

Analysing Aesthetics in Film Stills/Screengrabs

Submarine (Ayoade, UK, 2010)

Aesthetics and Submarine:

What are the common aesthetic elements used by the director?

How are the audience positioned and why?

How would you describe the 'look' of the film?

Image 1: Submarine

http://www.trespassmag.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/5_175u63v-175u642.jpg

Denotation:

Low Angle Mid Shot (LA MS) of a man and a woman (Jill & Lloyd Tate) in a kitchen, the foreground image of the man and woman are in high key lighting, the background is low key.

Connotation/Prompting questions:

Why do we assume these two people are a couple? Their proximity, their body language and character design are similar.

What does the use of beige/brown/yellow of the mise en scene connote? A bland and boring life, with no vibrant colours (passions). The more yellow tones used in the costume design of the woman could imply that she has a more hopeful outlook.

What could the low key area behind the man symbolise? The location is enclosed and claustrophobic, do they feel trapped in their marriage? The dark corridor could suggest they have something to hide.

Why has the director chosen a Low Angle here? The audience are positioned lower than the subjects of the frame, if they are the parents (powerful, dominant), we are positioned as the child.

Image 2: Submarine

<http://molempire.com/app/uploads/2012/06/Yasmin-Paige-as-Jordana-in-Submarine-movie-2010.jpg>

Denotation:

Low Angle Medium Close Up (LA MCU) of a teenage girl (Jordana) , in school uniform.

Connotation/Prompting questions:

What does the costume connote? The school uniform connotes innocence, but the red coat could symbolise, danger & lust, creating an enigmatic, mysterious character, the audience are unsure if she is 'good' or 'bad'.

The location is a more natural space than the previous image, suggesting she is 'free', but in the background we see a dark and imposing structure, could she also be 'trapped' somehow?

Why has the director chosen a low angle here? The audience are once again positioned below the character, creating the feeling that this is a powerful and significant character.

***Skyfall* (Mendes, UK, 2012)**

Aesthetics and Skyfall:

How have aesthetics been used to construct the character of Bond? And why?

How do the aesthetic choices of the director explore the idea of Britishness?

Image 1: Skyfall:

http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-WbbgUqYEDXw/Uan7twrlhNI/AAAAAAAAAGGE/MiN_wrvFbIE/s1600/Skyfall-bond_roof.jpeg

Denotation:

A long shot (LS) of a man dressed in black (Bond) looking over the rooftops of London.

Connotation/Prompting questions:

What famous landmarks can you identify? What do they symbolise? Why do you think this area of London was selected for this shot? Why so many flags?

Do you think the sun is coming up or going down? Why would that be meaningful?

Why do you think Bond is positioned facing away from the audience?

The Palace of Westminster, Big Ben and the Ministry of Defence. All symbols of strength, authority and Britishness, similar to the role of Bond and MI5. The flags and landmarks are patriotic and the high key light is hopeful, indicating the future is positive.

The cold stone of the buildings echo the stoic and unbreakable man in the foreground, he stands in a 'hero' pose with his back to us, protecting us and the city from future threats. He is dressed all in black, as if he has been to a funeral or like the 'angel of death', there is an element of sadness and loss to the character at this point.

Image 2: Skyfall

https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-u16gKcwxTJU/T4YoW_ey9LI/AAAAAAAAAB4/5E167GUKvqg/s1600/skyfall-james-bond-image.jpg

Denotation:

A low angle long shot of a man (Bond) in silhouette walking down a low key lit corridor.

Connotation/Prompting questions:

The aesthetics of this shot are used to construct an iconic 'Bond' look, firstly the back lighting creates a silhouette in a classic 007 style, the audience immediately recognise Bond the gun and his hand in his pocket enhance the look of the iconic character.

The Back lighting creates a 'venetian blind effect' through the blinds, they look like prison bars (connoting that Bond is trapped somehow), this along with the low key light and use of shadow create an almost black & white 'Film Noir' aesthetic, demonstrating that this film presents a mature, dark, disillusioned Bond that we may not have seen before.

The use of low angle clearly positions Bond in a position of strength and power.

***Attack the Block* (Cornish, UK, 2011)**

Aesthetics and Attack the Block

How has the director designed and shot the 'block' and why?

How do you think the images look British?

Image 1: Attack the Block:

<http://mildconcern.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/attack-the-block-stills.png>

Denotation:

This shot is a Low Angle Medium Long Shot (LA MLS) of 5 characters looking fearfully out of elevator doors.

