ESCAPE

Project

We were told to make a short sequence/film with very few shots to prove that we were able to tell a short story using all the basic camera techniques. We shot on tape and had to edit in the camera.

Challenge

The cue word of the assignment was "Escape" and after a short introduction the group gathered to brainstorm. We were six people: Rosa, Mohammed, Sakis, Ewa, Abdul and me, Niels. It took some time before we could put some ideas down on the paper and they were not good. An idea that died hard was an idea about mosquito's - Difficult because they're small and hard to focus on. It made me think of some good advices someone, once gave me. On your first production you should try to avoid the following.

1- Animals
2- Small children (short concentration spam)
3- Difficult props

The price of Democracy

We sat there watching the clock without having decided on any of the ideas when I took. My small camera and ditched the group to do some location scouting inside the house. An obvious location for a horror flick due to its size and place.

I tried to think of a somewhat exciting sequence about a person who needs to get out of the house, undetected starting from the top floor. I took some photos similar to the shots I wanted and showed it to the group together with a storyboard I'd drawn. Now, with an actual idea, we started brainstorming on the characters motivation and finally we were good to go and shoot.

1- Get the most out of what you have
2- Make a thorough storyboard
3- Think of your audience and how it's perceived

Shooting

We gave each other roles but even though I was technical support, I grabbed the camera out of impatience knowing that we had a deadline and it was all very stressful.

I still tried to introduce the team to my routine: camera, location, white balance, focus pulling, light adjustment, sound check – "you know the rest". We proceeded and stayed loyal to the storyboard. I couldn't find a more suitable room for it, but I'd like to introduce you, the reader of this, to the "Triple-P": "preserve professional pride". Meaning that you should do the best you can with what you've got instead of fooling around wasting everybody's time. It doesn't cost anything to be serious about your work and it doesn't take a red cam to make something you can be proud of. Even if it's just an assignment. Just be practical.

When editing in the camera always be aware of awkward pauses where the actors are just waiting. You should also avoid doing any calls after you're pressed "Rec", such as "Go!", "Roll Camera", "Roll Sound" or whatever. Do that before you record and make sure the action of your story doesn't require too much choreography.

Below you can see some pictures that inspired some of the actual shots that made it to the final movie.
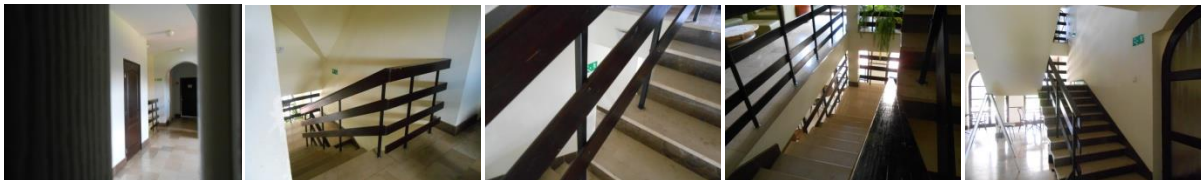
Evaluation

Continuity is important. Not only when it comes to props, clothes and a person's positions but also when it comes to the light. Often in amateur fiction productions you see the light change between shots even though the location stays the same. It's simply bad craftsmanship. At some point in the beginning you'll see Rosa turn off the light in Eva's room before Eva sneaks out. It is to prevent showing the audience that it is two different rooms. We were also aware of focus points to make our cuts as gentle and smooth as possible. That was only possible because of our loyalty towards the storyboard. You should also definitely consider the direction in which the characters are moving, when you cut from one picture to another, to avoid (Example) that a person walks from the right to the left side of the screen and out, before coming in from the left in the next take. It slows everything down. We were quite happy with the result and what was better - the audience laughed at the end.