

## POV

### What does it look like?

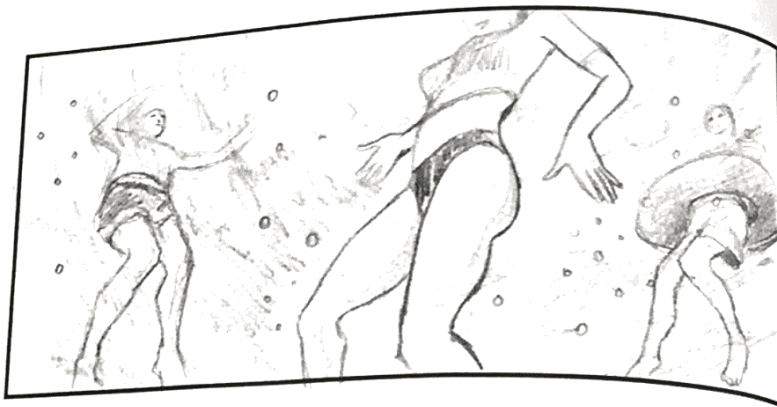
*POV* stands for "point of view," meaning that the audience sees exactly what a character in a film sees.

*POV* can be used to increase the audience's emotional attachment to the characters onscreen.

### Where can I see it?

In Jaws there are sequences projected from the shark's *POV*. Terminator 2: Judgment Day shows a computerized *POV* when looking through the eyes of the Terminator. In Natural Born Killers, a very intense *POV* is achieved by assuming the perspective of Mallory when she slams her head against the prison walls.

Strange Days uses many *POV* shots in its virtual reality sequences. The Evil Dead series uses *POV* to show the movement of an evil presence through the woods. In The Exorcist, we see Father Karras' *POV* when he falls down the stairs.



*POV*

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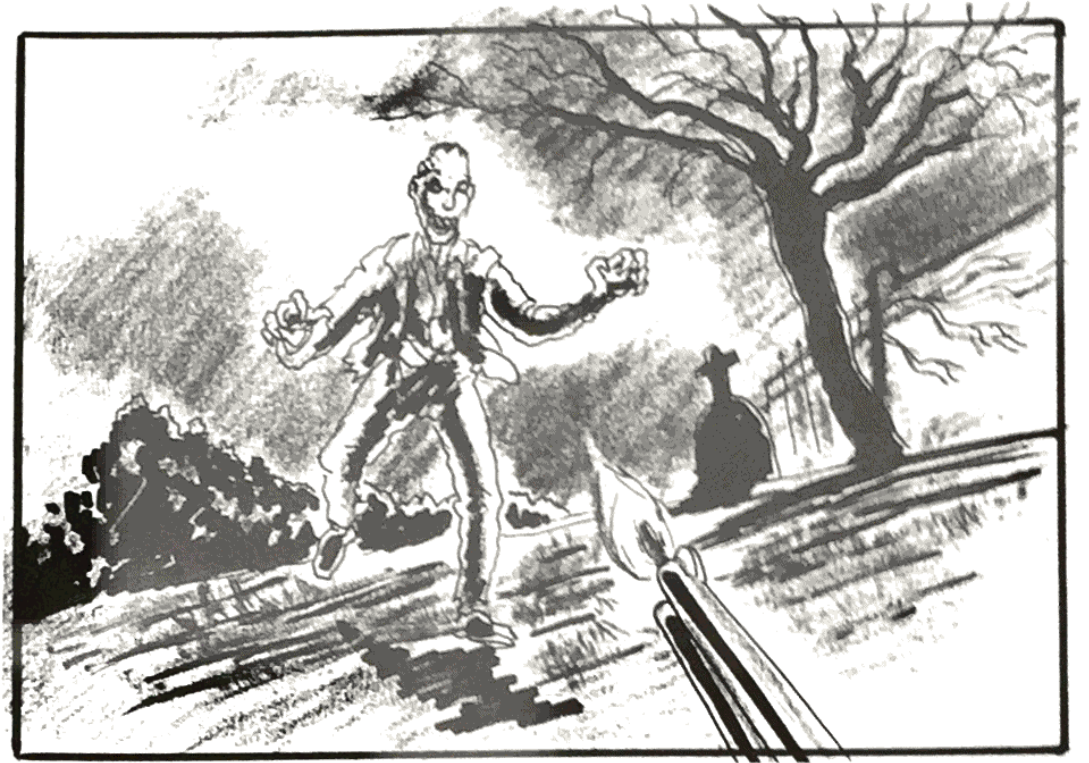
# INVENTORY POV

