

SLOW MOTION, FAST MOTION, MOTION MIXER

What does it look like?

Changing the camera's filming speed can create surrealistic effects. By filming at more than 24 frames per second, *Slow Motion* is achieved. *Slow Motion* extends the length of a shot, adding intensity to a scene. By playing the action out slowly, the audience has more time to savor what is happening.

Fast Motion is just the opposite. By filming at less than 24 frames per second, the images onscreen speed up. This is often used for comic effect, or to "fast forward" through a scene. Some directors will change the speed of the camera over time. This results in a scene that alternates between *Slow Motion*, regular motion, and *Fast Motion* for an added effect. I call this the *Motion Mixer*.

Where can I see it?

Many action movies by directors such as Sam Peckinpah, John Woo, and Luc Besson add *Slow Motion* shots to action sequences in order to extend their dramatic impact. John Woo uses *Slow Motion* in *A Better Tomorrow*, *The Killer*, and *Face/Off*. In *El Mariachi*, *Fast Motion* is used when a solo mariachi plays his keyboard.

In Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*, the *Motion Mixer* is used. Both *Fast Motion* and *Slow Motion* appear in *The Color of Money*, as the characters play pool. In *The Untouchables*, *Slow Motion* intensifies a gunfight between Elliot and the gangsters as a baby's stroller spins out of control down the stairs. At the end of *Bonnie and Clyde*, the deaths of the two main characters are filmed partially in *Slow Motion*.

SPLIT FOCUS

What does it look like?

Like our eyes, camera lenses have the ability to focus only on a certain field of objects. We experience this when we try to look at something close. If our eyes do not adjust, the image of the closest object will be blurry. The camera can eliminate this blurriness by pulling focus, causing the foreground objects to gain sharpness and the background objects to become blurred.

Split Focus relies on a device called a split-field diopter. A diopter splits the focus on each side of the lens. This allows one side of the lens to be focused on something far in the background, while the other side is focused on something up close.

Where can I see it?

The Fury gives us a close-up of a young woman in bed and a nurse watching in the background. In Raising Cain, *Split Focus* shows a detective in the foreground while Cain sits in the background answering questions. Brian De Palma uses this technique in many of his films.



Split Focus

CHROMA KEYING

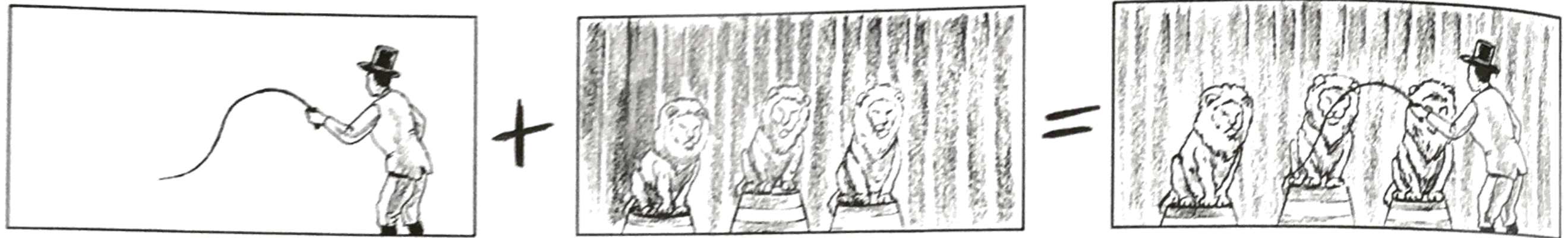
What does it look like?

Chroma Keying easily replaces a section of a scene with another image. This technique may be used to show a character in a dangerous or impossible situation without the actor ever being there.

An actor is filmed against a colored wall that is usually completely green or completely blue. Because the wall is a single color, a computer can remove the background by removing that color. The computer can then paste the actor onto a new background. This technique may also be used to replace objects within a scene. In post-production, patches of greenscreen in a scene can be used as areas that need to be replaced.

Where can I see it?

In Superman, the scenes of Superman flying were shot against a greenscreen and then composited onto a film image of the sky moving by.



Chroma Keying

COLOR SEEP

What does it look like?

Color Seep is a technique in which an image's saturation is changed over time. The saturation of an image determines how much color it has. An oversaturated image will look unnaturally bright and washed out. An image with the saturation removed becomes black and white. This process either gradually removes the saturation from a color image, or gradually adds saturation to a black and white image, ending up in color.

