

A story about celebrity, insecurity and cutting limes.

VENEER

Insecurity and tension muster as Kenneth LeComb, a down and out bartender, is forced to work in the presence of Herbert Zelinger, a world-renowned and accomplished artist.

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On a quiet, sunny morning in Brooklyn at an outdoor café, the world-renowned Herbert Zelinger (Michael Buscemi), sits back enjoying his cappuccinos, planning his next artistic venture and taking in the local fare.

In a neighboring bar that overlooks his table, through a thin pane of glass, we meet Kenneth LeComb (Francesco Saviano). He goes about his normal daily routine of prepping the bar, mopping the floors and cutting limes.

That is however, until he must clean the window. It is then that he becomes aware of Herbert, the art world star residing just outside. This leads Kenneth into an introspective anxiety that he is forced to address when Herbert stops in with a question.



(Long synopsis – Spoiler information)

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We open on a quiet, sunny morning in Brooklyn at an outdoor café. The world-renowned Herbert Zelinger (Michael Buscemi), sits back enjoying his cappuccinos, planning his next artistic venture and taking in the local fare.

In a neighboring bar that overlooks his table, through a thin pane of glass, we meet Kenneth LeComb (Francesco Saviano). He goes about his normal daily routine of prepping the bar, mopping the floors and cutting limes.

That is however, until he must clean the window. It is then that he becomes aware of Herbert, the art world star residing just outside. From there, we enter into the deep crevasses of Kenneth's mind where he begins to exhibit an introspective anxiety.

Kenneth starts to undermine every action, motive and aspect of Herbert's character that he can touch upon. Sometimes comical, sometimes vulgar, and sometimes ignorant, we begin to see a deep seeded insecurity that surfaces as the morning rolls on.

This condescending rancor continues as we see both friends and fans flock to Herbert's table just outside of Kenneth's world of stale hops and dirty glasses.

As Kenneth is nearing the end of his initial daytime ritual, he is finally relieved of his self-inflicted nemesis just outside. Herbert packs up his bags and gets ready to leave...when...“No, no, no, don't come in here...don't.” Herbert opens the door and peeks his head inside.

Kenneth must then confront his own insecurities head on as he enters into a face-to-face confrontation that touches upon the comical while both characters reveal a rather pathetic side to their personalities.

Within each of their actions and words, *Veneer* portrays a subtle commentary on celebrity in general while also exposing one artist who allows his attitude to be affected by it.

(Directors Statement/Anecdotes from the production - Contains spoiler information)

VENEER : Looking through the glass

This project came about as I had a few broad concepts circulating in my head about the art world. My ideas kept coming back to celebrity and identity and the absurdity that could manifest when combined with insecurity. Formally, I knew that these concepts were quite simple and could work as a viable short narrative. In that, I found my challenge: Could I utilize an aesthetic of minimalism and compile a strong short film with a very simple confrontation?

From there, I began to brainstorm and work out several scenarios and came up with a few centered on a *renowned* artist sitting outside of a café enjoying the afternoon. While this artist sipped coffee, I felt it would be interesting to have another character dissonantly ranting about that person and the perceived ease of his everyday life.

After I decided upon this rough treatment, I approached my friend Francesco Saviano with some of the ideas I had brewing and immediately sparked his interest in both adapting the story and playing the lead, Kenneth LeComb. Originally I wanted the story to encompass a jaded artist ranting to his friend about the famous artist sitting just outside of their bar. We quickly started working out this idea while calling on our friend Michael Buscemi to play the role of the *renowned* Herbert Zelinger. However, as casting for Kenneth's "friend" became difficult, I decided to scrap that concept and move inside Kenneth's head for the build up to the confrontation.

The location that we used helped to solidify this move. There was a quaint café directly next door to the bar where we were shooting. The bar itself overlooks the café through a large glass window. This provided the perfect tool for our character to observe a world moving outside as he followed his own mundane routines.

The first and *only* day of principal photography turned out to be one of the smoothest days I've ever experienced on a set. Michael arrived and I told him to grab a cappuccino, a muffin and to enjoy the neighborhood. We shot him with various lenses, moves and interactions with different locals around the neighborhood. In that, I could set up his character as being visually ambiguous – meaning that everything we know about him would be purely surface.

Production then moved inside where we shot Francesco playing out different scenarios of bar preparation while occasionally peering out at his self-inflicted nemesis (Herbert). As I shot and dictated the elements of the setups to Francesco, he was in character and composing the thoughts that he felt towards the man outside.

When it came time to film the confrontation between the two, I set up a very simple situation. I told Michael that his main goal was to find out who was playing at the bar later that evening. In contradiction to that, I directed Francesco to be difficult and unaccommodating in giving any information that Michael was seeking. I knew something would be interesting as all we knew of Herbert was from a very contempt-laden description given by the embittered bartender.