## What does it look like?

*Inventory POV* is a variation on the standard POV technique. The character carries an object in front of his face—a knife or a gun for example. This object shows up in the frame and allows the audience to see what he is holding in his hands.

## Where can I see it?

*Inventory POV* is used in Evil Dead 2, La Femme Nikita, and The Fifth Element, as characters wield weapons during action sequences. At the end of Spellbound, we see an *Inventory POV* as the doctor points his revolver and turns it to kill himself.



*Inventory POV*



## POV OBJECT, POV PROJECTILE

### What does it look like?

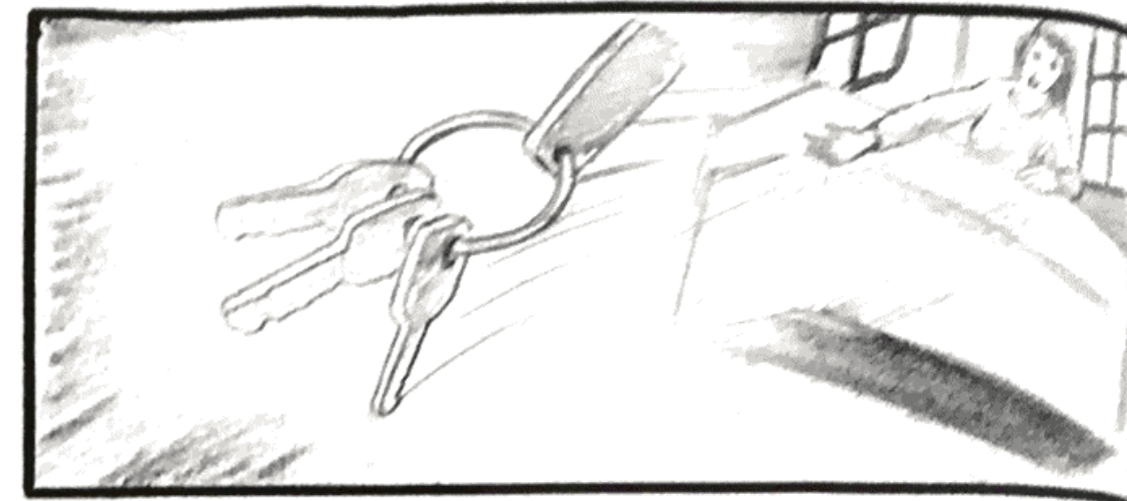
*POV Object* takes the perspective of an inanimate object—an answering machine or a soda can for example. When an actor reaches toward that object or interacts with it, the audience sees the scene from a unique perspective.

*POV Projectile* follows a projectile such as a bullet or an arrow to its destination. This allows the audience to “experience” the projectile and its effects.

### Where can I see it?

In After Hours, the camera takes the POV of a key ring that’s thrown out the window. Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves and Army of Darkness both use the *POV Projectile* technique to show an arrow flying through the air toward its target.

La Femme Nikita takes the perspective of a bullet flying toward its victim during a kitchen gunfight. The Color of Money gives us the perspective of a pool ball traveling across a table.



*POV Object*

## VOYEUR

### What does it look like?

In a sense we are all voyeurs—spying on the private and intimate lives of the characters onscreen. Those characters don't ask us to intrude into their existence. We simply oblige ourselves, and gouge our appetite for realities other than our own.

