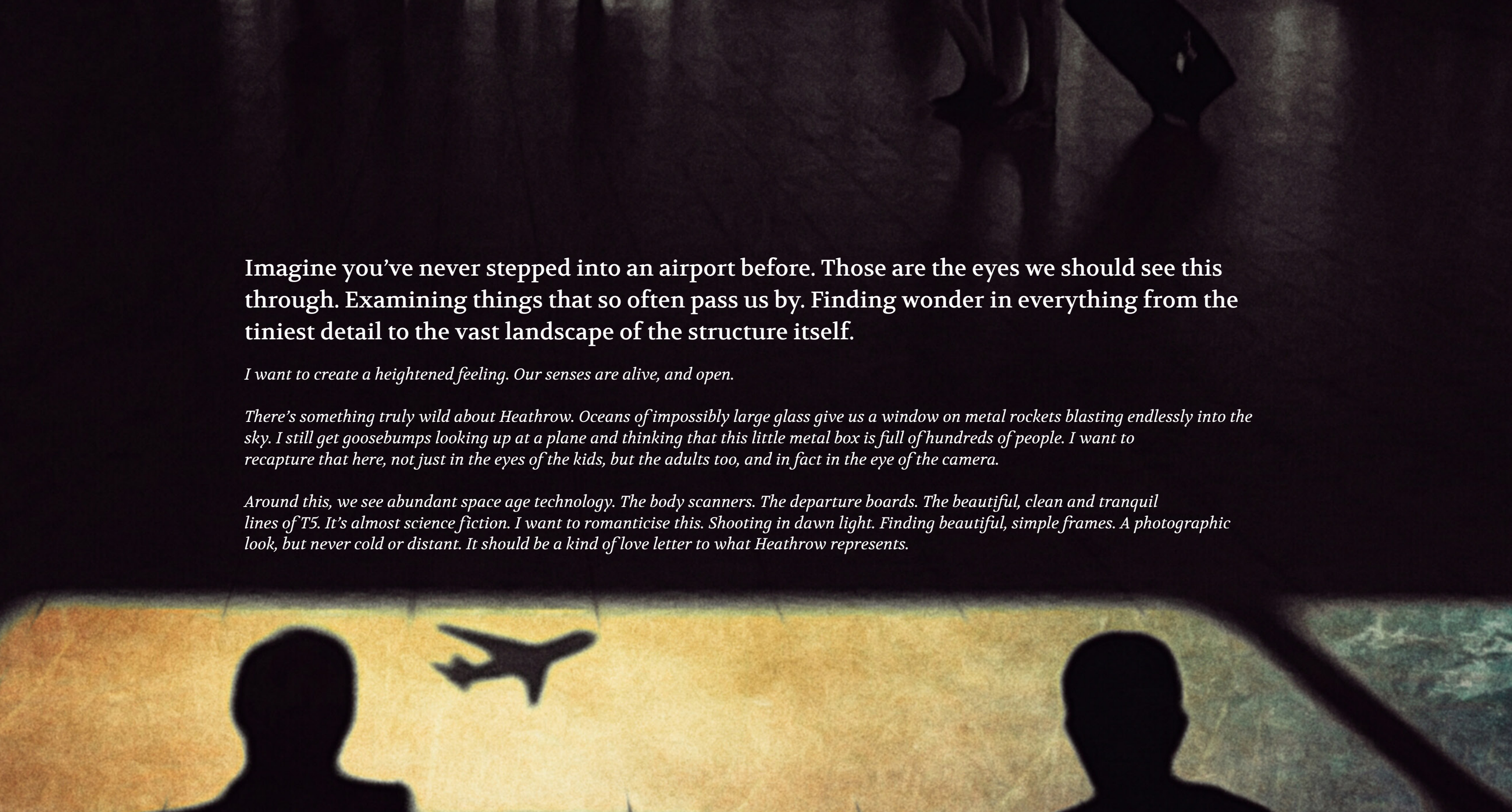
“And I learned to wander. I learned what every dreaming child needs to know -- that no horizon is so far that you cannot get above it or beyond it.”

