

— Rej Bordages —

Kelly Asbury Story Pitch Clinic

Outline

Tips and Tricks before starting

Clip- Shrek 2 Story board animatic- Conrad Vernon story panels

Clip- Shrek 2 Final sequence

Q&A

Charades

Story Trainees pitch boards

Story Trainees receive notes on pitch

Story Trainees pitch again with Kelly stopping them with advice

Story Trainees have opportunity to pitch one more time if they want

Tips, Tricks, and Notes from Kelly about pitching:

- When pitching always face audience
- When nearing the corner of the room turn weight slightly and switch hands with pointer to keep audience engaged
- Keep your energy up, don't be a downer
- Hold the pointer at the bottom of the stick
- If you can't do the characters voice get the personality of it with your inflection

- Maximize your abilities, don't get yourself into a bad situation
- The better and more prepared you are for the pitch the truer it will be in the movie
- Be prepared for disasters and keep it cool
- Don't let your ego get in the way of the pitch
- Don't worry about your individual drawing because it is the IDEA that you want to get across the clearest
- Don't take criticism personal
- Break out of your shyness barrier before you give your pitch
- Think about, "How do I convey this the best way possible?"
- Don't be afraid to explain your drawings when necessary
- Hold the pointer on the bottom of the drawing, not the dialog strip
- Setup your scene before the pitch
- Don't move the pointer with the dialog, the audience will read along instead of paying attention
- It is helpful to introduce the characters motives during your pitch
- Put life into your voice, modulate
- Remember you are giving a performance

- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse before you give the pitch so it will be smooth and you will know what your talking about
- You never know who you are going to pitch to so your pitch has to be just as good as your drawings
- Clarity rules!
- Print dialog BIG and clear on dialog strips
- Remember your timing, use it in your pitch as cinematic timing
- Describe your drawings and thoughts of your characters
- Face the audience as much as possible
- When you hit an important panel get your energy up
- Minimize your descriptions while still being clear about your panel
- Avoid a monotonous tone, keep your pitch upbeat and energetic
- Keep a good pace and avoid just showing the drawings
- The more you fine tune your boards the more fine tuned your pitch will be
- Readability and Clarity are the two most important things to keep in mind

TWELVE ELEMENTS OF SHOT ANALYSIS

1. **SHOT AND CAMERA PROXEMICS:** What type of shot? How far away from the action is the camera?
2. **CHARACTER PROXEMICS:** How much space is there between the characters? Where are the characters positioned relative to each other?
3. **STAGING POSITIONS:** Which way do the characters look relative to the camera?
4. **ANGLE:** Are we looking up or down on the subject, or is the camera neutral (eye-level)?
5. **FRAMING:** Is the framing tight or loose? Are the characters restricted or can they move about freely? Does the framing suggest symbolic ideas? Does it comment on the objects or characters within?
6. **CAMERA MOVEMENT:** Is the camera moving or stationary? Is the movement of the camera associated with any meaning?
7. **MOVEMENT WITHIN THE SHOT:** Do movements within the frame suggest different psychological meanings?
8. **DOMINANT AND SUBSIDIARY FOCUSES:** Where is our eye attracted first? Where does our eye travel after taking in the dominant?
9. **COMPOSITION AND DEPTH:** How is the two-dimensional space of the frame segmented and organized? What is the underlying design? On how many planes is the image composed? Do the background or foreground comment in any way on the midground?
10. **LENS AND FILTER:** How do these distort or comment on the photographed material?
11. **LIGHTING STYLE:** High or low key? High contrast or flat? How does the style affect the perception of characters, objects or events?
12. **FIGURATIVE COMPARISONS:** Are images used to convey abstract ideas? Are there 'symbolic' attachments to objects or events beyond their literal significance?

SHOTS

Different shots are defined by the amount of subject matter included within the frame. Shot designations vary considerably from person to person. A medium shot for one director might be considered a close-up by another. Although there are many different kinds of shots, most of them fall under one of six basic categories:

1. EXTREME LONG SHOT
2. LONG SHOT
3. FULL SHOT
4. MEDIUM SHOT
5. CLOSE-UP
6. EXTREME CLOSE-UP

(The DEEP-FOCUS SHOT is a variation of the long or extreme long shot.)

