
Contradance.
a feature film by ansel tan,
britney kam, and alicia l'archevêque.



LOGLINE

As the Soviet Union collapses, so does everything she once dared to become. Alone in a field, a former rocket engineer hopelessly builds her spaceship with improvised tools. Then, an American artist stumbles into her orbit, and she must decide whether love, like flight, is worth the risk of falling.



SYNOPSIS

In post-Soviet Russia, American photojournalist Thomas arrives to report on the abandoned Buran space shuttle programme and meets Sasha, an engineer left behind by its cancellation. Their courtship unfolds in her meadow workshop, where she's secretly rebuilding the rocket from salvaged parts. What looks like scrap is closer to a psalm, a private act of defiance against a country that discarded her.

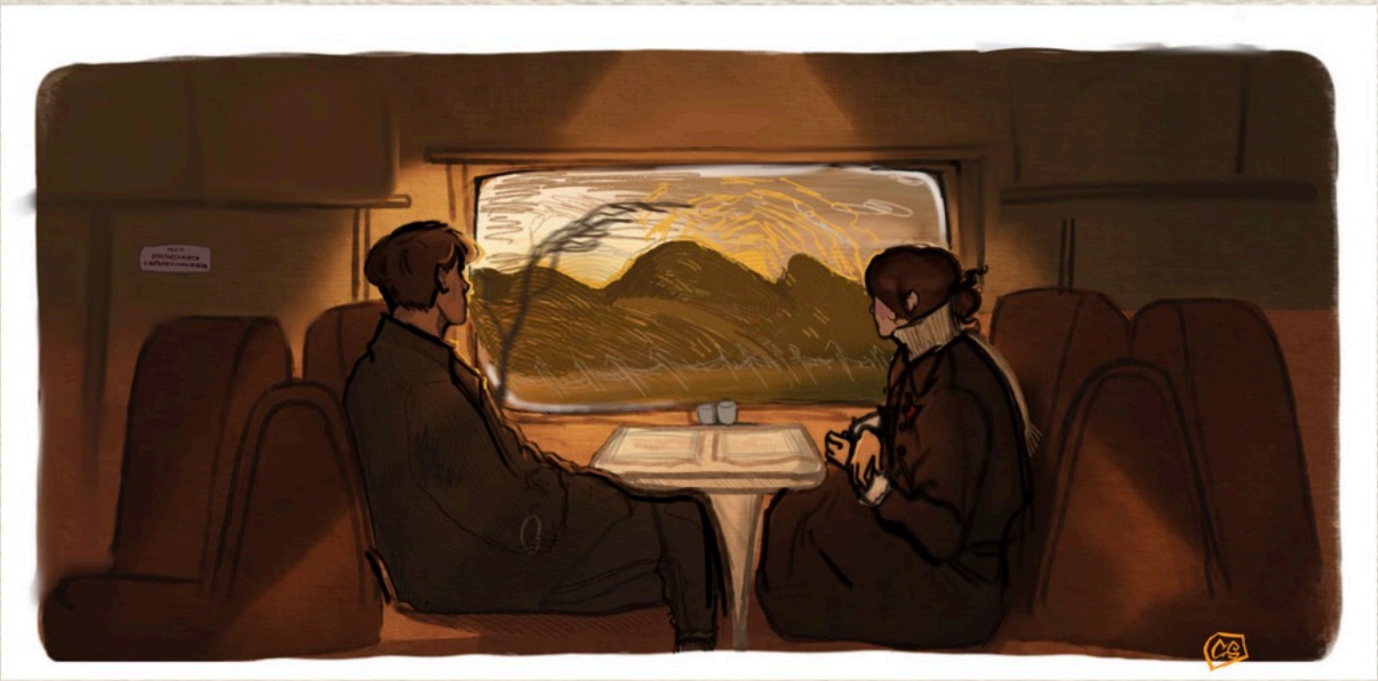
As Thomas falls for Sasha, he struggles with creative paralysis, unable to complete his own art. Sasha teaches him to wait rather than force inspiration, and he channels his devotion into a stop-motion film of felt puppets, an immutable archive of their love. Their romance deepens through shared rituals: bike rides to a wooden chapel that survives the Soviet era by periodically dismantling and rebuilding itself, a train journey through Sasha's childhood memories, a marriage proposal in the meadow.

Their shared dream carries them up into space, with Thomas reaching for the Earth as Sasha warns him not to let go. It's the purest vision of what they might be, before the tether snaps and he's left dangling, alone in the dark: a premonition neither yet understands.

Thomas's need to document Sasha's work becomes as much a desperate attempt to keep their love artificially alive, as to give her the recognition she deserves. By sending photos of her rocket to a Berlin gallery without her consent, Thomas betrays her trust, drawing Russian officials who confiscate her plans and repurpose her propulsion system into a nuclear weapon.

As war erupts, Sasha's romantic visions of escape collapse into apocalyptic fire, braiding past and faith with her invention's purpose. She burns Thomas’ dollhouse, rejects Thomas's camera, and sends him home, remaining to build again with matchsticks, dreaming not to escape but to endure.

TONE AND INSPIRATIONS



Imagine if Hayao Miyazaki directed a film about total thermonuclear war. Contradance is directed with the warmth and wordless intimacy of Studio Ghibli, combined with the spiritual patience of Andrei Tarkovsky and the tragic banality of Don DeLillo. Set on a rural Russian meadow far removed from the chaos of the fall of the Soviet empire, Sasha and Thomas build a rocket, dream lovely dreams, and paint a world that doesn't yet exist. Theirs', though, is a love story with a fuse already lit. The tragic shadow of displacement and war never quite subsides, felt in the air, always in the background, like a nagging dark-

That tension between idyll and collapse is mirrored formally. These live-action sequences are intercut with a stop-motion narrative Thomas builds within the film itself: a dollhouse and felt-puppet reconstruction of their relationship, and eventually, the couple's own shared dream, rendered by hand. The tension between what's dreamed, what's built, and what's recorded is the film's formal argument as much as its plot. By setting macrocosmic themes like war, displacement, and the ethics of documenting-as-living against the day-to-day of an authentic, sometimes mundane relationship, Contradance puts forth an inescapably human narrative: about survival and growing up in a turbulent age.

THE TEAM



Ansel Tan
Writer-Director, Director of Photography



Britney Kam
Co-Director, Producer



Alicia L'Archevêque
Co-Writer, Executive Producer



Sye Perry
Composer, Producer