Beryl Markham





THINKING.



Imagine you've never stepped into an airport before. Those are the eyes we should see this through. Examining things that so often pass us by. Finding wonder in everything from the tiniest detail to the vast landscape of the structure itself.

I want to create a heightened feeling. Our senses are alive, and open.

There's something truly wild about Heathrow. Oceans of impossibly large glass give us a window on metal rockets blasting endlessly into the sky. I still get goosebumps looking up at a plane and thinking that this little metal box is full of hundreds of people. I want to recapture that here, not just in the eyes of the kids, but the adults too, and in fact in the eye of the camera.

Around this, we see abundant space age technology. The body scanners. The departure boards. The beautiful, clean and tranquil lines of T5. It's almost science fiction. I want to romanticise this. Shooting in dawn light. Finding beautiful, simple frames. A photographic look, but never cold or distant. It should be a kind of love letter to what Heathrow represents.

A young woman with long, wavy brown hair is shown in profile, looking out a window. She is wearing a purple and white horizontally striped sweater. Her hands are pressed against the windowpane. The scene is lit with soft, natural light from the window. The word "CASTING." is overlaid in white, serif, all-caps font across the center of the image.

CASTING.



It goes without saying that we want people from all over the world here. As varied and unexpected as real humans always are.

The zen monk, the granny on a solo trip to visit her granddaughter, the football team going to a big away game, the couple on the trip of a lifetime. The youngsters traveling alone for the first time, the family heading off for some much needed rest. The traveller stood waiting in line, still with mud on his boots and legs from some exotic place. All of these people are wonderers, or they wouldn't be there.

Travel is an act of curiosity in itself.

There is no better place to find this kind of diversity than Heathrow. It's the whole world in one building. The only thing these people have in common is that they're going somewhere or coming back from somewhere.

To make the viewer feel this emotionally, I think we need to look for nuances. The moments we recognise as just like us. It might be a young Pakistani couple on a stopover, the way she takes one of his earphones out to listen to the same music, without needing to ask.

It might just be a kid having to be dragged away from watching planes take off through the window. We'll know these moments when we see them. I wouldn't restrict them to the passengers, either. I'd like to see the workers. The baggage guys. Security teams. I love the idea that a janitor who's worked there 20 years might still be just as fascinated by the planes as he ever was.



A man and a woman are seen from behind, looking out a large window at a hazy cityscape. The man is wearing a green sweater with a dark pattern, and the woman is wearing a dark top. The word "THREAD." is overlaid in white, bold, serif font in the center of the image.