The EXTREME LONG SHOT is taken from a great distance, sometimes as far as a quarter of a mile away. It's almost always an exterior shot and shows much of the locale. Also called ESTABLISHING SHOTS, they serve as geographical and spatial reference for the closer shots.

The LONG SHOT is the most complex because its range is the least specific. Usually, the long shot ranges correspond to the distance between the audience and the stage in the live theater. It would include most or all of the set of an interior location.

The FULL SHOT includes the human body in full, with the head near the top of the frame and the feet near the bottom. Charlie Chaplin and other slapstick comedians favored the full shot because it was best suited to the art of pantomime, yet it was close enough to capture broad facial expressions.

The MEDIUM SHOT contains a figure from the knees or waist up. A functional shot, it is useful for shooting exposition scenes, for carrying movement, and for covering dialogue. Variations of the medium shot are: the TWO SHOT, which contains two figures from the waist up; and the THREE SHOT, which contains three figures. Beyond three, the shot tends to become a full shot, unless the other figures are in the background. The OVER-THE-SHOULDER SHOT usually contains two figures, one with his back to the camera, the other facing the camera.

The CLOSE-UP shows very little locale, if any. It concentrates on a relatively small object, usually the human face. Since the close-up magnifies the size of an object, it tends to elevate its importance, often suggesting a symbolic significance.

The EXTREME CLOSE-UP is a variation of the close-up. Thus, instead of a face, the extreme close-up might show only a person's eyes or mouth.

The DEEP-FOCUS SHOT is usually a long shot, consisting of a number of focal distances photographed in depth. This shot captures objects at close, medium, and

long ranges simultaneously, all of them in sharp focus. The objects are arranged in a succession of planes, where the viewer's eye is guided from one distance to another. Generally, the eye travels from a close range to a medium to a long. Also called a WIDE-ANGLE SHOT because it requires a wide-angle lens to photograph.

PROXEMIC PATTERNS

PROXEMIC PATTERNS are the relationships of organisms within a given space. There are four major proxemic patterns:

1. The INTIMATE distance
2. The PERSONAL distance
3. The SOCIAL distance
4. The PUBLIC distance

The INTIMATE distances range from skin contact to about eighteen inches away. This is the distance of physical involvement - of love, comfort, and tenderness between individuals. With strangers, such distances would be regarded as intrusive.

The PERSONAL distances range roughly from eighteen inches away to about four feet away. Individuals can touch if necessary, since they are literally an arm's length apart. These distances tend to be reserved for friends and acquaintances rather than lovers or members of a family.

The SOCIAL distances range from four feet to about twelve feet. These are the distances usually reserved for impersonal business and casual social gatherings. It's a friendly range in most cases, yet somewhat more formal than the personal distance.

The PUBLIC distances extend from twelve feet to twenty-five feet or more. This range tends to be formal and rather detached. Displays of emotion are considered bad form at these distances.

Obviously, social context is also a determining factor in proxemic patterns. In a crowded subway car, virtually everyone is in an intimate range, yet we generally preserve a public attitude by not speaking to the person whose body is literally pressed against our own. Proxemic patterns can also be influenced by external factors: noise, danger, and lack of light tend to make people move closer together.

Proxemic patterns are related to the shots and their distance ranges. Although shots are not always defined by the literal space between the camera and the subject photographed, in terms of psychological effect, shot tend to suggest physical distances.

Storyboard artists have a number of options concerning what kind of shot to use for any given moment of a scene. What determines their choice is usually the emotional impact of the different proxemic ranges. Each proxemic pattern has an approximate camera equivalent: The intimate distances, for example, can be likened to the close and extreme close shot ranges. The personal distance is

approximately a medium close range. The social distances correspond to the medium and full shot ranges. And the public distances are roughly within the long and extreme long shot ranges.