Where can I see it?

Watch Platoon. After the final battle, the camera pans over a black and white landscape and gradually fades into color. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid starts out in sepia-toned black and white. After the introduction, the image fades into color. Then at the end of the movie, the image loses its saturation once again.

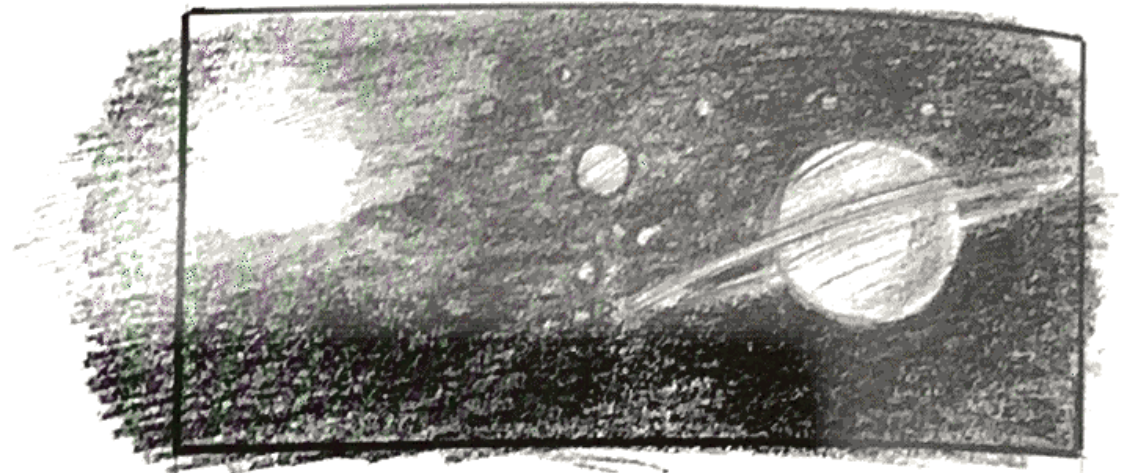
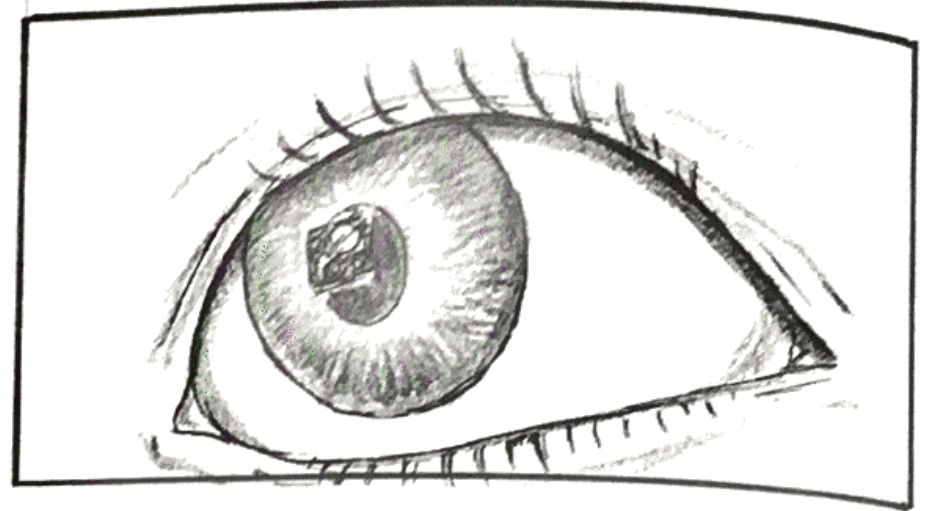
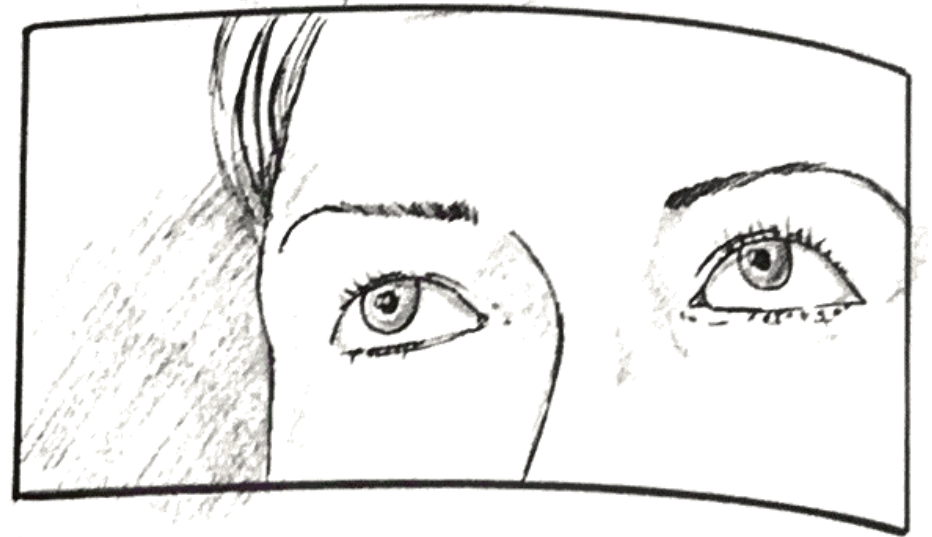
JOURNEY THROUGH EYE

