



Intro

Like the best stories, these films are all about transformation. They're about how our characters and their relationships change and evolve with their homes and furniture over time, and how IKEA as a company is changing and evolving with the world around it. These films are a big, bold departure from the IKEA ads of the past. And in 2021, the best way to be bold is to be authentic.

Scripts are rarely this charming and relatable. I see myself in each of these stories, whether it's falling in love and leaving single life behind, building a family, or forging a new life and career in a foreign country. And that's what we want: for people to relate to these characters and recognise themselves in our stories. So let's be truthful. Let's capture home life in all its humanity and charm.

Empathy Machine

There are a few tried and true methods to get the audience to empathise with characters in a story.

One way is to make the characters relatable, by giving them an idiosyncratic physicality, personality, or lifestyle, that endears them to us.

Another way is to put them in some kind of jeopardy. It doesn't have to mean their car is about to fall off a cliff. Emotional jeopardy is just as powerful. Like a problem they must grapple with and resolve.

Finally, we can make them skilled. We are instinctively drawn to people who are good at something. It's human nature.

Empathy is at the heart of our films and a combination of these tools will be used in each film to ensure the audience connects with our characters, like in a television show or film.

A Fine Balance

Striking the right tone in these films is key and whilst we never want to be saccharine or melodramatic, let's make our stories optimistic, light-hearted, and fun.

What's special about both the 'brand' and 'affordability' films is that they're each anchored by a distinctive storytelling device. Our goal is to fully realise the potential of the musical element and convey the passage of time by building an authentic, relatable world around these devices.

Möbel As A Character

Furniture (or möbel as it is known in Sweden and IKEA) is at the core of these films and acts as a companion to our characters throughout their stories, identifying who they are at every stage of life from childhood to parenthood.

As such, the furniture in their homes should reflect the changes in their personality, as well as their professional and personal lives. As our characters' lifestyles shift from youthful independence to familial interdependence, so should the spaces they inhabit and the furniture that fills them.

For example, the functional sofa they might buy in their twenties is replaced with the more refined sofa they might own in their forties.

Similarly, their early, youthful homes might possess a sparseness, but gradually fill up with furniture and coalesce around a clearly defined style as they grow older and get a better sense of who they are and what they like.

Story - L1 Campaign (Brand Platform)

Filmic Approach

This is a slice-of-life musical, rather than a music video. This means that even though our characters are singing, what they are saying is motivated by their actions in the scene. To maintain this tension between musical and reality, let's ease into the singing and start with a low-level, conversational style that naturally and gradually builds to an operatic crescendo of voices.

Employing natural and reactive camera movement will bring an organic, cinematic quality to the action as if it were spontaneously unfolding in front of us. This observed, intimate

style will make audiences feel like they are part of the story and believe that what's happening is motivated by the character's actions.

Story Ideas

We already have a set of scripts that are textured, witty, and flow. Here are a few ideas to build on the existing characters, fleshing out who they are, how they operate, and their relationships with the world around them.

I've also tightened and reimagined (see 'ALT') some of the lyrics, bringing them into the present tense and injecting some action into the singing. Of course, these are ideas for us to discuss, and as we get into composing we'll want to look at lyrical placement and other areas that contribute to the musicality of the script.

1. Close on a PREGNANT WOMAN in her living room, surrounded by piles of moving boxes. The camera booms down, revealing her HUSBAND listening to her very large stomach. The husband smiles. The pregnant woman smiles back at him. It's pure marital bliss. A mobile buzzes.

When everything looks settled

ALT: When things look settled fate meddles

2. The woman nervously paces up and down the room, one hand resting on her tummy while the other holds the phone pressed to her ear. She stops, her eyes wide in disbelief. She sings.

News at sunset.

ALT: News I can't forget.

Covering the receiver and telling the news to her husband.

Not one, not two, but triplets.

He sinks into a chair.

3. A sequence of four handheld portraits, showing different families - each with kids - in their homes. A guy with two kids in a parking lot. A family in the middle of dinner. A top shot of a family lying in bed together messing around looking at the camera. A father playing with his two kids, turning them in a circle, singing to them. We move between a range of angles and shot sizes as each family sings one part of the line.