Since our eyes identify with the camera's lens, in effect we are placed within these ranges in relationship to the subject matter. When we are offered a close-up of a character, we feel that we're in an intimate relationship with that character. The close-up can help to bind us to the character, forcing us to care about him, and to identify with his problems. If the character is a villain, the close-up can produce an emotional revulsion in us; in effect, a threatening character seems to be invading our space. In general, the greater the distance between the camera and the subject, the more emotionally neutral we remain.

Chaplin was quoted as saying: "Long shot for comedy, close-up for tragedy". When we are close to an action - a person slipping on a banana peel, for example - it's seldom funny, because we are concerned for the person's safety. If we see the same event from across the street, however, it often strikes us as comical.

Usually, a storyboard artist selects the shot that most clearly conveys the dramatic action of a scene. If there is a conflict between the effect of certain proxemic ranges and the clarity needed to convey what's going on, most storyboard artists opt for story clarity and look for emotional impact through some other means.

STAGING POSITIONS

An actor can be photographed in any of five basic positions, each conveying different psychological undertones:

1. FULL FRONT – Facing straight to camera
2. QUARTER TURN – Looking just off camera
3. PROFILE – Looking off frame left or right
4. THREE QUARTER REAR – Looking left or right into scene, away from camera
5. BACK TO CAMERA – Facing away completely

Since the viewer identifies with the camera's lens, the positioning of the actor in relation to the camera determines many of our reactions. The more we see of his face, the greater our sense of privileged intimacy. The less we see, the more mysterious and inaccessible he will seem.

The FULL FRONT position is the most intimate. The viewer's privileged position allows us to observe the character without his defenses up, his vulnerabilities exposed.

The QUARTER TURN is the most often employed position. It provides a high degree of intimacy but with less emotional involvement than having the character speak directly to the camera.

The PROFILE position is more remote. The character seems unaware of being observed, lost in his own thoughts.

The THREE QUARTER TURN is more anonymous. This position is useful for conveying a character's unfriendly or antisocial feelings, for in effect, he is partially turning his back on us, rejecting our interest.

The BACK TO CAMERA position is often used to suggest a character's alienation from the world. When a character has his back to the camera, we can only guess what's taking place internally. It is also useful in conveying a sense of concealment, or mystery. We want to see more.

TERRITORIAL SPACE

One of the most crucial decisions a storyboard artist has to make is what shot to employ. How much detail should be included within the frame? How close should the camera get to the subject? (Which is another way of saying how close should the viewer get to the subject, since our eyes tend to identify with the camera's lens.) It's an important decision because the amount of space included within the frame can radically affect our response to the photographed materials. With any given subject, a storyboard artist can employ a variety of shots, each of which includes or excludes a given amount of surrounding space. But how much space is just right in a shot?

Space is a medium of communication, and the way we respond to objects and people within a given area is an important source of information. In virtually any social situation, people receive and give off signals relating to our use of space and those people who share it.

All animals, including humans, are territorial. We feel threatened when someone takes a seat next to us in a nearly empty movie theater. When living creatures are too tightly packed into a given space, the result can be stress, tension, and anxiety.

Territories also have a spatial hierarchy of power. The most dominant organism of a community is literally given more space, whereas the less dominant are crowded together. The amount of space an organism occupies is generally proportioned to the degree of control it enjoys within a given territory. When an important person enters a crowded room, for example, most people instinctively make room for him.

This is important for the storyboard artist to consider, because space is one of the principal mediums of communication in film. The way that people are arranged in space can tell a lot about their social and psychological relationships. In film, dominant characters are almost always given more space to occupy than others, unless the film deals with the loss of power or the social insignificance of a character.

The film frame can be thought of as a kind of territory. The way that space is shared is one of the major tools of the storyboard artist. A well staged scene can express shifting psychological and social nuances within a single shot by varying the space between characters, altering the depth planes within the shot, moving characters through intrinsically weighted areas of the frame, and/or shifting the direction that the characters are facing in relationship to the camera.