What does it look like?

Journey Through Eye transitions from the real world into a character's inner thoughts. The camera moves toward an extreme close-up of a character's eye and then dissolves to a scene that represents that character's subconscious. The technique can be reversed—to transition from a character's subconscious to conscious reality.

Where can I see it?

In *Contact*, the camera pulls through the universe and journeys through Ellie's eyes. In *Highlander*, the camera pulls through the eye of Connor MacLeod, transitioning from his past into the present.



Journey Through Eye

REAR PROJECTION

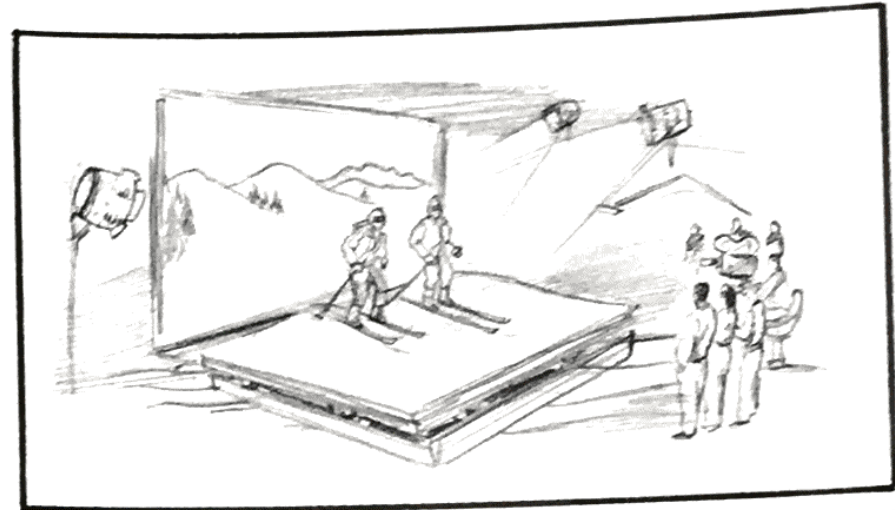
What does it look like?

Rear Projection is the process of projecting a film image onto a screen behind the actors. If done correctly, the audience sees both the scene in progress and the projected images blended together seamlessly. The effect can be very surreal. *Rear Projection* gives the impression that a separate universe is happening alongside the real universe, both in the same scene.

Before audiences became as sophisticated as they are today, actors in older movies often sat in a model car and pretended to drive. Behind them, a *Rear Projection* showed images of streets and cars moving by. Because this looks fake to our modern eyes, *Rear Projection* is seldom used anymore for traveling shots, and is most often used as a special effect.

Where can I see it?

Rear Projection is used several times in *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* to give us the feeling of old movies.



