

An Introduction

by Andrea Wilkinson

Tomorrow is my 26th birthday. I've never spent it by being halfway around the world from the spot where I first poked my head out of my mother's belly. (I was born c-section.)

So twenty-six, and I'm in a new category altogether. I'm getting old. I am way into childbearing age and on my way to 30. And being 30 is ok. That's the age of the people I looked up to when I was just another kid at the gay bars...18 and absolutely wide-eyed.

But that's another story altogether. I have a dossier to write—a paper detailing my work for the next year. I'm going to graduate (or receive a paper) that says I have a post-graduate degree in Transmedia—which I shall interpret as working with various media in new ways as well as old ways via the computer. I also like to call it old media in drag. Which is funny to me. Painting wearing fake breasts and high heels in a sequined dress...and we call it Interactive. Or a small little pudgy sculpture poorly lip-synching to some mid-seventies diva wearing a wig and lipstick, and his morning shave now showing slightly as stubble—we call it 3d Modeling. That's Transmedia. And for the drag-king version, there are any number of screen prints that drive trucks, pack a sock, and blend in with the rest of society never knowing they were once the image of little girls on yellow screens...we call them static HTML.

Stay with me.

This is an ordeal. I'll bind it up like something worthwhile. It's no fun to read things online because there is no texture of a book. How can we change that? Are e-books the solution? No, go get a library card. Where is this middle area? I'm to swear myself to daily writings in less than 24 hours and here I am starting a day early. I'm to swear myself to have a year pressed into pixels for worldview. I've got to learn website security. I'll make folders password protected. I'll learn a programming language. I'll get to know Flash like a small area of the back of my hand where a skin colored mole rests.

Wait a second, I'm not going to say I'll know it like the whole back of my hand...that is asking for trouble. I'm going to swear myself into audio problems I can't solve. Into filming bits that few will ever see but I will enjoy the process of making. I'm going to pull out news bits or sentences and draw them. I'm going to turn text into gifs and photos into jpgs. Compressed, but not like the art of compression used to be (oh, I speak like a historian of years past.) Maybe I will return to the few with 28.8 modems. Maybe it will be HTML. Maybe it will be .swf files. I don't know. But I'm going to.

It's this journey. It's my learning a new language. It's spoken Flemish and written Dutch. It's the fact that I've learned the soft "g" because I said the Flemish word for

"happy" over and over again as Eva and I crossed half of the continent of North America. Why call it a continent instead of a country? It sounds bigger and more vast as a continent.

Problems to work out. I've got many. I've got to calendarize. To set up order. To plan. To buy a huge calendar and fill it with promises to myself, or to teachers maybe, so I can get things done.

This journey started with a pang of diarrhea on Paleizenstraat for fear I would enter an art school looking like an American country bumpkin, and for some reason I can't shake it. Even if I grow my hair long enough to wear dreads and I lose enough weight to buy the right pants or chain smoke...something will be different. I can't place it. It horrifies me. I check my reflection in the window of every Moroccan emigrants window—the ones that aren't barricaded—and in the side window of every Renault, Opel, Seat, Fiat en route. Insecurities flourish. I bum too many cigarettes. I request sandwiches without sla (salad.) I stand op de tafel en de wit kamer, en ik kijk de kinderen en de straat scream and fight each other. Een kind protecting his head while one kicks at it to the delight of the crowd. These are little rugrats who go home to mothers they still fear. It's strange.

XThe point X on the paper leading to something else outside of who I am already. Who am I? What do I stand for?

What's this image of me got to do with anyone else? Who is this wonderful lady I'm to share my life with? How did I manage to get her? What is the connection we have that we will never have with anyone else? What does she see in little ol' me? What events led up to us? What is the shape of the "after death there is the after-life" hole in my head? I once would have said it was in my heart...