It isn't easy, it feels strange

The day when everything starts to change

ALT: New ain't easy, life feels strange
The day when everything changes

4. A HUSBAND and WIFE in the living room grudgingly making their fold-out bed while their in-laws laugh, drink, and enjoy themselves in the background.

Husband: My in-laws come to visit

Wife: No hotels, I don't believe it

As she stretches a sheet over the fold-out bed.

ALT: In-laws visit.

No hotels, I don't believe it.

No hotels, b— —t

Husband: They'll leave in a month. No guarantee

Wife: Privacy - it's a fantasy

ALT 1: Could be a month. Maybe three.

ALT 2 One more day I just might flee.

Wife: Privacy is a fantasy.

5. We move between different parts of a home. A FAMILY stood around a BBQ in the garden. A group of KIDS sit on the floor playing while their TEENAGE siblings chat on the couches. A picture-perfect family taking a perfect picture on their porch.

It isn't easy, it feels strange.

The day when everything starts to change.

ALT: New ain't easy, life feels strange.

The day when everything starts to change.

6. A NEWS ANCHOR on a television in the living room.

News Anchor: The world has locked down.

ALT: The world is locked down.

7. Reverse shot of a FAMILY (HUSBAND, WIFE, and 10-year-old DAUGHTER) watching the television.

Husband: Everything had to shut down.

Wife: Work. School.

Husband: So I'll take the table.

Wife (to Daughter): And you take the stool.

8. POV of a CHILD looking at their TEACHER on a computer monitor as she flips over a series of cards with different math symbols prompting the child to write equations. The MOTHER of the CHILD tries to follow along but can't keep up.

It isn't easy, it feels strange.

The day when everything starts to change.

ALT: New ain't easy, life feels strange.

The day when everything changes.

9. In a kitchen, an ELDERLY INDIAN MAN prepares curry in a hot cauldron. His SON, next to him, sings to the camera as he walks into the space.

SON: The first girl left me at the altar.

The second one even faster.

I sold my things and left my pad.

And am moving back in with mum and dad.

His father spoons some curry into his mouth.

The son with his parents: It isn't easy, it feels strange.

The day when everything starts to change.

ALT: New ain't easy, life feels strange.

The day when everything changes.

10. We revisit the characters and families that we have seen. The relieved husband and wife folding up their bed. The little girl now in the classroom with her teacher. The son sitting on the sofa between his two parents. All of them singing in unison, the music builds now.

It isn't what I expected.

My plans have been rejected.

But I'll find a way through.

Like I always do.

On 'do' the melody reaches a crescendo.

11. Dawn. We end with the couple from the beginning cradling their newborn baby in their living room. It's a quiet family moment. Dad lulls the baby as mom looks on, a portrait of blissful domestic harmony. A new day...

Story - L2 Campaign - Affordability

Filmic Approach

Like a piece of filmed theatre, the story will be told from a perspective that allows us to focus on the changes in our characters and the environment around them. The camera will remain static, even as the environment, furniture, wardrobe, and staging will change with each shot.

The twist is that the camera will be handheld to give an organic, observed quality and kinetic energy. To make the cut work well, we'll have enough change in the frame. It's technically a jump cut, but because of the compositions, blocking, and staging, it won't feel abrupt.

By using the visual changes in the characters and their surrounding environments to convey the evolution of their lives, we will elevate this deceptively simple shooting style and create a dynamism that engages our viewers' eyes as well as their ears.

Each of these films will rely solely on diegetic and ambient sound. Using real sound will immerse us deeply in the worlds of our characters. The clinging and rustling of a shirt, the soft creak of footsteps, or the ambient sound of the exterior seeping in. It will be a rich aural tapestry, hard cutting from one scene to the next. We will still hear music in some scenes - like the dorm room party or young woman doing yoga. It will all come from within the scene. Cutting from a loud scene like the college party to a quiet scene like listening to a baby in mum's tummy, will be a powerful contrast and draw us even deeper into the world.

Video 1: "I Will Be Single Forever."