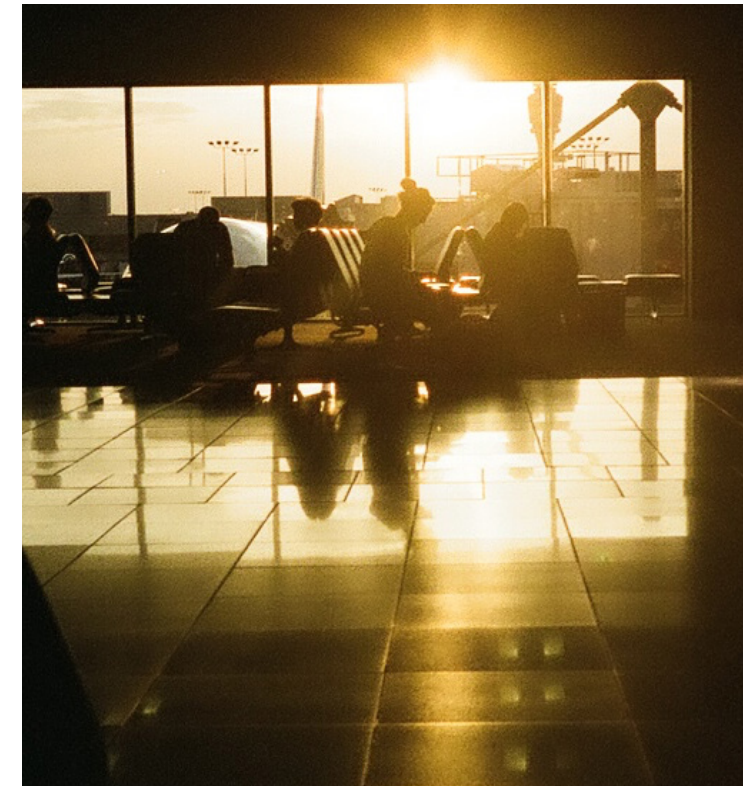
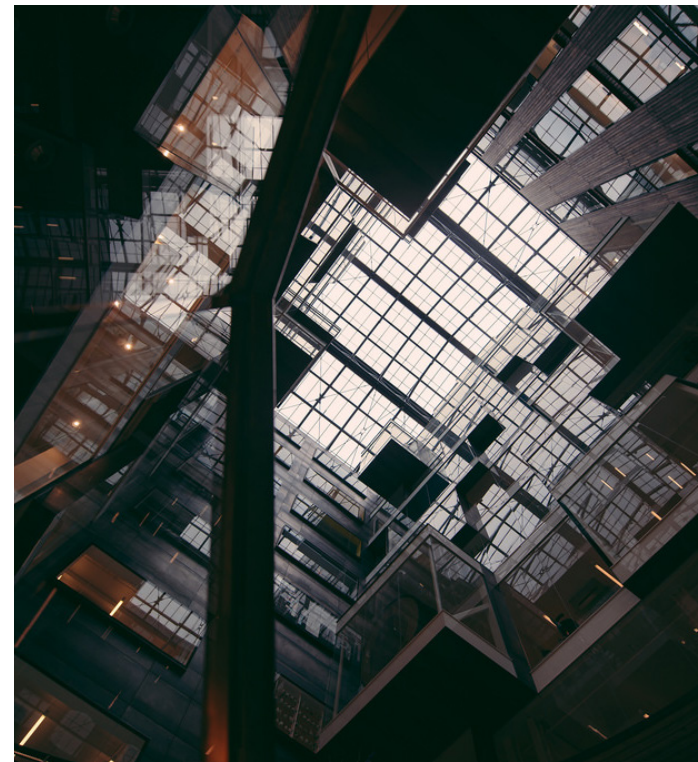
THREAD.

What makes this more than a series of nicely observed moments? We need to give the film an intention and a strong voice. I would create this through shots that we return to of a camera drifting beautifully through the spaces of the airport.

We'd shoot this as B-Unit, on a steadicam. The idea, is to accentuate this idea of HEATHROW as a living breathing organism.