The trajectory is simple. I keep going there. I keep reevaluating simple absolutes in my life. I come up with these absolutes over time. I write them down and go back to them day after day like a mantra. I read the news. Maybe I start yoga. I start dropping Flemish along the way. En de morgen ik ben seisentwindig. I search for things important or mundane because that's what art is to me—a way to work through or to remember. Absolutely. Writing is the same because it too is art. I incorporate this into everything. I find some strange fire and kindle and rekindle until it roars and singses the very pit in which it lies.

It is true that for me art is a way to work through or to remember, and for others if they care to know or want to see. It is available to them as an extension of me, and if they are interested they will find something interesting. I will not set out to change anyone but myself. I will simply record.

I will hit the record button tomorrow. I'll

use rechargeable batteries at night, solar power during the daytime, and in sleep I will not be dormant, but simply dreaming.

a dream

Last night I dreamt of being in a place with friends and family...not being satisfied with the service of a restaurant. Watching a cat run under a parked car and a bald eagle going in after it. I reached in for the bird and it bit completely through my hand...my eyes seeing beak go through skin and come out the other end. The cat was presumably saved. I bandaged my bleeding hand with strips of purple cloth and tried to find a doctor. The dentist was next door to a doctor and the woman didn't believe that I had been bitten by a bald eagle. I showed her my hand. It was gruesome. I was thankful that it was my left hand. I returned to my friends and family and they too marveled at my poorly attended to, now Jell-O scabbing, bandaged, eagle bitten hand. I woke up.

Maybe tomorrow I should wear red to celebrate record. From age 26 to age 27. Hopefully it will become something I need like my new love of lettuce. (This is a remarkable sentence if you do not know me.) I'm just going to start writing and doing my thing. I've got enough supplies and I have enough doodles and projects to keep me busy, I'm reading through the library of books in my livingroom for more inspiration and I'm very much in love with a girl. I think the odds are in my favor. I'm either well on my way to a dossier or I've already started my first book.

I consider the end result of my time at Transmedia a beginning—just as this is starting itself—a ball already in motion.

I cannot put my finger on a date on the calendar and say when this began. I can tell you particular facts, days people visited, the days when they left, where we were on certain occasions, holidays such as Christmas, but the day the ball shed its skin of potential energy and became kinetic...no.

There is no specific reason I gave up the thing I was best in. It was too large, cumbersome, it made me short of breath, was sometimes a burden over my shoulder, and some considered its sound unpretty. By now it has become an analogy. The tuba or my Christianity, for I was good at them both. And both were left at more or less the same time, with the mouthpiece of one sitting next to the book of instructions. Both collecting dust. Is it a relief? Yes is the answer to one of them. No is the answer to the other.

So here in my hand, at this time, I held on to certain abilities, some better than others, reading more perfected than my athleticism, typing more in use than my penmanship, praying more perfected than my pulled-from-the-gut creativity...and yet something led me to art.

I should define the word. Art being

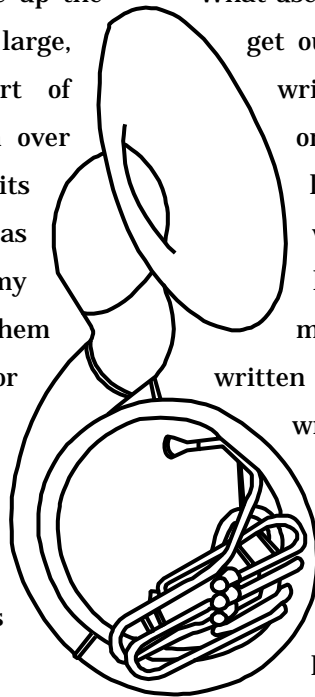
something I am capable of. and Artist being a label I still somehow don't use. I am like the oil-faced man in a factory making cars. I know bits about the engine and the wheels, and how to reset glass in the windshield. I know how to roll back odometers, how to mend the rubbery bit around the gearshift, and how to drive the car...but put me in a field with broken autos and I cannot build a car.

