

A. Camera Techniques : Distance and Angle

1. Long Shot: shows all or most of a fairly large subject and usually much of the surroundings. The camera is at long distance from the subject emphasizing the background. Some documentaries with social themes favor keeping people in the longer shots, keeping people in the longer shots, keeping social circumstances rather than the individual as the focus of attention.
2. Establishing shot: opening shot or sequence, frequently an exterior 'general view'. Used to set the scene.
3. Medium shots: the subject or actor and its setting occupy roughly equal areas in the frame. There is space for hand gestures to be seen.
4. Close-up: A picture which shows a fairly small part of the scene, such as a character's face, in great detail so that it fills up the screen. It abstracts the subject from a context. Close-ups focus attention on a person's feelings or reactions, and are sometimes used in interviews to show people in a state of emotional excitement, grief or joy.
5. Angle of shot: the direction and height from which the camera takes the scene.
6. Viewpoint: The apparent distance and angle from which the camera views and records the subject.
7. Selective Focus: Rendering only part of the action field in sharp focus through the use of a shallow depth of field.
8. Wide-angle shot: a shot of a broad field of action taken with a wide-angle lens.
9. Tilted shots: When the camera is tilted on its axis so that normally vertical lines appear slanted to the left or right, ordinary expectations are frustrated. Such shots are often used in mystery and suspense films to create a sense of unease in the viewer.

B. Camera Techniques: Movement

1. Zoom: the camera does not move; **zooming in** - the lens is focused down from a long-shot to a close-up whilst the picture is still being shown. The subject is magnified, and attention is concentrated on details previously invisible as the shot tightens. It may be used to surprise the viewer; **zooming out** – reveals more of the scene as the shot widens. Zooming in rapidly brings not only the subject but also the background hurtling towards the viewer, which can be disconcerting. Zooming in and then out creates an ugly ‘yo-yo’ effect.
2. Tilt: a vertical (up and down) movement of the camera.
3. Crab: an horizontal (right to left) movement of the camera.
4. Tracking (dollying): Involves the camera itself being moved smoothly towards or away from the subject (contrast with zooming). Tracking in draws the viewer into a closer, more intense relationship with the subject; moving away tends to create emotional distance. Tracking back tends to divert attention to the edges of the screen. The speed of tracking may affect the viewer’s mood. Rapid tracking is exciting; tracking back relaxes interest.
5. Hand-held camera: it can produce a jerky, bouncy, unsteady image which may create a sense of immediacy or chaos. Its use is a form of subjective treatment.

C. Editing Techniques

1. Cut: sudden change of shot from one viewpoint or location to another. Cutting may change the scene, compress time, vary the point of view, or build up an image or idea. There is always a reason for a cut, and you should ask yourself what the reason is. Less abrupt transitions are achieved with the fade, dissolve, and wipe.
2. Split screen: division of the screen into parts, which can show the viewer several images at the same time. This can convey the excitement and frenzy of certain activities, but it can also overload the viewer.

D. Manipulating Time

1. Screen time: the time experienced or felt by a character in a film represented by events within a film.
2. Compressed time: compression of time between sequences or scenes, and within scenes.
3. Long take: a single shot which lasts for a relatively lengthy period of time. The long take has an 'authentic' feel since it is not inherently dramatic.
4. Simultaneous time: events in different places can be presented as occurring in the same moment.
5. Slow motion: used to make a fast action visible, or to make a familiar action strange, or to emphasize a dramatic moment.
6. Accelerated motion: used to make a slow action visible, or to make a familiar action funny, or to increase the thrill of speed. Others: replays, freeze-frames, flashbacks, flashforwards.

E. Use of Sound: music, sound effects, silence.

F. Lighting: soft, harsh, backlighting (halo effect).

G. Graphics: maps, graphs, news, text, animation

H. Narrative Style:

1. Subjective treatment: when the viewer is treated as a participant. We may be shown not only what a character sees, but how he or she sees.
2. Objective treatment: treating the viewer as an observer.