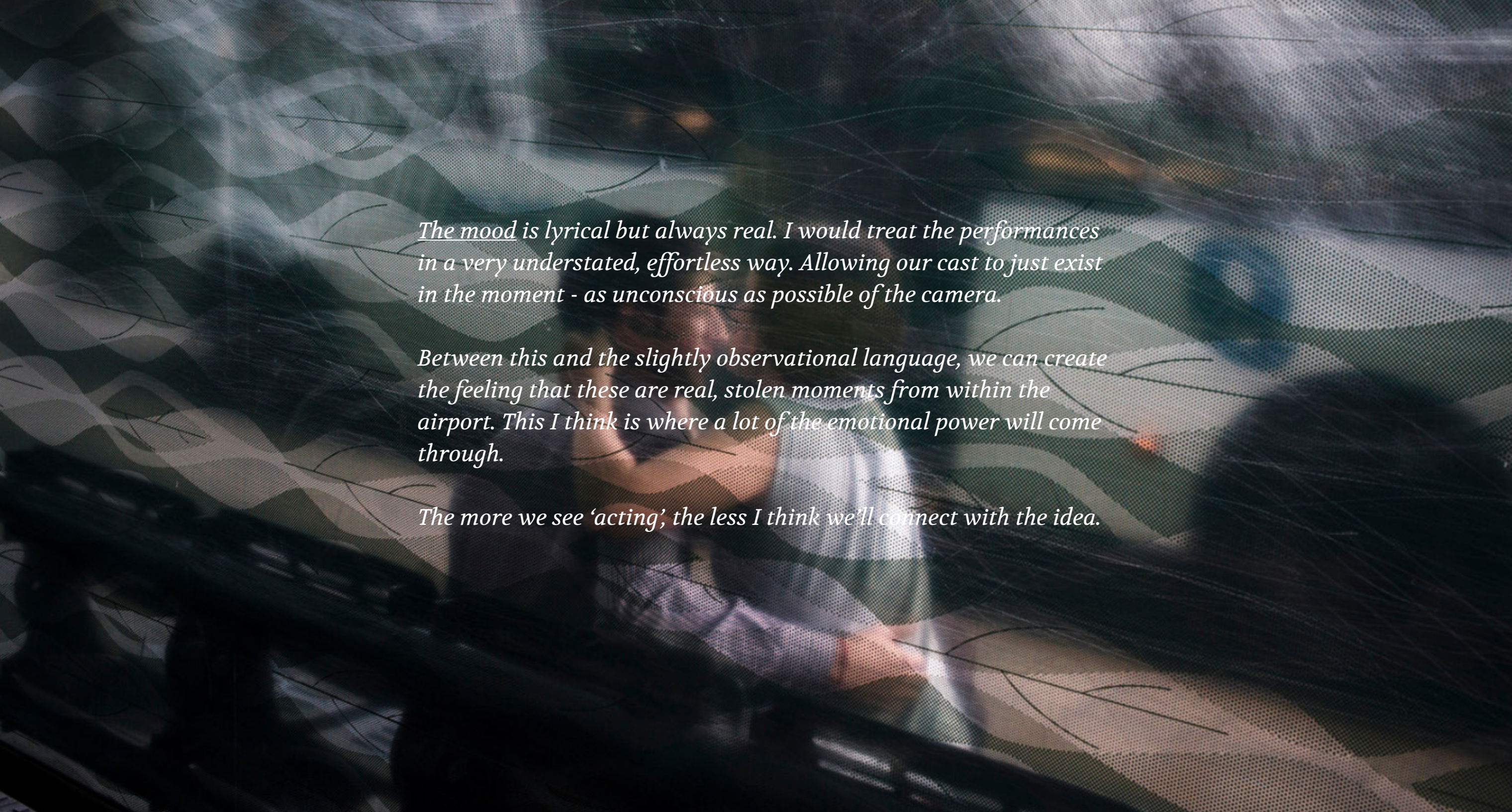
We'll see all areas. Lovely wides drifting through corridors swarming with people (the limbs). Then snaking through the luggage conveyor system (oesophagus), the kitchens (lungs), air traffic control (the brain).

This thread will be laced into our other scenes, giving the film a constant sense of linear progress. We're building towards something. Inching closer. Finally, it leads us to the final shot of the film: a young girl's awestruck face as she watches a plane take off, reflected in the glass of a tall window.



A man with glasses and a beard is shown in silhouette, looking out a window. The background is a bright, hazy outdoor scene with a boat visible through the window. The word "MOOD." is centered in white text.

MOOD.



The mood is lyrical but always real. I would treat the performances in a very understated, effortless way. Allowing our cast to just exist in the moment - as unconscious as possible of the camera.

Between this and the slightly observational language, we can create the feeling that these are real, stolen moments from within the airport. This I think is where a lot of the emotional power will come through.

The more we see 'acting', the less I think we'll connect with the idea.



We're shooting in an airport, and this always comes with its own set of rules.

Fortunately I think in this case they will serve the creative really well. Airport or not, I'd want to shoot this with a stripped back crew, and a fast, light, flexible approach.

It's not about setting up huge lights and locking everything down, but about creating effortless, fluent moments and images.