Too specific and mechanical?

What used to be this gutness, this “have to get out” stomachache, this “if I don't write this down, I will die” got lost on logos and typefaces. The words lost on a girl who told me, “stop writing.” Oh for my stupidity of listening to the girl. I would be much healthier now if I had just written through her stupid words and written through her large hands holding mine...but that was 1994.

But the gutness lost on logos...dropped from the list of things to do in a day. Dropped the day I read my last short story in college, buying the books then and placing them on the shelf to look pretty. I forgot about the author then, it only mattered if the cover was well designed.

And what else could not fit into a day? Exercise and looking up. New places to visit instead of repeat visits to old. The



newness feeling of looking for friends...I had my few and would attempt to keep them. And now that I have crossed the continent, it has become moeilijk (difficult).

Leaving the thing I was best at, left me cold. Cold until I decided, at no particular time, that I would make it warm there again. It is not a part to warm with old fires, it is a place to warm in general. It is a place where I sit by the window with a good book, where I write or draw when the feeling hits, and where I make myself a devotional time, a time of reflection. A prayer-type, inward looking time, where I see the gut feeling sitting there nursed by my beautiful wife in her blue-converted man pants, with a black button-up and gray sweater sipping tea.

If there is ever a chance for me to be great it is now. If planets were ever so aligned for me to succeed it is now. "Great" being relative to me. Great not necessarily being judged by my ability to rub two coins together in my pocket, having a glossy magazine car parked in front of my house, or speaking fluent Spanish. Great is my waking up each day as I do already. And success is going to bed with a sigh of "done something" instead of "tomorrow I will do something."

This is a pep talk for a person already pepped.

The Dossier: The Definition of Me

Statistically speaking I was born into an expected life-path. This consisted of being born, going to school, going to college, getting a good job, finding a husband, getting married in a church, having children, retiring, becoming a grandmother, and then death—on to heaven. I would be laid to rest in a country cemetery beside my faithful husband who would most likely precede me in death. Sure the formula can allow for flunking out of college, or a year off for backpacking around the world, but the equation remains mostly intact.

Just how forked have I made my path already? I already have a plot of land for my casket. (Pause for a second and let this soak in.) My parents bought it for 60 dollars plus fees for yearly upkeep. Why? Because I took a detour in the life-path. No one else I know who is 26 and in good health has her own burial space. Wrenches were thrown into the gears of expectancy—the formula quit working.

I, with all of my fellow 1976ers, was sifted through birth and survived. Some didn't. We were then sifted through education. Some quit. Next came the university system, and many never finished their degrees. In all of these subtractions I am being statistified. Labeled. Sorted into the piles for bad apples or into the juice jars of hopeless romantics. I become a demographic who begins to get mailers for: white, female, American, protestant,

yuppie, internet savvy, lives in Midwest or California, lesbian. Do I own a PalmPilot or do I plan to purchase one in the coming months?

Who am I in all of this? When did I become nine numbers (XXX-XX-XXXX) to the American government at tax time? It's my driving license number, the student number I had in school, and the number that lets me get a job. Where does Transmedia and my second year fit into this? Simple. Read on.

What a better way to umbrella several projects together than with these labels, the properties of sifting. I am a statistic in reference to every statistic. An answer of yes or no. A census checkbox. In reference to the world, I am one of billions. In reference to gender, I am one of half of the population of the world...it just gets smaller and smaller until I find me. What a boost to one's esteem to realize that there is only one you, as I have done/will do.

This can be inspiring or it can be intimidating. In my case, it becomes a guide.

M A T E R I A L S

The year 1994 brought me to the internet. (for a complete dated history of my relationship to the internet please visit the link: plaineegg.com/transmedia/dossier/.) Since then it has been a strange roller-

coaster ride in my dealings with it. Sometimes I am sitting at the front with my hands up going over a crest of a gigantic climb, sometimes I'm upside-down in the middle of a twisty-turn, and sometimes I find that I have switched seats altogether and am stuck 5 seats back on a kitty-ride that requires no seatbelt or restraints. I am a demographic in a different dropdown—no longer target A: young female college student consumer, I am target B: college graduate, earning cash, looking for my own home. I'm not yet settled down, but near it.

