Looking at Movies - Chapter 6 - Cinematography

Cinematography is basically about the principals of lighting and camerawork. We don’t notice it while watching a movie, but the makers thought of a lot of aspects. The lines the people stand in are not a coincidence. It’s predetermined way before.

Camerawork
- Basic principles of the use of film form in cinematography (writing with light)
- Some principles of shot composition / use of camera-equipment (lenses) and lighting for cinematographic purposes

Objectives:
- specific vocabulary to describe important visual elements of shots
- analyze the cinematographic elements used in scenes in relation to dramatic, narrative, development

Cinematographic devices:
- focus your attention to specific elements
- guide your anticipation (things to come, fear/suspense - - cf Aristotle on storytelling in Hiltunen)
- guide your emotions/perception of drama by using

Cinematographic Language: the three planes

- Frame Plane: framing - closer or wider
- Geographical Plane: camera closer to the line of action or actor moving away/turning away from line of action (NOT in book)
- Depth Plane: low-angle, high angle

Examples of all three planes, starting with depth plane and it’s angles:

Camera Angles:
The term camera angle means slightly different things to different people but it always refers to the way a shot is composed.

**Eye-Level**
This is the most common view, being the real-world angle that we are all used to. It shows subjects as we would expect to see them in real life. It is a fairly neutral shot.

**High Angle**
A high angle shows the subject from above, i.e. the camera is angled down towards the subject. This has the effect of diminishing the subject, making them appear less powerful, less significant or even submissive.

**Low Angle**
This shows the subject from below, giving them the impression of being more powerful or dominant.
The scene is shown from directly above. This is a completely different and somewhat unnatural point of view which can be used for dramatic effect or for showing a different spatial perspective.

→ In drama it can be used to show the positions and motions of different characters and objects, enabling the viewer to see things the characters can't.
- The bird’s-eye view is also very useful in sports, documentaries, etc.

**Slanted**

Also known as a dutch tilt, this is where the camera is purposely tilted to one side so the horizon is on an angle. This creates an interesting and dramatic effect. Famous examples include Carol Reed’s The Third Man, Orson Welles' Citizen Kane and the Batman series.

- Dutch tilts are also popular in MTV-style video production, where unusual angles and lots of camera movement play a big part.

**Frame plane**, the closer and wider shots:

- **EWS (Extreme Wide Shot)**
  The view is so far from the subject that he isn't even visible. Often used as an establishing shot.

- **VWS (Very Wide Shot)**
  The subject is visible (barely), but the emphasis is still on placing him in his environment.

- **WS (Wide Shot)**
  The subject takes up the full frame, or at least as much as comfortably possible. AKA: long shot, full shot.

- **MS (Mid Shot)**
  Shows some part of the subject in more detail while still giving an impression of the whole subject.

- **MCU (Medium Close Up)**
  Half way between a MS and a CU.

- **CU (Close Up)**
  A shot of the main subject.

- **ECU (Extreme Close Up)**
  The ECU gets right in and shows extreme detail.
  Variation: Cheker

- **Cut-In**
  Shows some (other) part of the subject in detail.

- **CA (Cutaway)**
  A shot of something other than the subject.

- **Two-Shot**
  A shot of two people, framed similarly to a mid shot.

- **OSS (Over-the-Shoulder Shot)**
  Looking from behind a person at the subject.

- **Noddy Shot**
  Usually refers to a shot of the interviewer listening and reacting to the subject.
**Geographical plane** is about the line of camera and line of action. Is somebody looking towards the camera or not? Where is the camera located? For example: Over the shoulder shot. These lines will tell you more about the characters, because it shows how the person feels.

You see it, when you get it.
Chapter 6 - Cinematography

Book Summary

The shot is the basic unit of film language. Whenever you write or talk about a film in an academic setting, you will be expected to describe individual shots accurately and thoroughly. Chapter 6’s primary purpose is to give you the vocabulary necessary to do so. The cinematographic aspects of a shot that you will be expected to describe in almost any analysis are: its color qualities (remember that black and white are colors), the nature and source of its lighting, the implied proximity of the objects and people photographed in the shot, the angle and height of the shot, the nature of camera movement, if any, the point of view (POV) of the shot, and the speed and length of the shot. In order to have the necessary jargon at your disposal, you will need to memorize the terms used to describe these various aspects of the shot.

Chapter 6 also describes a central compositional principle in cinematography: the so-called rule of thirds. The material on this subject and the related discussion of deep-space composition is intended to help you see the compositional space more clearly so that you can recognize balance or imbalance in the composition of any shot. Unlike most of the rest of the chapter, this discussion is less about memorization than it is about being visually aware and seeing details accurately.

Light in cinematography: 2 types of sources
- natural = daylight
- artificial = instruments. The two most basic instruments are focusable spotlights and floodlights. They produce hard (mirrorlike) and soft (diffuse) light.

Another piece of lighting equipment is the reflector board. This helps to increase the quality of a movie.