It's run and gun, but in a mature way. We'll know exactly what we need to get and be forensic about getting it right. Some small beauty lights for certain scenes, a steadicam.

At the same time, of course I'm sensitive to the issues around airport access and security, and we'll adapt our ideas to suit this, making the most of whatever access we're given.



MUSIC & SOUND.



Music and sound here should elevate the pictures, at the same time as creating intimacy. We should feel like we're watching a short story or visual poem, not an ad.

For the VO I'd love someone older, with wisdom but warmth. A British voice of course, recognisable and compelling, with gravitas. Someone who can inspire all of us to grasp our inner sense of wonder.

The recordings of the lectures of Alan Watts are a good example:

'Give It Away And It Will Come Back'

'The Mind'

'Stop Chasing What You Think Will Make You Happy'

I'd heavily suggest we try and find a properly produced, commercial piece of music. This will have a depth that something composed to picture simply never will. I'd bring in companies like Major Tom or Village green, and get them searching right away.

I'm not a fan of referencing my own work, but my NSPCC film has a piece of music that I think works in the way I imagine here. Enhancing the poetry of the film, opening us up to feeling more intensely. I would avoid anything too loud or that tries too hard.

NSPCC 'Astronaut'

With the right read on the VO, we could potentially be very minimal. The music just subtly helping the atmosphere.

STORY 60" TVC

Low light cut aways of HEATHROW as dawn breaks. Stillness over the quiet runways, endless rows of sleeping aircraft. Graphic. Weighted.

Design and architecture seen as art.

Cut to: A big wide shot. Live sound of the airport. Endless rows of giant viewing windows seen from a distance. Up ahead, a small silhouette of a child looking out over the runway. The camera softly tracks in.

V/O: We are all born wonderers

CUT TO: A little pair of hands tightly gripping a mini suitcase as it's wheeled over polished flooring.

CUT TO: Low and from behind, a row of seating bathed in morning light. Little feet hang over the seat edge, one bare foot, the other in tiny flip flops. Their legs flutter with excitement.

CUT TO: The Camera gliding through beautiful walkways and corridors. The reflections and shadows of people caught with a poetic eye.

V/O: But I wonder; do we run out of wonder?

CUT TO: A beautiful close up of the YOUNG BOY looking up at the HUGE departure board. Intimate. Real. Lost in the moment.

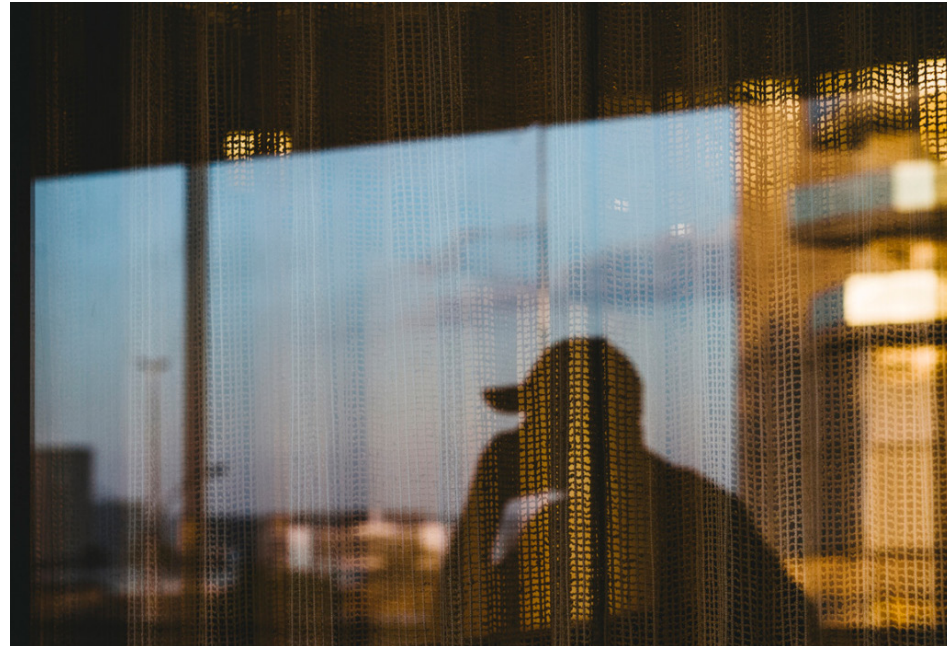
CUT TO: A profile shot of a travelator. A gang of kids (siblings) run and skip through shot, their little heads bouncing in and out of shot above the railing.