I am a 26 year old woman trained in print graphic design, even exact-o knives and amberlyth, who finds herself on the web more often than she finds herself at a press check. This year I want my place on the internet to be ever-changing. Instead of a placeholder for resume and portfolio, I want it to be a reflection of me. Andrea ages online. I am eight, going in 9, on my internet timeline.

In this respect, I plan for every project to have a home online. This is not to say that some of the projects will not be able to exist in tangible form—something viewable outside of plasma and flat screens without an internet connection. I want tangible too. Having various versions existing of the same project is the essence of Transmedia: A popup becoming a projection. A series of documentations becoming a wall of photographs. A year-long journal becoming a book. This is what

I envision for my projects. They will end up defining moments of my life, projects that detail specific instances I've recorded, and they will fit neatly inside the following structure.

THE STRUCTURE:

All paths lead to Me. Is it a saying from some sacred texts? That I must retreat to the mountains and get to know myself? Spend some quality time meditating on the meaning of life? Masturbate more in strange attempts at self-love? Is it a line you feed a current love interest when you want to move on? "I've got to find myself..." and then you take a bag and sort through what it is your stuff and what is hers—packing a car to the gills with cds and books, sweaters and shoes, always leaving something behind.

The world is the world—undefined and well defined. Grossly big and pocket-sized at the same time.

We are hand-picked and machine sorted, "all in this together" only to realize that we fall into countries, that fall into regions, that fall into races, that fall into religions, that turn into classes, that turn into families, and only then do I get a mother and father.

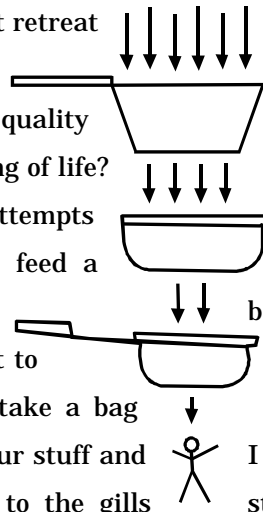
The labels are sticky-backed price-tags, bumper stickers on the back of cars,

patriotic ribbons fixed to safety-pins for pride. Yes I wore one in the days after "that" day, you would have too if you had seen what I had seen or been where I had been.

The individual projects may have nothing to do with each other except that they define me or relay a defining moment in my history. Who is Andrea in reference to the world? Where did she grow up, and how does she relate to it as a democrat instead of a republican? Who is the decently well-off Andrea who is learning Flemish in a room full of landless people? When did my parents become friends instead of just being my parents?

I also plan to incorporate numerical statistics to add factual reference which leads up to my being a unique individual. Though the numbers will be twisted, turned, and even guessed at in some cases, they will back up my hypothesis that if we look at it right, we are like snowflakes and the cliché that every single one of them is different.

Having the liberty to choose whatever defining moments I want, they remain unchosen and yet just below the surface. Obviously I have some ideas for what I would like to cover, but the beauty of it is, the year hasn't even started. In one year I might experience personal losses or joys so big I will produce project after project dealing with only this one thing. I might



embrace a language different than my own and experience levels of knowledge I have yet to even comprehend. A year can do a lot to/for a person, and I am open for what the year will bring. These will be projects that I want to record because they are instances I want to relive or capture. They will be projects that represent problems I need to work-through or solve. Sometimes they will be labels we all find ourselves in. You are a man, therefore you wear a suit. I can play with the “typical” or the very personal. This is my freedom.

PROJECTS

(for possible applications please look at The Gory Project Details on page 12.)