Rear Projection

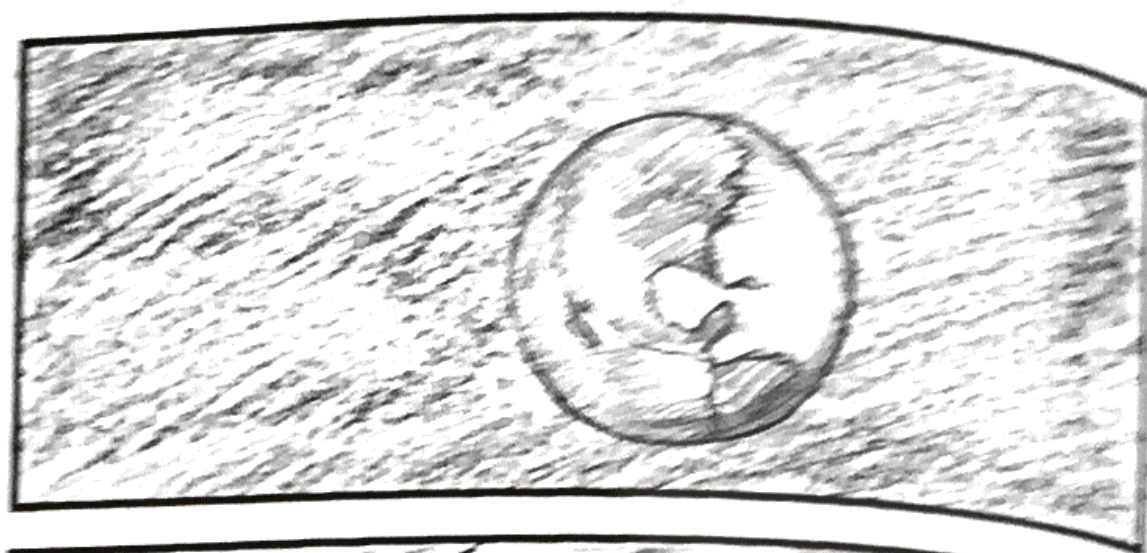
GLOBAL ZOOM

What does it look like?

A *Global Zoom* begins with an establishing shot of an entire planet. The camera then zooms, via a digital effect, toward the planet until it finally reaches the surface. This technique, used in reverse, adds finality to a scene or to the entire film.

Where can I see it?

The 'Burbs uses this technique and its reversal to begin and end the film.