Theni is a graphic designer born into a wealthy middle-class Indian family with a strong sense of tradition. That clash of South Asian tradition and access to modern western culture has shaped her character and is inherent in her eclectic, rebellious personality.

1. Day. We open on a wide low quarter angle, slightly raised off the floor. Theni - dressed in a tracksuit, with short, shaggy hair - eats a tub of frozen yoghurt in the corner of her sparsely furnished living room. The pitter-patter of raindrops as they pelt the windows. She looks into the camera, speaking loudly from a distance:

I

2. Night. We cut to a close-up of Theni - funkier, with her hair pulled back - who has turned around, reorienting the room around her. She is playing a video game and is really into it. She's so into her game that she doesn't even look to camera.

Will

3. It's early morning and Theni - fresh-faced, with longer hair - is now meditating on the floor of her living room, surrounded by newer, fancier furniture. She is the epitome of zen as she opens her eyes and looks over at us, stating:

Stay

4. Theni is sitting on a sofa next to a GUY as they watch a movie together late at night. The room is rearranged. She is wearing lipstick, her hair is down, and she looks great. They catch each other's eyes and the guy feels like he should say something, holding up popcorn and saying "great popcorn". He grimaces, instantly regretting this lame line, while Theni turns to the camera and smiles:

Single

5. It's morning and we're close up on Theni - her hair is curled and her make-up is done. We hear a commotion around her and a PHOTOGRAPHER off-screen saying "you're doing great." Theni steps back revealing her wedding dress and the guy from the previous scene in a three-piece suit and corsage sitting next to her on the sofa. Her dog is sitting in the middle of them. A MAKE-UP ARTIST sprays finishing touches on Theni then moves out of the way. They turn to one other, eyes locked and both say:

Forever

We see the room with all the price tags.

SUPER AND VO: AFFORDABLE FURNITURE FOR WHEN YOUR LIFE PLANS CHANGE.

SUPER: MAKE YOUR HOME A SPACE THAT CHANGES WITH YOU.

IKEA logo.

Video 2: "I Will Never Have Kids"

Amir works in property. Insular and somewhat bookish, he knows what he likes and likes what he knows. A few years ago, Amir stepped out of his comfort zone and signed up for a dating app which is where he met his wife and the mother of his child.

Note: I think it would be cool to start Amir a bit younger - as a kid. Bring it full circle.

1. We open on a profile shot of Amir - baby-faced, with a bowl cut - stood in front of the mirror brushing his teeth while his brother sits on the toilet doing the same. Amir turns to the camera, toothpaste foaming around his mouth, and says:

I

2. We remain at a kid's level (and do so throughout) as a teenage Amir - with greasy hair and skin - sits on the floor of his bedroom surrounded by FRIENDS, playing Nintendo Wii. Amir momentarily breaks his focus and looks up at the camera, saying:

Will

3. Now we're in a dorm room adorned with LED lights as an eighteen-year-old Amir - wearing a band t-shirt and sporting some stubble - dances with his classmates to loud, head-banging music. Eyes glazed, hands raised, Amir is lost in the song's climax as he shouts:

Never

4. Amir - now with a beard and glasses - is in his early 30's as he presses his ear up against the pregnant belly of his wife while she lies supine on the bed. The loud music has been replaced with dead silence as he looks into the camera with excited anticipation and whispers:

Have

5. It's dawn as Amir - with tired eyes and the first signs of greys coming through - stands over a changing table next to a crib in the distance, removing his BABY's diaper. Both of them are illuminated by tea lights scattered about the room. He wraps up the diaper in a disposable bag then tosses it towards the bin...but misses, throwing his head back. ANOTHER KID, the same age as Amir was in the first shot, runs into the room and kisses him for no reason at all. He sighs as he looks to the camera and says:

Kids

We see the room with all the price tags.

SUPER AND VO: AFFORDABLE FURNITURE FOR WHEN YOUR LIFE PLANS CHANGE.

SUPER: MAKE YOUR HOME A SPACE THAT CHANGES WITH YOU.

IKEA logo.

Video 3: “Only One Year In Dubai”

Kieran is a British ex-pat who went to Dubai for a year but never left. He works in fintech, but over the last few years he has left his flashy, playboy lifestyle behind, replacing nights out at the club with nights in with his wife and three children.