Territorial space within the frame can be manipulated with a high degree of psychological complexity. When a figure leaves the frame, for example, the camera can adjust to this sudden vacuum in the composition by panning slightly to correct for the new balance of weight. Or the camera can remain stationary, thus suggesting a sense of loss symbolized by the empty space that the character formerly occupied.

Hostility and suspicion between two characters can be conveyed by keeping them at the edges of the frame, with a maximum space between them, or by having an intrusive character force his physical presence into the other character's territory, which is defined by the enclosure of the frame.

ANGLES

The angle from which an object is photographed can often serve as a source of commentary on the subject matter. If the angle is slight, it can serve as a subtle form of emotional coloration. If the angle is extreme, it can represent the major meaning of an image. An image of a person photographed from a high angle actually suggests an opposite interpretation of an image of the same person photographed from a low angle. The subject matter can be identical in the two shots, yet in terms of the information communicated, it's clear that the content has changed. There are five basic angles in cinema:

1. The BIRD'S-EYE VIEW
2. The HIGH ANGLE
3. The EYE-LEVEL SHOT
4. The LOW ANGLE
5. The OBLIQUE or DUTCH ANGLE

As in the case of shot categories, there are obviously many intermediate variations of these angles.

The BIRD'S-EYE VIEW is perhaps the most disorienting. It involves photographing a scene from directly overhead. In certain contexts, this angle can be highly effective. The bird's-eye view permits us to hover above a scene in a godlike fashion. The characters photographed seem antlike and insignificant. Directors, like Hitchcock, whose themes revolve around the idea of fate, often favor this type of angle.

Ordinary HIGH ANGLE SHOTS are not so extreme, and therefore not so disorienting. The camera is placed on a crane arm or some other natural high point, but the sense of godlike omnipotence is not as defined. High angles give a viewer a sense of a general overview, but not necessarily one implying destiny or fate. In terms of the object photographed, high angles reduce the height of objects, and usually include the ground or floor as a background. Movement is slowed down. This angle tends to be ineffective for conveying a sense of speed. It is more useful in suggesting tediousness. The importance of setting or environment is increased. The locale often seems to swallow characters. High angles reduce the importance of a subject. A person seems harmless and insignificant photographed from above. This angle is also effective for conveying a character's self-contempt.

EYE-LEVEL SHOTS are neutral and dispassionate in their context. They avoid manipulation and judgment. On screen characters are treated as equals. Eye-level shots discourage us from viewing characters either condescendingly or sentimentally. For the most part, the viewer observes characters as ordinary -

FRAMING

Storyboard artists arrange objects and people within an imaginary three-dimensional space enclosed within a FRAME. The frame functions as the basis of the composition in a movie image.

As an aesthetic device, the frame performs in several ways. A good storyboard artist is just as concerned with what's left out of the frame as with what's included. The frame selects and delimits the subject, editing out all irrelevancies and presenting the viewer with only a "piece" of reality. The materials included within a shot are unified by the frame, which in effect imposes an order on them. The frame is essentially an isolating device. It permits the storyboard artist to confer special attention on what might be overlooked in a wider context.

The amount of open space within the frame can be exploited for symbolic purposes. Generally speaking, the closer the shot, the more confined the characters appear to be. Such shots are usually referred to as tightly framed. Conversely, the longer, loosely framed shots tend to suggest freedom.

Certain areas within the frame can suggest symbolic ideas. By placing an object or character within a particular section of the frame, the storyboard artist can radically alter his comment on that object or character. Each of the major sections of the frame – center, top, bottom, and edges – can be exploited for such symbolic and metaphoric purposes.

The CENTRAL PORTIONS of the screen are generally reserved for the most important visual elements. This area is instinctively regarded by most people as the center of interest. The center is a kind of norm. We expect dominant visual elements to be placed there. Precisely because of this expectation, objects placed in the center tend to be visually undramatic. Central dominance is generally favored when the subject matter is intrinsically compelling. The viewer is allowed to concentrate on the subject matter without being distracted by visual elements that seem off center.