A voyeuristic sequence may be specifically designed to make us feel that we are spying on the characters onscreen, rather than simply experiencing the story being told. A shot may be framed in such a way (through binoculars, from inside a closet) that emphasizes the voyeuristic aspect of the scene.



Voyeur

### Where can I see it?

Many detective movies, including Rear Window and Blue Velvet, contain elements of voyeurism. The detective spends his time spying into other peoples' lives. The voyeuristic element can be subtle, or it can be very direct. In She's Gotta Have It, Goodfellas, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, and Cadillac Man, the characters temporarily break out of their reality and talk directly to the audience through the camera. This has a somewhat jolting effect in Goodfellas, when Ray Liotta's character explains himself in the courtroom.



## DARK VOYEUR

### What does it look like?

*Dark Voyeur* is the classic horror and psychological thriller gimmick. The technique is used to evoke feelings of the characters in a film being watched, usually by someone or something with malicious intentions.

This technique works by framing the characters in the scene *through* the bushes or *from inside* the closet. This gives the impression that someone is watching them, but doesn't want to be seen.

### Where can I see it?

Friday the 13th is a good film to watch for the *Dark Voyeur*. We get the shark's perspective in Jaws, as it looks up at the swimmers. Many horror films use this technique.



*Dark Voyeur*

# MASK, VIGNETTE

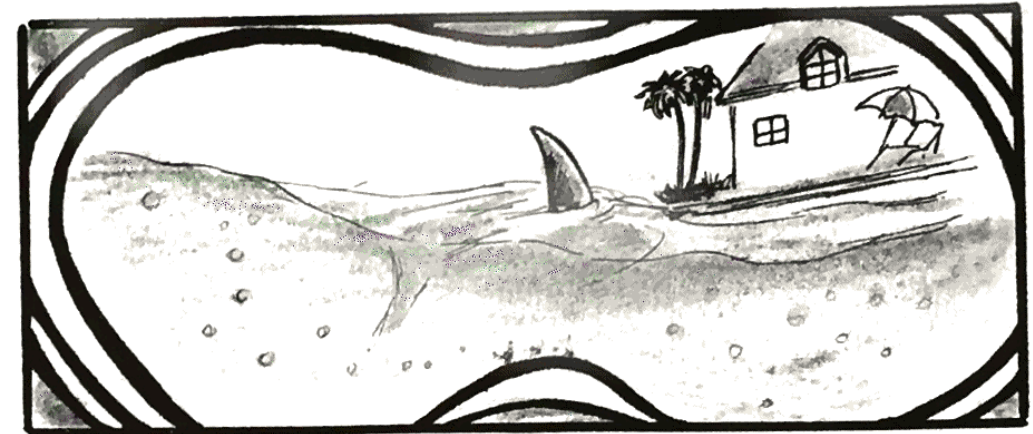
## What does it look like?

A *Mask* is an area of the screen that is blacked out to represent what we would see if our field of vision was reduced. Examples of *Masks* can be seen in films where a character looks through an object such as a pair of binoculars or a keyhole.

A *Vignette* is similar to a *Mask*. The difference is that a *Mask* is always a blacked-out area. A *Vignette*, on the other hand, may have some shape or form. For example, looking through a hidden camera might show the rounded edges of the camera lens surrounding the screen. Because the masked area has color and form, we refer to it as a *Vignette*.

## Where can I see it?

In *Das Boot*, a *Mask* shows the submarine captain looking through binoculars at a destroyer. *The Truman Show* contains many *Vignettes*. Each one represents a hidden camera in Truman's world.