Direction is also important:

Key light: Also known as main light or source light. The brightest light falling on a subject.
Fill light: Lighting, positioned at the opposite side of the camera from the key light, that can fill in the shadows created by the brighter key light. Fill light may also come from a reflector board.
Lighting ratio: The relationship and balance between illumination and shadow.
Low-key lighting: Lighting that creates strong contrasts; sharp, dark shadows; and an overall gloomy atmosphere.
High-key lighting: Lighting that produces an image with very little contrast between darks and lights. Its even, flat illumination expresses virtually no opinions about the subject being photographed.

Backlight: Lighting, usually positioned behind and in line with the subject and the camera, used to create highlights on the subject as a means of separating it from the background and increasing its appearance of three-dimensionality.

Style
An overall style of a film is determined by its production values, or the amount and quality of human and physical resources devoted to the image.

Lenses
Lens = The piece of transparent material in a camera that focuses the image on the film being exposed.
 aperture: Also known as gate. The camera opening that defines the area of each frame of film exposed.
 iris: 1. A circular cutout made with a mask that creates a frame within a frame.
 2. An adjustable diaphragm that limits the amount of light passing through the lens of a camera.
 focal length: The distance between the optical center of the lens and the film plane
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of lens</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short focal length lens (wide angle lens)</td>
<td>• Produces wide angle views. • Makes subjects appear farther apart than they actually are. • Through its nearly complete depth of field, renders almost all objects in the frame in focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long focal length lens (telephoto lens)</td>
<td>• Produces deep-angle views. • Brings distant objects close. • Flattens space and depth. • Makes subjects look closer together than they actually are. • Narrow depth of field leaves most of the background and the foreground of the in-focus objects dramatically out of focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle focal length lens (normal lens)</td>
<td>• Produces images that correspond to our day-to-day experience of depth and perspective. • Keeps all subjects in a normal sense of focus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoom lens (variable-focal-length lens)</td>
<td>• Produces images that simulate the effect of movement of the camera toward or away from the subject. • Rather than actually moving through space, merely magnifies the image. • Can make a shot seem artificial to an audience.</td>
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Prime lenses: A lens that has a fixed focal length. Only a zoom lens has another category.
Depth of field: the distance in front of a camera and its lens in which objects are in apparent sharp focus.
Rack focus: a change of the point of focus from one subject to another.

**Framing of the shot**
Framing is the process by which the cinematographer determines what will appear within the borders of the image during a shot.
Aspect ratio: The relationship between the frame’s two dimensions: the width of the image related to its height.

Iris-out/Iris-in: Optical wipe effect in which the wipe line is a circle; named after the Iris of a camera.

Implied proximity to the camera
These are all the shots I showed in the beginning of the summary.
What’s important is to remember the term: **Proximity**.
Depth
One of the biggest challenges for cinematographers is how to create depth in the two dimensional movie screen.
Blimp: A soundproofed enclosure somewhat larger than a camera, in which the camera may be mounted to prevent its sounds from reaching the microphone.
Deep-space composition: A total visual composition that occupies all three planes of the frame, thus creating an illusion of depth, and that is really reproduced on the screen by Deep-focus cinematography: Using the short-focal-length lens to capture deep-space composition and its illusion of depth.

Rule of thirds: A principle of composition that enables filmmakers to maximize the potential of the image, balance its elements, and create the illusion of depth. A grid pattern, when superimposed on the image, divides the image into horizontal thirds representing the foreground, middle ground and background planes and into vertical thirds that break up those planes into additional elements.

Camera angle and height
Discussed at top
Scale: is the size and placement of a particular object or a part of a scene in relation to the rest.

Camera movement (see image)

Crane shot: is made from a camera mounted on an elevating arm that, in turn, is mounted on a vehicle capable of moving by its own power.
Steadicam: a camera which is attached to the operator’s body, that steadies the camera. smoothest moving camera

Framing and point of view
Omniscient = camera has complete perception of what the cinematographer chooses to hear and see. (mostly from high angle)
Single = a shot made with the camera close to the line of sight of one character, showing what that person would be seeing of the action.
Group = You see what a group of characters would see, but at the groups level, not from the much higher omniscient point of view.
**Speed and length of the shot**

Slow motion = Photography that takes decelerates action by photographing it at a filming rate greater than the normal 24 frames per second so that, in cinematic time, it takes place at a slower rate than the real action took place before the camera.

Fast motion = Idem, but it at a filming rate less than the normal 24 frames per second. Makes it faster.

Long take = Also known as sequence shot. A shot that can last anywhere from one minute to ten minutes (between 1930 and 1960: 8-11 seconds. Now: 6-7 seconds)

Special effects = a term reserved for technology that creates images that would be too dangerous, too expensive or in some cases simply impossible to achieve with traditional cinematographic materials that we’ve already discussed.

In-camera effects: created in the production camera on the original negative. Examples of in camera effects include montage and split screen.

Mechanical effects: a special effect created by an object or event mechanically on the set and in front of the camera.

Laboratory effects: A special effect that is created in the laboratory through processing and printing, Computer-generated imagery (CGI)