1. The film opens with Kieran sweating in a tiny bachelor's apartment. We see him in a centred, straight-angle frame. He is microwaving instant noodles.

He looks at the camera, saying:

I'M

2. Kieran opens his fridge which is full of food. He looks at the camera and says:

IN DUBAI

Fridge POV.

(I love this kind of shot, and just used it in my last Groupama ad, but it doesn't allow us to see much of the setting, here's another idea to discuss).

ALT: Kieran stands inside an empty kitchen condo. We see the Dubai cityscape in the background.

3. Kieran cooking in his kitchen which is now filled with smoke. More food, more people to cook for.

His wife enters the frame and smells the aroma.

He looks at the camera and says:

FOR

We hear the whirr of a blender.

4. Kieran, holding a baby in one hand, pours the baby formula into a cup.

He looks at the camera and says:

ONLY

5. Kieran having dinner with his wife and three kids. He is 20 years older now. His hair recedes in the front and he's got a more relaxed, dad-like demeanour. We see the scene from the opposite end of a dining table. It's still that same symmetrical framing from the opening, but the space is larger. The furniture is also more family-oriented.

Kieran looks at the camera and says:

ONE YEAR

He digs into his meal and resumes the conversation with his family

We see the kitchen with all the price tags.

SUPER AND VO: AFFORDABLE FURNITURE FOR WHEN YOUR LIFE PLANS CHANGE.

SUPER: MAKE YOUR HOME A SPACE THAT CHANGES WITH YOU.

(IKEA logo)

Passage of Time

We're using the location, art direction, hair and make-up, and wardrobe to show the passage of time. This should be done in a tasteful, understated manner consistent with the style of the films.

We could also create a visual through-line in each film by selecting a thematic colour in the wardrobe then carrying this into every scene.

And let's not forget the subtle details such as a change in hairstyle, the greying of hair, and the appearance of glasses. Tiny details in the props - like different styles of mobile phones or other technology - can also telegraph a different era.

Casting

It's great we have so much variety in our casting, allowing us to reflect our audience with a racially and culturally diverse cast made up of Emiratis, Indians, Filipinos, Western ex-pats, and Arab ex-pats, some single and some in mixed couples.

To get those subtle, nuanced performances we need great actors. But rather than get actors to fake authentic relationships, we should try to cast real families, couples, and

friends as their existing dynamics and idiosyncratic interactions will lead to unplanned, intuitive moments that will make our characters and their exchanges feel more original.

In some cases, such as Amir's character, we will need multiple actors to play the character at different stages in his life, so we must find similar physical traits in each of the actors playing that role.

Sound and Music

I have been a musician for 30 years and love to take a hands-on approach to the creation of music. The musical execution in the brand film will come down to two things: the musicality of the song and the arrangement. I like the idea of music that has a stripped-back feeling and a suggestive tone, letting the playful lyrics speak for themselves in a similar way to Tim Minchin's 'I Can't Save You'. This can be elevated with real sound and foley, establishing a sense of place in each of the different scenes.

When it comes to the singing, I don't think our actors need to be pitch-perfect. So long as it's relatively in-key, I think we should embrace the imperfection and humanity it brings to their performances.

In all of the films, we will use location-specific sound design and foley, layering reality into the scenes to give them a lifelike texture that will trigger an emotional response from the audience as they watch our characters reach these milestones in their lives.

I just love these scripts. They're a brilliant way to showcase IKEA products in an authentic, human way. They're charming, without being laugh-out-loud funny. There has never been a better time to mix humanity and levity. To get a window into the authentic world of people's lives.

From my living room sofa to my dining room chair, to the desk on which I'm writing this right now, IKEA furniture is ubiquitous in every household including mine. The truth is, IKEA furniture has not just been part of our homes for decades, it's been part of our lives. As we all know, a single piece of IKEA furniture has the power to define or transform our home, so let's use these films to transform IKEA and its brand for years to come.

These are my initial thoughts. I look forward to getting in the trenches and digging deeper with you.

Speak soon!