*Mask, Vignette*



## REFLECTION

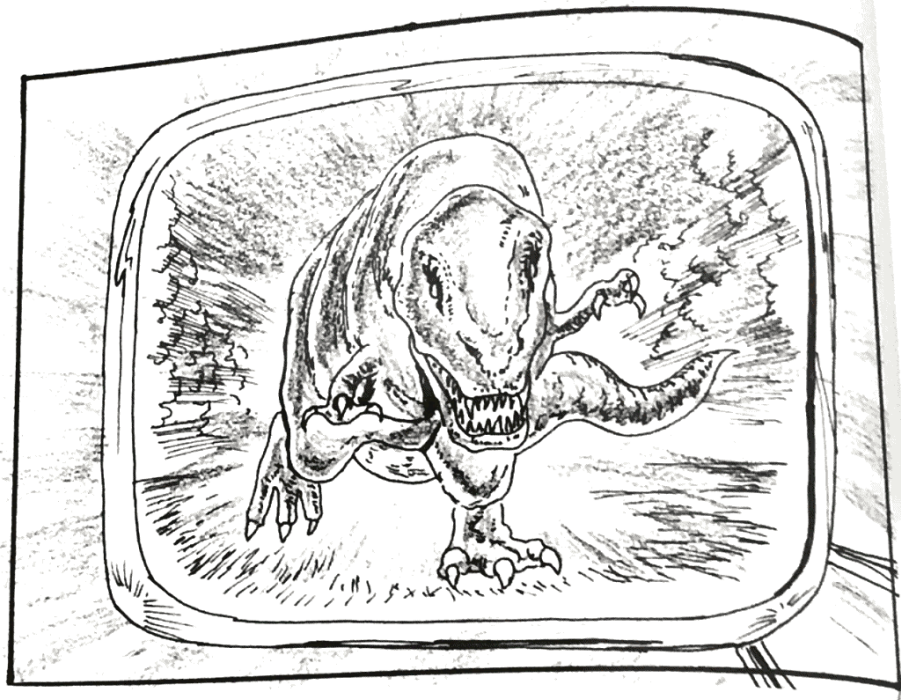
### What does it look like?

A *Reflection* is enigmatic and philosophically interesting. Instead of seeing the world as it really is, we see a reflected image. This forces us to see a reality that has been distorted for a brief period of time.

There are many different ways that we can see reflections. Mirrors and other reflective objects are common examples.

### Where can I see it?

In *Jurassic Park*, we see the T-Rex's *Reflection* in the jeep's rear view mirror as the characters speed away. In *Blue*, the image of a doctor is reflected in Julie's eyes, as he tells her that her husband and daughter have died. In *Duel*, *Reflections* in car mirrors represent the film's road-centric theme.



*Reflection*

# PORTAL

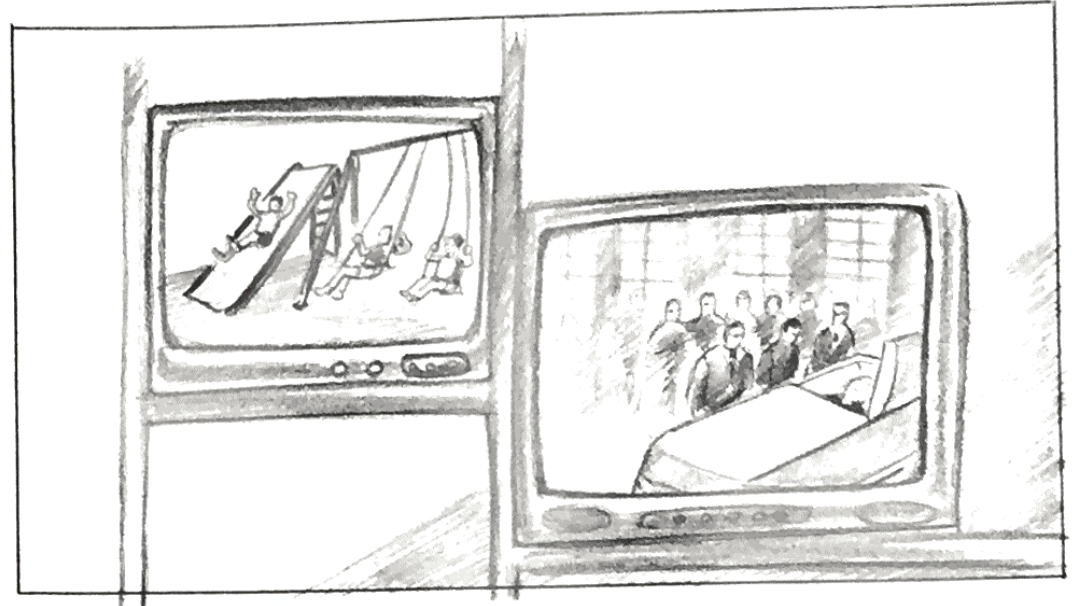
## What does it look like?

