

FILM ANALYSIS AND COMPOSTION

HOW TO READ A FILM

“A film is difficult to explain because it is easy to understand.” – Christian Mertz

The basic question in film study centers on the ideas related to form or function. Most view film from both points of view.

- Are we interested in what a film is (form)
- (Or)
- Are we interested in what a film does to us (function)

FORM OR FUNCTION

A 1945 essay- Close up View by Sergei Eisenstein considers various approaches to film study. The various ways to view and analyze film include looking at the form of the film, the function of the film, and the release date (social context) of the film.

- The form of the film involves looking at the various parts of the film. How was the film made, etc?
- The function of the film involves looking at how the film acts upon us – emotionally, psychologically, intellectually, or spiritually.
- The context of time involves looking at the production and release dates of the film in relation to the social aspects.

CLOSE UP VIEW (FORM)

The theory of this film study approach breaks down film into its parts and resolves the film into its elements.

The – form – of the film (the basic components) as it relates to the viewer are considered.

- The performances
- The role of the director
- The screenplay
- The editing –pace/rhythm
- The technical aspects of film
— the ‘shot’, color, light, music, sound.

MEDIUM SHOT VIEW (FUNCTION)

The theory of this film study focuses on the human scale of the film, which is the level of focus and concern of most viewers. What did this film do to me at a personal, emotional, visceral, or spiritual level? What themes do the screenplay in this Film address? What is the Director saying about the human condition?

The - function – of the film as it relates to the viewer is the basis for viewing the Film. For example, consider some of the following when applying this theory to the analysis of the film.

- How does the film act upon the viewer?
- What does the film do to the viewer?
- Why does the film connect to the viewer in this manner?
- Consider the viewers response to the film – emotionally, psychologically, intellectually, or spiritually.
- What themes are the focuses of the film?

LONG SHOT-VIEW

The theory of this film study focuses on the film in relation to the context of time and the social or political implications connected to the production and release date of the film.

For example, consider some of the following when applying this theory to the analysis of the film.

- When was the production and release of the film?
- How does the time of the release of the film possibly have an impact on the viewer?
- During the time of release of the film, what social situations or conditions could possibly affect the viewer's response to the film?
- During the time of release of the film, what political conditions or situations could possibly influence the viewer's response to the film?