Global Zoom

SLICE OF LIFE

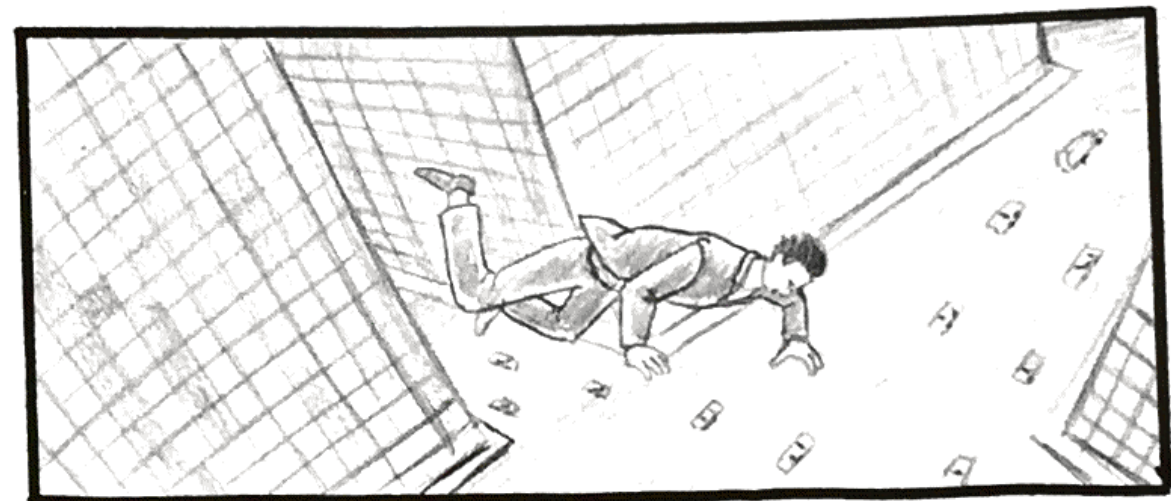
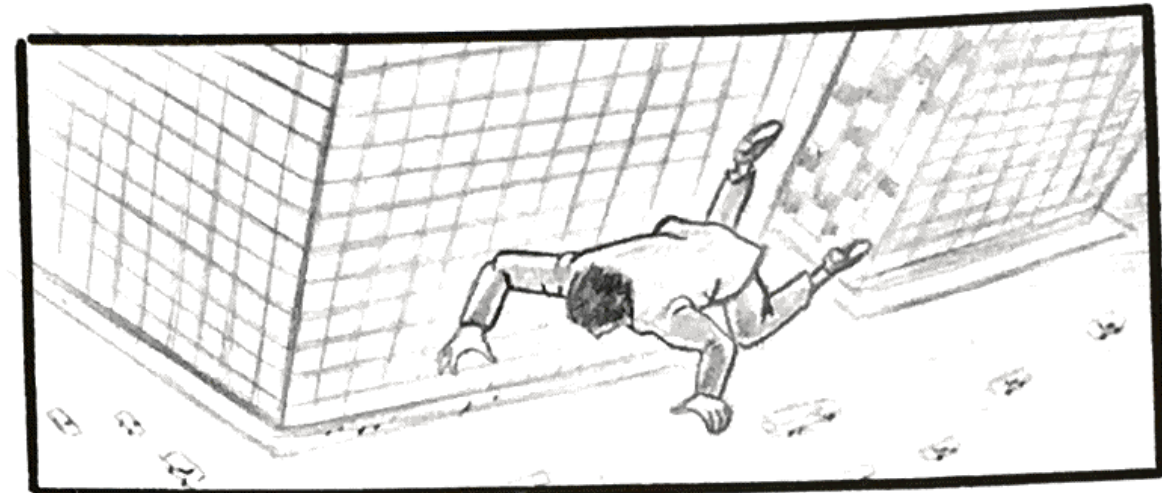
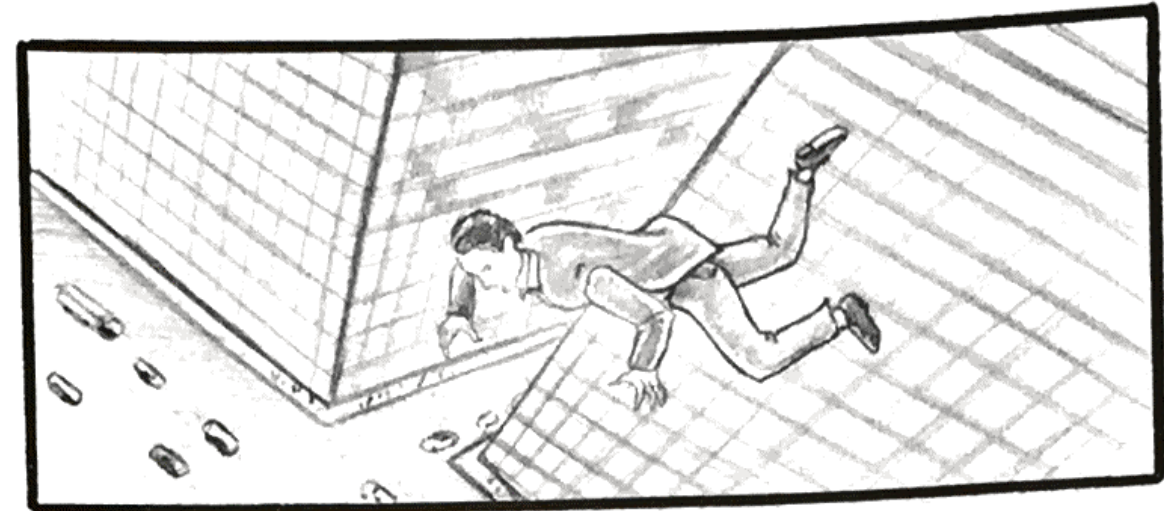
What does it look like?

The *Slice Of Life* shows a “slice” of life, frozen in time or at extremely slow speeds, from many different angles.

A series of photographic cameras are set up up at varying angles around the subject of interest. All of the cameras are then fired at a programmed speed to capture the subject from several different angles at the desired instant. The still images are spliced together. Finally, a computer creates in-betweens for the images to eliminate jitters.

Where can I see it?

The Matrix uses *Slice Of Life* several times to show characters doing impossible things like dodging bullets. *Slice Of Life* can be seen in Lost in Space, when the spacecraft enters hyperdrive. Commercials and music videos use this technique occasionally.



Slice Of Life

STROBE

What does it look like?

Strobe adds pulsating imagery to a scene. Similar to a disco, the lights flash on and off, providing discrete glimpses of the action.

Where can I see it?

In Jacob's Ladder, *Strobe* intensifies the nightmarish imagery during a bizarre party scene.



Strobe

THEMATIC FILTER, NEGATIVE

What does it look like?

A filter is one of many tools available to a filmmaker for altering a film's final appearance. Filters are colored sheets or colored panes of glass that change the color of light that passes through. Filters are often placed over lighting equipment to change the color of light being projected, and over camera lenses to change the color of light caught on film. Common uses of filters include: making the sunset look more golden, reducing the reflection of windows, and warming the skin tones of the actors.