CUT TO: The camera continues to search and snake through HEATHROW. Over walkways and along platform edges. Through the baggage conveyor system and delivery bays.

V/O: Should we stop looking up, as we grow up?

CUT TO: A little BOY (4) sits on his BIG BROTHER'S (18) shoulders. The two boys walk through the airport, big hands holding little hands. A sense of bonds that tie. The camera following from behind the little boy's shoulders.





(Casting two real brothers and letting them explore the airport together makes for a nice moment of authenticity.)

Cut to: Polished departure gate flooring. The beautiful shadow of an OLD MAN. Graphic and cinematic. Another shadow cuts through frame, a AEROPLANE taking off into the sky. We hear the distant sounds of the JETS RUMBLING.

CUT TO: Little binocular shaped hands in front of little 5 year old eyes.

V/O: Hold your gaze.

CUT TO: A BLACK MAN (36) looks out of the shuttle bus window as they cruise towards the plane. Reflected in the glass is the vast expanse of the runway.

CUT TO: A follow shot behind a MONK dressed in his orange robes, donning headphones over his shaved head. He walks through the airport looking to his right at the planes taking off.

CUT TO: Shafts of light rolling over little faces. A close intimate moment as we watch the expression of two YOUNG KIDS as they rise up inside the glass elevator, looking down over the entire airport. Because out there, there's others like us.

CUT TO: Two LITTLE KIDS (3 & 4) dance at each other from opposing seats at the departure gate.

CUT TO: A GIRLFRIEND and BOYFRIEND on an airport chair, surrounded by bags and jackets. The two napping on each others shoulders. Soft. Intimate. Real.

V/O: And nothing like us.

Cut to: A tall, burly, tattooed guy, looks like he might have been to India and back. Mud covered boots and psychedelic coloured socks, he stands patiently waiting in line. Behind him, an elderly, clearly foreign couple.



V/O: Wonderers, keep wondering...

CUT TO: The camera follows from behind. A LITTLE GIRL's back to camera. She's being pulled along a beautiful foyer towards one of the gates. Mum pulls her as she rides her sticker covered wheeled suitcase. Little lady is wearing a neck pillow in the shape of the Cookie Monster's face. It bobs up and down as she rides the suitcase staring at the huge gantry above her.

CUT TO: We watch the two brothers from earlier walk towards the boarding gate. Big bro takes Little Bro's hand as they step onto the travelator. The two glide off into the distance.

V/O: We're all closer here.

The music stops... we hear just raw atmosphere.

CUT TO: Wide shot on steadicam. We hear real, live sound inside the airport. We push in on a LITTLE GIRL looking out of the giant airport windows in low light. Her hands pressed against the glass. The camera gets closer. We're almost right next to her, watching her wide eyed face.

We hear the distant sounds of a plane taking off and her soft breathing..

Intimate. Lingering. In the window we see the reflection of a plane soaring.

TITLE: Closer.

Heathrow.