A *Portal* is a way of looking at reality as it is filtered through some kind of device.

Looking at a television set is seeing reality, but what you are seeing is not physically real. It is merely an imported representation of someone else's perception— a *Portal* into another person's existence.

## Where can I see it?

In Numero Deux, Godard shows the entire film through two television sets which act as *Portals* into the characters' lives. In Blue, Julie views her family's funeral through a small video monitor from her hospital bed. In The Truman Show, Truman's entire life is viewed through hundreds of hidden cameras. Each camera is a *Portal* into his life.



*Portals*



# SHADOW

## What does it look like?

A unique representation of reality, a *Shadow* can help a filmmaker who wants to show a scene's action indirectly.

*Shadows* are useful when it is difficult or undesirable to show what is actually taking place in a scene. For example, instead of showing us a character being beheaded, the director shows us a shadow that represents this action.

*Shadows* may also be used to "soften" a film's rating, by only indirectly showing something that, if projected explicitly, would cause concern.

## Where can I see it?

In *Evil Dead 2*, we see Ash's *Shadow* as he decapitates a possessed corpse with a chainsaw. In *M*, a *Shadow* shows a child killer approaching his newest victim. In *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, a *Shadow* is used as Clint Eastwood arrives in the graveyard.



*Shadow*



# SILHOUETTE

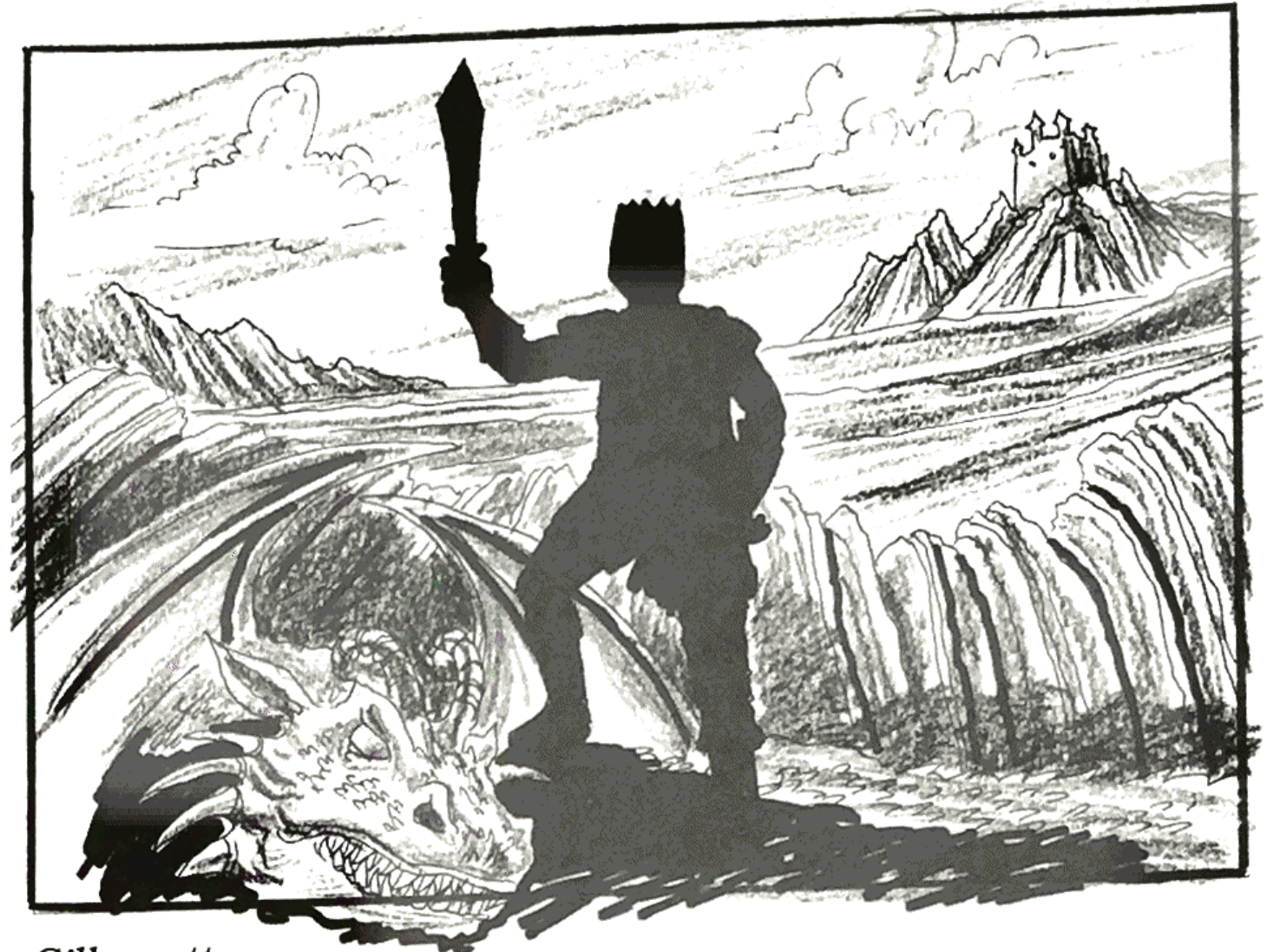
## What does it look like?