A *Thematic Filter* filters out an entire range of colors, leaving an image saturated heavily by a single hue. This leftover color range sets the mood for the scene in which it is used.

A *Negative* is similar to the *Thematic Filter* for black and white films. A *Negative* is simply a reversal of the colors. Shades of black become white and vice versa.

Where can I see it?

Negative is used several times towards the end of Godard's Alphaville. In Natural Born Killers, the color of lime green is used as a common theme throughout the film. *Thematic Filters* are used in several scenes to filter the light, giving it a distinct lime green appearance.

IMAGERY

What does it look like?

The concept of *Imagery* in a film can mean many different things. *Imagery* can be used to emphasize emotional elements of a scene without any dialogue. For example: in a scene where the characters are talking about war, stock footage of violent battles may be intercut with the conversation. This is a good use of *Imagery*.

In a more general sense, *Imagery* represents any collection of images (montage) that affects the audience on a purely emotional level. Images tend to have certain associated meanings. A flower might signify peace or love, and a gun might signify war. Images that contradict their natural meanings can be even more interesting. For example: a beautiful, but poisonous flower.

Where can I see it?

All of David Lynch's films use *Imagery* extensively. My personal favorite is Lost Highway, but I would recommend watching them all. In Marathon Man, images of a champion marathon runner are used. In Apocalypse Now, the *Imagery* of rotating helicopter blades is blended with the *Imagery* of a spinning ceiling fan.

In Spellbound, *Imagery* represents a dream sequence that was inspired by the paintings of Salvador Dali. Battleship Potemkin uses *Images* of sailors hanging from the mast. Jacob's Ladder has many scenes of nightmarish *Imagery*. In M, the *Imagery* of a child's ball rolling out from the forest signifies her death.

KINETIC ENERGY

What does it look like?

According to physics, *Kinetic Energy* is the energy of motion. In the realm of filmmaking, *Kinetic Energy* describes the motion of the camera in a scene. There are an infinite number of ways to move a camera, and each one has a unique impact on an audience. Some examples of *Kinetic Energy* are: dolly movements, Steadicam™ sequences, handheld shots, crane moves, and jib paths.

The shakes that result from handheld camera work add energy to a scene. Steadicams™ can be used for sequences that require a wide range of movement while maintaining a very smooth image. Mechanical devices such as cranes, jibs, and dollies usually create smooth camera movements that are constrained to the device's limits.

An inventive example of *Kinetic Energy* is to place the camera on a swing, a merry-go-round, a roller coaster, or any object that has its own unique type of movement.

Where can I see it?

In Straw Dogs, Peckinpah uses a handheld camera to add energy to the action scenes. In Rosemary's Baby, a handheld camera observes Rosemary as she struggles to escape. Breaking the Waves has a considerable amount of *Kinetic Energy*. In The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, the camera spins quickly as a character searches through a cemetery for gold. Handheld cameras are used during a chase sequence in Planet of the Apes.

As interesting as it can be, *Kinetic Energy* is not everything. For most of The Godfather, the camera is very still. This lack of rapid camera movement does not detract at all from the power of the film's drama.

LENS

What does it look like?

When shooting a film, a camera *Lens* can have a great deal of impact on the mood and quality of the final image. A wide angle lens sees more of a landscape, but distorts objects that are close to the camera. This distortion can be to the director's advantage, perhaps if they are looking for a psychedelic mood for their film. An extreme wide angle lens has much more noticeable distortion. These lenses are sometimes referred to as fisheye lenses.

The focal length of a lens determines its viewing area. A short focal length indicates a wide angle lens, while a long focal length indicates a telephoto lens. Lenses with long focal lengths allow the camera to be positioned far away from the subject being filmed. These lenses have the effect of compressing the image depth, making objects in the frame appear closer to each other than they actually are. This compression is often good for stunts, by making the stunt players look much closer to dangerous explosions and car chases than they are.

Another interesting property of lenses is that they change the perceived speed at which characters move onscreen. Through a telephoto lens actors walking perpendicular to the camera appear to be moving faster. Through a wide angle lens actors walking toward the camera appear to be moving faster.

MIXED MEDIA

What does it look like?

