

Unseen Deceit – A Short Film on Scam Awareness

Project Overview

“Unseen Deceit” (<https://youtu.be/JN-DDm4Ms4k>) is a short film – filmed and produced in 2023, as part of a PSB Academy filmmaking assignment, inspired by real-life experiences surrounding online job scams. Rather than focusing solely on the act of scamming itself, the film explores the emotional aftermath faced by individuals who have fallen victim to such incidents. Through a narrative centred on vulnerability, reflection and recovery, the film aims to raise awareness of scams while highlighting the often-overlooked psychological impact on victims.



Concept and Narrative Direction

The narrative follows the protagonist, Sarah, after experiencing a job scam, focusing on her internal struggle rather than the scam itself. To convey this, the story is framed through a phone call with a therapist she came across online, using the conversation as a narrative device to explore the feelings of vulnerability, confusion and self-blame. This approach was intentionally chosen to humanise the issue of scam awareness, shifting the focus from fear-based warnings to empathy and understanding.

By using a phone call rather than direct confrontation, the film reflects how individuals often seek help privately after such experiences, allowing the audience to gradually uncover the emotional weight of the incident through dialogue and pauses.



Visual Storytelling and Mood

Visually, “Unseen Deceit” adopts a restrained and realistic approach by grounding the story in familiar, everyday environments. The film was shot primarily at the protagonist, Sarah’s condominium, and in public spaces outside PSB Academy and Marina Square. These locations were intentionally chosen to reflect the contrast between her private emotional state and the public spaces she navigates daily.

Scenes filmed within the condominium emphasises intimacy and vulnerability, using natural lighting and minimal camera movement to convey isolation and emotional heaviness. In contrast, the outdoor shots introduce a sense of normalcy and routine through a chance encounter between Sarah and a close friend. In these scenes, Sarah shares the job advertisement with her friend, which appears to be legitimate and convincing, leading her friend to encourage her to pursue the opportunity. The sequence is captured through a combination of wide shots, close-ups and over-the-shoulder framing, visually reinforcing the credibility of the moment while illustrating how scams can blend seamlessly into everyday interactions without immediate suspicion.



Production Process and My Roles

Throughout the production of “Unseen Deceit”, I took on multiple roles across both the creative and technical aspects of the film. I served as the director, overseeing the narrative flow, performance direction and overall visual tone of the project. In addition, I appeared on screen as Sarah’s close friend in the outdoor scenes, contributing to the story through a natural and supportive interaction that advanced the narrative.

For the balcony phone-call scene that takes place before the scam was revealed, I appeared on screen while my teammate filmed. Although I was not filming this sequence myself, I was responsible for planning the shot composition, framing, and blocking in advance. A medium shot was deliberately chosen to capture both facial expression and surrounding environment, reinforcing the sense of normalcy and credibility before the scam became apparent. This allowed the scene to feel grounded and realistic, while subtly foreshadowing the emotional shift that follows later in the film.

I was also responsible for filming the indoor scenes at Sarah’s condominium, where tighter framing and minimal camera movement were used to convey intimacy and emotional vulnerability. Dialogue for the film was initially written by me and later refined with input from my teammate, ensuring the conversations felt natural while remaining purposeful to the narrative. This collaborative process strengthened both the realism and clarity of storytelling.



Reflection and Learning

Filmed and produced in 2023, “Unseen Deceit” marked an important stage in my development in video production and visual storytelling. Working on a narrative based on true events required careful consideration of tone, pacing, and emotional sensitivity, reinforcing the responsibilities involved when communicating social issues such as scam awareness.

This project strengthened my ability to plan and justify visual decisions within practical constraints. From selecting filming locations to determining shot types and framing, each choice was made with narrative intention rather than aesthetics alone. The contrast between public and private spaces, alongside the use of medium shots and restrained camera movement, demonstrated how composition and environment can reflect emotional states and guide audience interpretation.

Taking on multiple roles as a director, actress, and camera operator, further developed my adaptability and problem-solving skills. Writing dialogue and refining it collaboratively highlighted the importance of iteration and communication in achieving authenticity. Although the project was completed earlier in my learning journey, the skills and insights gained continue to inform how I approach video production today, particularly in narrative-driven content, campaign storytelling, and emotionally grounded visuals.