The area near the TOP OF THE FRAME can suggest ideas dealing with power, authority and aspiration. A person placed here seems to control all the visual elements below, and for this reason, authority figures are often photographed in this manner. In images suggesting spirituality, often the top of the frame is exploited to convey a godlike splendor. This grandeur can also apply to objects – a palace, the top of a mountain, etc. If an unattractive character is placed near the top of the screen, he can seem threatening and dangerous, superior to the other figures within the frame.

The areas near the **BOTTOM OF THE FRAME** tend to suggest opposite meanings from the top: subservience, vulnerability, and powerlessness. These areas are often exploited symbolically to suggest danger. When there are two or more figures in the frame and they are approximately the same size, the figure nearer the bottom of the frame tends to be dominated by those above.

The **LEFT AND RIGHT EDGES OF THE FRAME** tend to suggest insignificance, since these are the areas farthest removed from the center of the screen. Objects and characters paced near the edges are literally close to the darkness outside the frame. This darkness can be used to suggest those symbolic ideas traditionally associated with the lack of light; the unknown, the unseen, and the fearful. In some instances, the blackness outside the frame can symbolize oblivion or even death.

There are two **OFF FRAME AREAS** that can be exploited for symbolic purposes: the space behind the set and the space in front of the camera. Not showing the viewer what is happening behind a closed door can provoke curiosity, creating an unsettling effect, for the viewer will tend to fill in the vacuum with vivid imaginings. The area in front of the camera can also create unsettling effects. In "The Maltese Falcon", for example, the viewer witnesses a murder without ever seeing the killer. The victim is photographed in a medium shot as a gun enters frame just in front of the camera. Not until the end of the movie does the audience discover the identity of the killer.

The movie frame can also function as a metaphor for other types of enclosures. The frame can be used voyeuristically, like in the films of Hitchcock, where the frame is likened to a window through which the audience can pry into the intimate details of the characters' lives.

MOVING CAMERA

A STATIONARY CAMERA tends to convey a sense of stability and order, unless there is a great deal of movement within the frame. The moving camera – by its very instability – can create ideas of vitality, flux, and sometimes disorder. Each major type of camera movement implies different meanings, some obvious, others subtle. There are seven basic moving camera shots:

1. PANS
2. TILTS
3. CRANE SHOTS
4. DOLLY SHOTS
5. ZOOM SHOTS
6. HAND-HELD SHOTS
7. AERIAL SHOTS

PANS in extreme long shots are especially effective in epic films where an audience can experience the vastness of a locale. Pan shots tend to emphasize the unity of space and the connectedness of characters and objects within that space.

Since a TILT is a change in angle, it is often used to suggest a psychological shift within a character. When an eye-level camera tilts downward, for example, the person photographed suddenly appears more vulnerable.

TRACKING or DOLLYING is a useful technique in point-of-view shots to capture a sense of movement in or out of a scene. If it is important to emphasize the destination of a character's movement, a director is more likely to use a straight cut between the initiation of the movement and its conclusion. If the experience of the movement itself is important, the director is more apt to dolly. When a camera literally follows a character, the audience assumes that it will discover something along the way. A journey, after all, usually has a destination. One of the most common uses of the dolly shot is to emphasize psychological rather than literal revelations. The movement of slowly tracking in on a character acts as a signal to the audience, suggesting, in effect, that something important is about to happen. Traveling shots, in conjunction with the movement of people, processions, and traffic, are analogues for the unbroken flow of experiences.

The PULL-BACK DOLLY is an effective technique for surprising the character (and audience) with a revelation. By moving back, the camera reveals something startling, something previously off camera.

HAND-HELD SHOTS are generally less lyrical and more noticeable. Hand-held shots are often jumpy and ragged. The camera's rocking is hard to ignore, for the screen exaggerates these movements, especially if the shots are taken from close ranges. For this reason, hand-held shots are often used for P.O.V. shots.