Mixed Media is the result of mixing the traditional film medium (filming live actors, sets, and props) with other media such as animation, drawings, and photographs. Computer-generated imagery and optical printers aside, traditional filmmaking's constraint is that it can film only what is reality. A camera can't capture an imaginary image. By using other types of media, filmmakers may accomplish cinematic techniques that are impossible by traditional means.

Mixed Media can express what may be too expensive to re-create in reality. Scenes with extremely complex movement and interaction might be less expensive to animate than to film. Low budget films may use pictures and drawings to symbolize large-scale sequences.

Where can I see it?

In Who Framed Roger Rabbit and Cool World, animated characters interact with their live action counterparts. In Tank Girl, comic book snippets and animation segments are interspersed with live action. In Once Upon a Time in the West, a painting of the ocean is used to signify the railroad tycoon's unachievable goal of reaching the Pacific Ocean.

MIXING STOCKS

What does it look like?

There are many different types of film that a filmmaker can choose. Each type is called a film stock, and its unique physical characteristics determine how the final image will look. In addition, there are many different formats for film: 8mm (used for home movies before video camcorders), 16mm (used for documentaries, low budget films), and 35mm (used for most feature films). I also include video, since many directors have experimented with mixing video with filmed images or filming with nothing but video cameras. While other film formats exist that are used for large-screen theaters, these formats are usually too cumbersome for mainstream cinema.

Each film format defines the film's frame size. The larger the frame size, the greater the detail that can be captured, resulting in better image quality. By mixing these formats within a movie, a filmmaker can achieve varying levels of perception, based on the way the image texture changes.

Where can I see it?

Several of Oliver Stone's films *Mix Stocks*. In Drugstore Cowboy, we see 8mm home movies. In The Game, 16mm film is used to create flashback sequences to the character's childhood.

SOUND DESIGN, VOICEOVER

What does it look like?

Although *Sound Design* is not a visual cinematic technique, we must keep in mind that movies are an audio-visual medium. *Sound Design* is an incredibly important aspect of the cinematic experience. Imagine what *Star Wars* would be like without music. It would lose much of its grandeur. If you stripped a horror movie of its bombastic *Sound Design*, it would probably lose its ability to frighten us. Music goes a long way towards setting the mood for a scene, but even more subtle and powerful are the sounds that the audience doesn't notice. It is not uncommon for films to add sounds as enhancements in post-production: birds singing, cars driving by, water running. *Sound Design* can enhance or detract from an audience's enjoyment of a film.

A *Voiceover* is a specific aspect of *Sound Design* employed in many films. This technique involves dubbing a character or a narrator's voice over a scene as a means of narration.

Where can I see it?

A very powerful example of sound design happens in *The Godfather*. As Michael Corleone prepares to murder his first victims, the sound of a rushing train fades in and out to signify the ebb and flow of his emotions. As he walks out into the diner to make the kill, the sound of the train floods the scene.

In any movie with music, observe how the music affects the mood of the scene. In *The Graduate*, the music slows down as Ben's car runs out of gas. In many horror movies, bombastic sound effects are used to emphasize horrifying and surprising moments. *Goodfellas* is partially narrated by a Ray Liotta *Voiceover*. In *Duel*, the character's thoughts are vocalized as a *Voiceover*. The beginning of *Citizen Kane* is narrated by a *Voiceover*.

CGI CINEMA

What does it look like?

CGI stands for "computer-generated imagery." As computers become more powerful and sophisticated, their ability to generate lifelike creatures, models, and special effects improves. The number of films that rely on computer graphics is steadily increasing each year.

CGI Cinema allows filmmakers to achieve complex cinematic movements that are not possible in the real world. In a virtual world, the camera can move anywhere and at any speed. This kind of control allows for the introduction of many new and exciting additions to the cinematic palette available to filmmakers.

Where can I see it?

Jurassic Park and Terminator 2: Judgment Day are just two well known examples of breakthroughs in mainstream computer-generated imagery for films. In Forrest Gump, computer effects are used in subtle ways that are almost transparent to the audience. A feather that floats to the ground is computer generated, and the "legless" Vietnam veteran had his legs removed inside a computer.

EXERCISES

• **Study cinema.** Now it's time for you to start doing your own cinematic research. With a new perspective, watch movies that you've seen several times before. Watch those you don't think you will like—you may find new "flavors" of filmmaking that you never knew existed. Keep an eye out for commonly used cinematic techniques and try to invent your own. Study directing, filmmaking, cinema. Learn common techniques and common mistakes. A great deal of knowledge can be gained by studying the work of artists before you.