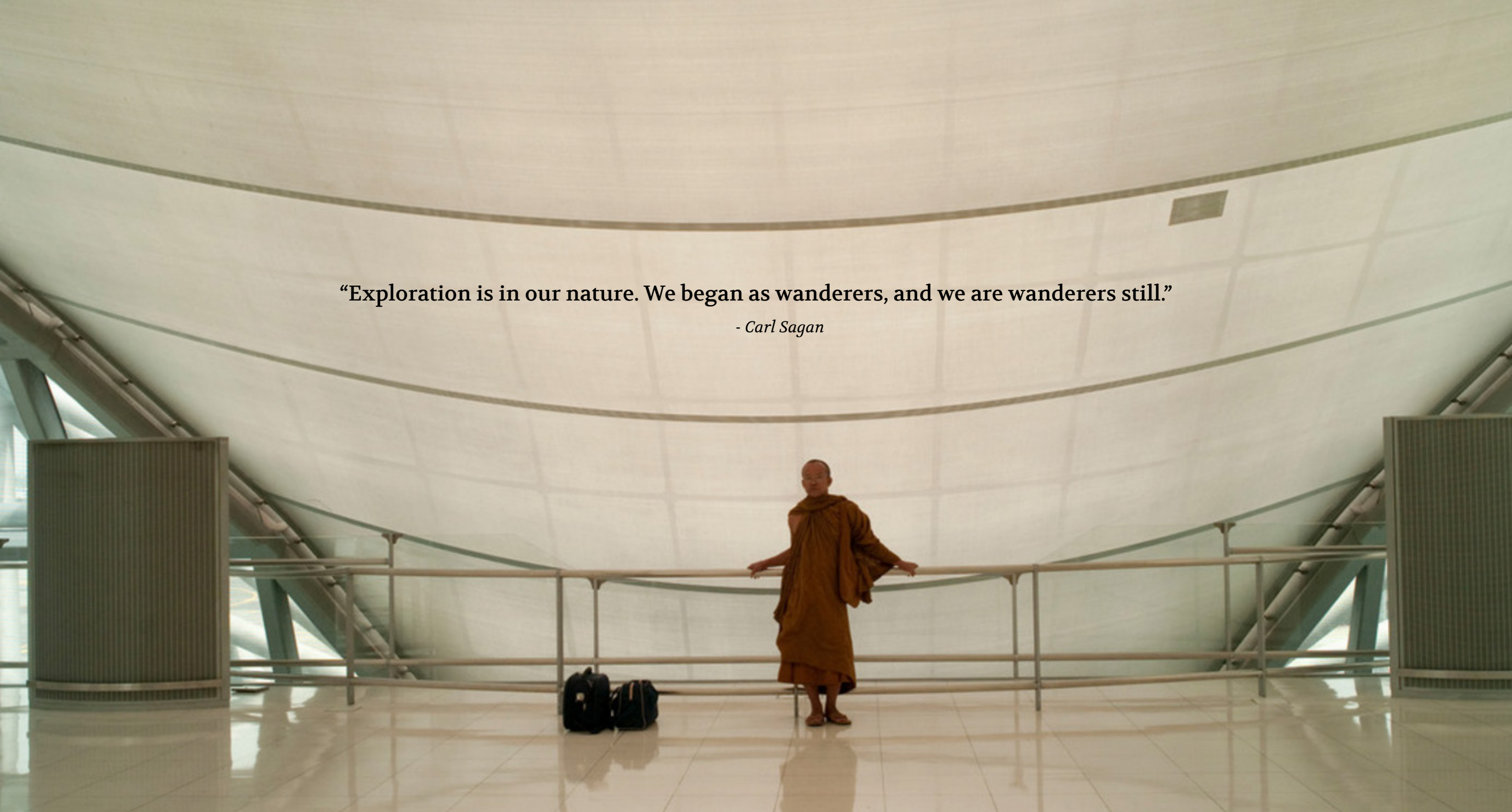






“Exploration is in our nature. We began as wanderers, and we are wanderers still.”

- *Carl Sagan*





Something really draws me to this project. I think it's because I feel like I've always been a wonderer too.

I love the way of looking at the world that this script describes. The challenge of course is to translate that idea into cinema. To find a filmic viewpoint that has the same sense of wonder that our characters are feeling.

It's powerful, mature and artful. Subtle storytelling, full of grace and humanity. Openness, inclusiveness, curiosity.

To show that our collective sense of wonder is what brings every traveller together, and by enabling and catalysing that, Heathrow brings us closer.



THANK YOU.