CRANE SHOTS are essentially airborne dolly shots. It can move in virtually any direction; up, down, diagonally, in, out, or any combination of these. Because of this flexibility, a crane shot can suggest a number of complex ideas. It can move from high, long distances to low, close ones.

ZOOMS give a sense of being plunged into a scene, or an equally jolting sense of being plucked out of it. Zoom shots are used instead of dolly or crane shots for a number of reasons. They can zip in or out of a scene much faster. There are certain psychological differences between zooms and those involving an actual moving camera. Dolly and crane shots tend to give the viewer a sense of entering into or withdrawing from a set. Furniture and people seem to stream by the side of the frame, as the camera penetrates a three-dimensional space. Zoom lenses foreshorten people and flatten space. The edges of the image simply disappear at all side. The effect is one of sudden magnification. Instead of feeling as though we are entering a scene, we feel as though a small portion of it has been thrust toward us.

AERIAL SHOTS, usually taken from a helicopter, are really variations of the crane shot. The aerial shot can be much more extravagant, and is occasionally used to suggest a swooping sense of freedom, or a godlike sense of inexorability.

MOVEMENT WITHIN THE FRAME

A script might call for a character to move from one place to another, but how the storyboard artist chooses to stage this movement will determine much of its psychological implications. Meanings associated with various portions of the frame are closely related to certain kinds of movements.

For example, with VERTICAL MOVEMENTS, an upward motion seems soaring and free. Movements in this direction often suggest aspiration, joy, power and authority – those ideas associated with the upper portions of the frame. DOWNWARD MOVEMENTS suggest opposite ideas: grief, death, insignificance, depression, weakness, etc.

Since the eye tends to read a picture from left to right, physical MOVEMENT LEFT TO RIGHT seems psychologically natural, whereas movement from right to left can seem tense or uncomfortable. Kinetic symbolism can be used to suggest other ideas and emotions as well. For example, ecstasy and joy are often expressed by expansive motions, fear by tentative or trembling movements, eroticism by undulating motions. When virtually nothing seems to be moving in an image, even the slightest motion can take on enormous significance. In many cases, non-movement can be exploited for symbolic purposes: lack of motion can suggest spiritual or psychological paralysis.

Movement can be directed toward or away from the camera. Since we identify with the camera's lens, the effect of these movements is like a character moving toward or away from us. If the character is a villain, MOVEMENT TOWARD THE CAMERA can seem aggressive, hostile, and threatening, for in effect, he's invading our space. If the character is attractive, movement toward the camera seems friendly, inviting, sometimes seductive. In either case, movement toward the camera is generally strong and assertive, suggesting confidence on the part of the moving character.

MOVEMENT AWAY FROM THE CAMERA tends to imply opposite meanings. Intensity is decreased and the character seems to grow remote as he withdraws from us. Viewers feel safer when a villain moves away in this manner, for he increases the protective distance between us and him. In some contexts, such movements can seem weak, fearful, and suspicious.

When a character moves in or out of the depth of a scene, the effect is often one of slowness. Unless the camera is at close range or an extreme wide-angle lens is being used, movements toward or away from camera take longer to photograph than lateral movements. With a telephoto lens, such movements can seem hopelessly dragged out. When depth movement is photographed in an uninterrupted long take, the audience tends to anticipate the conclusion of the movement, thus intensifying the sense of tedium while waiting for the character to arrive at his destination.

Especially when a character's physical goal is apparent in the shot – like the end of a corridor, for example. The audience grows restless if they are forced to view the entire movement. LATERAL MOVEMENTS, on the other hand, tend to emphasize speed and efficiency. They are often used in action movies.

The distance and angle from which movement is photographed determine much of its meaning. In general, the longer and higher the shot, the slower the movement tends to appear. If movement is recorded from close and low angles, it seems more intense, speeded up. Photographing the same subject – a running man, for example – in two different setups can produce opposite meanings. If the man is photographed in an extreme long shot from a high angle, he will seem ineffectual and impotent. If he's photographed from a low angle in a medium shot, he will seem like a dynamo of energy.