I. Formats and other Features

1. Shot: a single run of the camera or the piece of film resulting from such a run.
2. Scene: a dramatic unit composed of a single or several shots. A scene usually takes place in the same time and space and with the same characters.
3. Sequence: several scenes, all linked together

Adapted from 'The Grammar of Television and Film'.
<http://users.aber.ac.uk/dgc/gramty.html>

Central Station

Blurbs of interview with the director found at
<http://www.sonypictures.com/classics/centralstation/frames.html>

“There were several themes I wanted to explore, but the main thing was the desire that people have to communicate –to express their emotions and feelings—and sometimes their inability to do this. Dora, the character Fernanda Montenegro plays, has lost the capacity to communicate with everyone, including herself. She has lost her feelings and she cannot respond to any desire anymore. She leads such a cynical life, self-contained life that she is incapable of sharing with others—and that includes sharing possibilities that life can bring you”.

“I think the question of the search is also really important. We’re talking about the woman who searches for her lost feelings and a boy who searches for his father [...] what the two of them discover at the end of the film, is not only the family but the importance of companionship, friendship and understanding. In a way, these values [companionship, friendship and understanding] are not really appreciated in today’s very competitive society, where efficiency is everything. These questions of solidarity or friendship or everything that’s important in the film are not rated in the Stock Exchange. The film talks about things that are not perceived as being important but are extremely important for our survival”.

About the boy actor, Vinicius de Oliveira

“We interviewed and tested 1500 kids from all over the country. And as we were getting closer to principal photography, I was really not satisfied that we had found the right person. And one day I went to the small airport that lies in the center of Rio de Janeiro and the shoeshine boy at the airport came up to me. Because it was raining and he didn't have any clients at that moment, he asked me to help him buy a sandwich. He told me that once I returned from the city of Sao Paulo that afternoon, he would pay me back”.

“I liked not only his face and the dignity of his look, but I also liked his approach and I thought that he definitely had something special, although I could not tell you rationally what it was. I asked him whether he would like to do a test for a film and the answer was, "I've never seen a film before. I've never been to a movie theatre." Then I told him that that was not really important, it was just like television, but it was a much more dignified experience than television. He said, "Okay I'll do it, but can I bring my other friends? They are about the same age as I am." I told him, "Yes you can bring them, but you might lose the role because we're just looking for one kid." He said, "It's not important. I'd like to bring them anyway so everyone can have a chance." That made me like him even more, because somehow he had the quality we needed not only for the role but also for handling the filming. You need total concentration and discipline for a great number of weeks”.

“This boy somehow had it all within himself. And when we rehearsed the script before filming we learned how talented he was. He was nine and a half at that time and we all learned something from him, because this was a street kid that had the knowledge of what the street means and the difficulties of fighting for survival. But he had not lost his innocence in going through that phase. And therefore, he was very knowledgeable and very wise and yet still very innocent about everything. The small crew that put this film together realized that this kid was bringing something vital to the film. We all learned to respect him and he became friends with all of us. It was really an unforgettable experience”.

Source:

<http://www.sonypictures.com/classics/centralstation/frames.html>

Que Viva México!

Director: Sergei Eisenstein

Producer: Upton Sinclair

Mexico, 1931

Conceived as a gigantic tableau of Mexican life, the film is a portrayal of the dramatic interaction between the ancient Mayan civilizations, the Spanish conquistadors and the modernizing mythology of the Mexican Revolution.

In his images, Eisenstein explores the simultaneity of past and present. There are pastoral scenes of peace under the shadows of the ancient pyramids; enactments of the Easter sacrifice; the celebration of death in the festivities of the Day of the Dead, and great moments of irony juxtaposed with the hunger for life in scenes of an uprising on an hacienda in Central Mexico. Eisenstein's filmic language combines the monumental depiction of Mexican life with the power of historical film drama.

The film consists of six interdependent episodes. Their relationship is not only a narrative one, but it is based on a poetic association of ideas and visual concepts that create an epic montage. Episodes:

1. Prologue- inspired in the mural of Mexican painter **David Alfaro Siqueiros**.
2. Conquest – religious syncretism
3. Sandunga – Story of Mexican Indian life
4. Fiesta- inspired in the work of Spanish painter **Francisco de Goya**
5. Magey – the hacienda.
6. Soldadera- based on the fresco paintings by **José Clemente Orozco**. Scenes of the Mexican Revolution.
7. Epilogue- urban life/old traditions. The celebration of the Day of the Dead. Inspired in the popular prints of the folk artist **Guadalupe Posada**.

Source: http://www.quevivamexico.com/site_home.htm

Pictures retrieved from: <http://www.quevivamexico.com/gallery.html#>