Francesco's strong character development throughout the shoot provided a strong basis for his contempt-laden voiceover. After the shoot, we went back and forth working out the voiceover for mood, content and timing. Then we went in, recorded and re-recorded until I knew we had the character nailed.

After recording the voiceovers, I began to mix and design the sound. Originally, I was planning on using the room and exterior city noises as the backdrop of ambient sound. I felt as though this along with the voiceovers would have been strong enough; however I began to play with some found music of Norwegian musician John Erik Kaada that was intended as film music. One track sounded perfectly suited for this film so I contacted him, obtained permissions, mixed it down and printed it.

Overall, this project has taught me that with the right people involved, the true magic of filmmaking can emerge. We had absolutely no budget and had to construct this story and concept out of pure logistics. This is an honest example of how an organic idea can easily be focused and executed when passionate filmmakers take a chance and put their heads together.

This is a slice of life story. It poetically lacks resolution while mimicking the routines and miscommunications that pepper our everyday lives. This piece does not literally ask or even try to resolve my original ideas on the art world and its relation to pop culture, but sets up a short scenario that can act as a catalyst for discussion. It simply became an exercise in observation of people and how insecurity and miscommunication can haunt mundane interactions.

It was everyone's sharp intuitions that helped to make the pace assume a natural fluidity. From the initial concepts through the execution, I knew that we were quite fortunate and successful in our experimental endeavor.

The Filmmakers

FRANCESCO SAVIANO – Kenneth LeComb

MICHAEL BUSCEMI – Herbert Zelinger

MARIKA HACKING – A Herbert Fan

JACQUELINE HAMILTON – Herbert's Pal

Story by PETER BOLTE

Written by PETER BOLTE, FRANCESCO SAVIANO

Produced, Directed and Shot by PETER BOLTE

Edited by ZELIG BARTH

Music by

JOHN ERIK KAADA

“Retirement Community”

Music for Moviebikers

Ipecac Recordings

© 2006, Ipecac Recordings

Locations

BARBES

COLSON

Special Thanks

THE SCREEN ACTORS GUILD

OLIVIER CONAN

VINCENT DOUGLAS

JONATHAN ISRAEL

JEFFREY COBB

IPECAC RECORDINGS

GREG WERCKMAN

MIKE PATTON

MAURICIO BUSTAMANTE

Peter Bolte is a Brooklyn, NY based artist and filmmaker. He received his BFA in painting from Webster University in 2000. He then moved to Baltimore and obtained a post-baccalaureate in fine art from Maryland Institute College of Art.

While in Baltimore, he expanded his work into film, directing his first avant-garde short, *Consuming Capitalism*. With that project he began an ongoing audio/visual collaboration with composer Trevor Dunn.

From there, he became focused on the narrative with the short film, *V.O.* (Sean Gullette, Jake Robards – Winner Best Short Film 2005 Berkeley Film Festival). Peter has also directed two award-winning music videos, *Liver-Colored Dew* (Music by Trevor Dunn's Trio Convulsant, Ipecac Recordings) and *Queen of Displays* (Music by One Ring Zero, Barbès Records).

Along with his music video credits, he was hired by Nokia in the spring of 2007 to produce and direct two videos shot entirely on a new spec series of camera phones. Additionally, he has worked in various aspects of production for companies including Viacom, Nokia and Black Retail Action Group, where he shot a performance of Savion Glover & the Otherz in 2005 at the Schomburg Center in Harlem. His side projects also include co-editing the provocative documentary *Begging Naked*, which excelled in the festival circuit in 2007.

Peter has exhibited his paintings and films both nationally and internationally at numerous venues including the Woodstock Film Festival, Nantucket Film Festival, Anthology Film Archives, Issue Project Room, Galapagos Art Space, Williamstown Film Festival, HereArt, Festival Electrochoc, Barbès Performance Space and Maryland Institute College of Art.

Currently he is on the festival circuit with his new short film *Veneer*, starring Francesco Saviano and Michael Buscemi as well as being in development of a new feature project titled *Anathema*.

Filmography as Director:

2009 *Anathema* (feature narrative) in-development
2008 *Veneer* (short narrative)
2007 *Dandelion Man* (feature narrative)
2007 *Wise Words* - Cubworld (music video - Nokia)
2007 *This Is Life* - Cubworld (music video - Nokia)
2006 *Queen of Displays* (music video - One Ring Zero)
2005 *Liver-Colored Dew* (music video - Trevor Dunn's trio-convulsant)
2005 *Oil on Godard* (experimental)
2005 *V.O.* (short narrative)
2003 *The Sea of Ignorance* (experimental)
2003 *Consuming Capitalism* (experimental)