I have come to the conclusion that for me, the next year is going to be deeply rooted in the following project:

Journal

Though already started, this is a monstrous process of recording my life (bits of it) in journal form online. (to see my current entry or previous entries, visit: andreawilkinson.com/sentences) I started this the day I wrote the beginning of this dossier in hopes to not postpone any efforts to get this next year underway. The journal will end up being a wealth of text bits for text projects, as well as inspiration for other ones.

The journal will be the springboard on

which other projects will root themselves. It is the foundation on which problems and/or explanations will find a home.

These other projects are simply possibilities. I have promised myself that this year will be a year of doing, and it has already seen a productive beginning. This project is the umbrella, just as labels, holidays, literature, and facts and figures will worm their way in. I have already experienced loss with the death of my Grandmother, the day and the hour I wrapped up my first entry. Realities such as these are the bits that will spurn artworks themselves...not any desire on my own to learn Flash or to take up pen and brush again.

Text Continued

The next year, I will continue to work on “big text” versions of bits and sentences that I either read or write (excerpts taken from my journal) that deal with certain obvious issues:

my being a woman, being a newly planted Antwerpenaar, a woman in love, a frustrated backsliding participant in politics, an American living abroad, a wannabe-writer-designer, or a girl who didn't expect to have time on her hands at 26 turning 27.

For examples of texts that I have already completed and are viewable, please visit: andreawilkinson.com/transmedia/text/

My Eclectic Religion.

Since I am still a recovering born-again Christian, I have a lot to deal with. As you have already read, I have a lot of religious baggage. Sometimes I am on a quest (see journal entry entitled “the quest” andrewilkinson.com/sentences/archives/2002_04_23.html) and sometimes I don’t seem to care much for the spiritual side of life at all. In this respect I would like to delve into religious iconography and place myself into the icon. Me as Jesus. Andrea as Buddha. Me as the Hasidic Jew that lives across the street that apparently has, inside of his home, one of the biggest diamonds in the world.

I’m not saying that over the course of this year I will “don a religion” and it will stick, but I would like to research the saints and the prophets to see who I would be if I were them...literally, as in image form.

Rollover text

Though more appropriately suited for a more detailed description, at some point this year I would like create sentences with interchangeable words. The mouse rolls over the verb and it changes into a new random verb.

This will be based on children’s books or might progress to adult literature. (No, I’m not talking erotic Adult XXX, though once I wrote it down, it seemed to be an obvious

conclusion) This could also be done in Dutch, as I am ever learning new words and phrases

Flemish for beginners

Idgie is a glorified stick figure that used to have quite a fan base of weekly readers in a small-town private Christian college newspaper. Drawn during the required weekly chapel services on blue-lined paper, readers would be treated to the weekly “Adventures of Idgie.” If it works out with her visa papers, next year would be a great year for Idgie to emerge again, in an adventure appropriately named: “Idgie Leert Vlaams.”

The stories would be suitable for small children or for people who find themselves in a 20 week, 12 Euro Flemish course in Hoboken. It would be about colors and objects or trips to the market. Not only something to help me with my Flemish, it would be a way to help me revive an old friend. (Though her name might change to a more Flanders-friendly name.)

A Day in the Life

Life is simply a succession of days. In and of itself there is nothing remarkable about one day to the next, except over the course of many of them we seem to age. A project with photography, A Day in the Life entails taking a picture of my face every

single day for one year to see how it changes (hopefully the changes won't be drastic!)

It is likely to also include recording an entire day in photographs, or dictating conversations for a set period of time. I might set an alarm on a watch to go off every 5 minutes and therefore recording digitally a day in the life of Andrea Wilkinson with a camera or a tape-recorder.

Documentation of Bliss

By the end of the year, I want bliss to be in a box. I've started collecting—matchsticks stuck together, a piece of Eva's hair, a 2 of spades found on the street in Essen. Anything ordinary and yet priceless. Sort of like stamp collecting or stalking a star. Treating the relationship that Eva and I have like it is something to be recorded or kept.