Connotation/Prompting questions:

What colour filter do you think has been used? Why? What is symbolic about the elevator? Why has a Low angle been used?

The green filter has been used to connote death and decay, the high key lighting is harsh and unnatural within the lift, and low key low contrast outside of it, suggesting that there is safety inside the lift –which can transport them upwards to the heavenly light.

The location is highly claustrophobic, the lift could be a metaphor for the block and its inhabitants, all from different backgrounds, working together.

Image 2: Attack the Block

<http://medias.telerama.fr/cinemovies/photos/20040/attack-the-block-2011-20040-747936062.jpg>

Denotation:

Moses in low angle long shot is being led away by police.

Connotation/Prompting questions:

Even though we are now outside the light still has a sickly fluorescent green/yellow glow, suggesting something is unnatural & decaying.

The low angle makes the block look imposing and allows Moses to still maintain power even though he is being arrested.

The rain is cathartic and symbolic of the washing away of 'sin' the threat has been neutralised.

Brooklyn (Crowley, UK, 2015)

Aesthetics and Brooklyn:

Where has the director used a look that you feel is typically 1950's?

How has the director used light to create mood?

Image 1: Brooklyn:

<http://images6.fanpop.com/image/photos/38900000/-Brooklyn-2015-Stills-emily-bett-rickards-38959288-680-478.jpg>

Denotation:

A low angle medium long shot of 6 women sitting at a dinner table.

Connotation/Prompting questions:

How has cinematography been used to position the audience?

How has the costume design been used to suggest character?

Why do you think the director has used a sepia tone?

The positioning of characters around the table and the low angle, seat the audience at the table, in the empty space presented, we are one of them.

There is a suggestion of a class divide at the table, on the left, the women wear pearls and more fashionable clothes in more expensive fabrics, to the right Eilis is dressed in a more feminine, home-made, prim design.

A warm sepia tone and low key lighting have been employed to create a rich colour palate, it is warm, inviting and nostalgic, but also claustrophobic, the mise en scene is cluttered, our protagonist Eilis is flanked by others in the frame with little space for movement.

Image 2: Brooklyn

<http://www.aceshowbiz.com/images/still/brooklyn-image04.jpg>

Denotation:

A low angle shot of Eilis, heavily back lit in a doorway.

Connotation/Prompting questions:

How does this shot suggest freedom? And where is entrapment implied?

The back lighting is very high key, creating a clear 'halo effect' giving 'Eilis a heavenly glow. The pale blue tones and high key light further the angelic effect.

Eilis has more freedom in the frame than the previous shot implying that she is now free, but the back lighting of the door has bars suggesting entrapment.

A low angle gives her power and confidence.

***My Brother the Devil* (El Hosaini, UK, 2012)**

Aesthetics and *My Brother the Devil*:

How has the director used cinematography and mise en scene to connote entrapment and freedom?

Image 1: *My Brother The Devil*:

http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2012/11/09/article-2230249-15E580D5000005DC-331_634x422.jpg Ref: 5870125d

Denotation:

A low angle Mid shot, of two brothers (Mo & Rashid) in natural light, walking/cycling down an alley.

Connotation/Prompting questions:

What does the bike connote? Who has the power in this shot? How has location been used to connote entrapment? How does costume suggest the differences between the two brothers?

The high key natural light, the bike the light colours of their costumes all combine to present an image of happiness and freedom.

The low angle gives the characters power, with Rashid in a slightly elevated position of power over Mo.

The low angle makes the location appear imposing, claustrophobic, the prison-like fence is threatening.

Practical Task:

Using the glossary of terms, let's take a closer look at how the aesthetic choices of the director impact upon our reading of Character and Setting.

Choose 2-3 screenshots from your UK focus film

Step 1: Denotation	Step 2: Connotation
Using the correct terms identify and what we see in the frame:	Why as the director constructed this shot in this particular way?
Shot type:	What message are they attempting to convey?
	What is (your) the audiences response to what you see?

Using a sequence of your choice, create a storyboard using screen grabs from the sequence, remember to use every shot no matter how short it is.

Use this format:

<p>Shot number:</p> <p>Shot type:</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>Cinematography:</p> <p>Sound:</p> <p>Shot duration:</p> <p>Transition:</p>	
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Then write a 750 word summary 'How the director constructed meaning in this sequence using aesthetics'.