A *Silhouette* is created by placing film characters against very strong backlighting so that the characters' features and expressions become darkened or even completely black.

This technique can be used to contrast a character with his surroundings—a man silhouetted against a blazing sunset for example. *Silhouettes* are often used for artistic expression.

## Where can I see it?

In Full Metal Jacket, we see the *Silhouettes* of soldiers as they train in boot camp. We see this in Unforgiven, when Clint Eastwood rides on horseback across the plains. In Jaws, Roy Scheider's body is photographed as a *Silhouette* on the fishing boat at night. In Kickboxer, we see a *Silhouette* of Van Damme as he trains in the temple ruins.



*Silhouette*



## SUBJECTIVE

### What does it look like?

The *Subjective* technique involves strapping or connecting a camera to an actor's body. When this is done, the camera becomes a part of that character's subjective experience. When the character moves, the camera moves with him. The camera usually faces the character's close-up to connect even further.

### Where can I see it?

In *Mean Streets*, the camera is strapped to Harvey Keitel, following him as he stumbles through a party. In *The Exorcist*, the camera is strapped to a psychiatrist and we fall backward with him after Regan attacks.

In *Strictly Ballroom*, Scott Hastings stands on a platform that spins around as he spins. The camera moves on the platform, inside his subjective reality. In *Jacob's Ladder*, *Subjective* is used to intensify Jacob's nightmarish experiences.



*Subjective*

## EXERCISES

- **Look at the world around you and observe how reality is constantly being presented indirectly.** Examples: reflections, portals, and shadows. What's the difference between these examples and the reality we see with our own eyes?
- **Watch some horror films.** Why do you think Dark Voyeur is used so frequently, and why is such a simple technique so effective?
- **Create your own masks and vignettes.** You can cut a form out of cardboard and use it to frame a photograph, or you might draw a border around a magazine illustration.
- **Make a film that takes the perspective of some inanimate object.** You may be able to achieve some interesting scenarios with this technique.
- **Observe.** How do directors use the Subjective, POV, and Voyeur techniques to transport us into the internal perspective of a character onscreen?