I also plan for the photos of us on Bracketland to be completely updated by the end of the year (bracketland.com). The act of this collecting leading the viewer to feel the immensity or overwhelmingness I have in my relationship. How unexpected it was and how special it continues to be. For an example of boxed possessions, please view the journal entry entitled: Foto Representations.

(andreawilkinson.com/sentences/archives/2002_05_19.html)

Flash Settings + Audio

With technology giving us the ability to capture the most trivial of moments, why not combine sound and still images? In light of the availability of moving pictures, why not digress to stills? Based on work I started with David Karam, the pieces will combine photography with audio embedded into the actual file.

This will not be one specific scene, but several—my parents' farm or an American diner, watching the QVC channel or dinner with the Wilkinsons, etc.

T I M E S C H E D U L E

Some of the before mentioned projects will run parallel—as well as other unrelated projects happening alongside. The schedule should prohibit procrastination. As there are 8 months and as the journal is something that is daily, it would be easy to allot a new project for each month.

Instead of having an unveiling at some specific date, I would simply finish projects and put them online as I finish them. Perhaps I could also include a posting area for comments on the works themselves.

P R O M O T E R

As soon as I finish this dossier, and have it pre-read, I plan on emailing several of the

teachers that we had and ask them to be my promoters. I can see how each of them could be interested in specific ideas, though not necessarily the project as a whole. Instead of having a promoter on a huge scale, I would rather send progress reports at certain intervals and ask for feedback. This year I do not plan to rattle the art world, I plan on rattling my own.

THE GORY PROJECT DETAILS

The following sentences briefly describe the means in which projects could be completed. It is quite possible that once I get into a specific project, I find that it is better suited to print form instead of HTML or that javascript is too burdensome and that it would be better suited for Flash. Most of the projects will be web-based, but most of them will also be available as tangible and exhibition-ready pieces—from projections to poetry readings, from video screens to walls of photographs.

I plan on using, almost exclusively, the tools I personally own. This is not a year of living above my means, I'll earn petty cash for freelance logo designs and websites for random organizations along the way. What I have is time. What I own is a hobby-grade digital camera with loads of memory, an old PC laptop, an ibook, and an internet connection. I have books on JavaScript, HTML, XML, and a wealth of knowledge in intelligent friends. I own 3

domain names and maintain the sites to all three. Perhaps this year I will buy a fourth.

Point being, I'm not planning on being anything I'm not. I'm ready for a year of pulling and posting, cutting and pasting, recording with a microphone of all of my senses: Me.

- Computer desktop backgrounds, printed pieces, or downloadable screen savers.

- Text projections in a storefront.

- Candles of saint-Andrea or me on crucifixes, prayer cards or Buddha-like wood carvings.

- Audio versions of journal entries.

- A children's online book in Flemish with the animated or still version of Idgie.

- JavaScript or Flash roll-over techniques, panoramic QuickTime VR landscapes.

- More bad poetry stretched to be more than just words on a page.

- A box full of bits and pieces of a relationship; hair, napkins, leaves that were pressed pre-winter

- Small scale movies. Perhaps living only in compressed, web-ready form—30second bits with moving images.

- An ever-running script that counts the amount of time since my birth.
- Flash files with embedded audio: the combination of photography and Flash. The viewer controlling the sounds of a setting—the volume level and panning left to right.
- A lifelong ambition of mine is to make greeting cards. I don't know if it is because my mother worked at Hallmark Cards before she went to college or if it's the sappy sentimental side of me. Point being, with the internet, anything is possible, and cards are something I want to make myself, host myself, and have available for others to send.
- A printed book—a limited edition of journal entries and photographs, edited for content and printed on something other than an inkjet.

I M P O R T A N T L I N K

To see what I've done thus far, please visit my website:

<http://www.andreawilkinson.com>

C O N T A C T M E

To contact me regarding this dossier, please feel free to email me at:

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