Movement in film is a subtle issue, for it's dependent on the kind of shot employed. The close-up can convey as much movement as the most sweeping vistas in an extreme long shot. In fact, in terms of the area covered on the screen's surface, there can be more movement in a close-up of a tear running down a person's face than in an extreme long shot of a skydiver leaping out of an airplane.

Epic and psychological movies employ movement in different ways, with emphasis on different shots. Epic movies usually depend on the longer shots for their effects, whereas psychological films tend to employ the closer shots. Epics are concerned with a sense of sweep and breadth, psychological movies with depth and detail. Epics often emphasize events, psychological films the implications of events. One stresses action, the other reaction. If there is a great deal of movement in the closer shots, its effect on the screen will be exaggerated. For this reason, the closer shots are usually used for the relatively static scenes. Two people talking and gesturing, for example, has enough movement to prevent most medium shots from appearing static.

DOMINANT FOCUS & SUBSIDIARY CONTRASTS

The human eye automatically attempts to harmonize formal elements of a composition into a unified whole. The eye can detect as many as seven or eight major elements of a composition simultaneously. In most cases, the eye doesn't wander aimlessly over the surface of an image, but is guided sequentially to specific areas. This is accomplished through the use of a DOMINANT CONTRAST. The dominant focus is that area within a frame that immediately attracts our attention because of a conspicuous and compelling contrast. It stands out in some kind of isolation from the other elements within the frame. For example, a light element placed among various dark elements, or one color standing out among others. Virtually any formal element can be used as a dominant: a shape, a line, a texture, etc.

After we take in the dominant, our eye scans the SUBSIDIARY CONTRASTS which usually act as counterbalancing devices. We look somewhere first, then we look at those areas of diminishing interest. None of this is accidental.

Movement almost always acts as a dominant focus, providing the other elements in the image are stationary. The importance of motion, however, varies with the kind of shot used. Movement tends to be less distracting in the longer shots and highly conspicuous in the closer ranges.

Unless the viewer has time to explore the surface of an image at leisure, visual confusion can result when there are more than eight or nine major compositional elements. If visual confusion is the deliberate intention of an image – as in a battle scene – it may be appropriate to overload the composition.

COMPOSITION AND DEPTH

The design of a composition is usually not meaningful in itself, but it can derive its meaning from a dramatic situation. Some expressive cinematic effects can be achieved by understanding the relationship between the compositional elements of an image and the dramatic context of the story. In movies, dramatic context is usually the determining factor of a composition. What is superficially a bad composition might actually be highly effective, depending on its psychological context. Many films are concerned with neurotic characters or events that are out of whack. In such cases, a storyboard artist might well ignore the conventions of classical composition. Instead of centering a character in the frame, the character's spiritual maladjustment can be conveyed symbolically by placing the character near the edge of the frame. In this manner, the storyboard artist throws off the visual balance and presents the viewer with an image that's psychologically more appropriate to the dramatic context.

In most cases, a storyboard artist composes on three visual planes: the foreground, the midground and the background. Not only does this technique suggest a sense of depth, it can also radically alter the dominant contrast of an image. For example, a figure is often placed in the midground of a composition. Whatever is placed in the foreground will comment on the figure in some way. Some foliage, for instance, is likely to suggest a naturalness and blending with the environment of nature. A gauzy curtain in the foreground can suggest mystery, eroticism, and femininity. The crosshatching of a window frame can suggest self-division, and so on. These same principles apply to backgrounds, although objects placed in these areas tend to yield dominance to mid and foreground ranges.

The upper part of the composition is heavier than the lower. Images seem more balanced when the center of gravity is kept low, with most of the weights in the lower portions of the frame. Isolated figures and objects tend to be heavier than those in a cluster. Sometimes one object – merely by virtue of its isolation – can balance a whole group of otherwise equal objects. Certain lines suggest directional movements. Horizontal lines tend to move from left to right, vertical lines from bottom to top. Diagonal or oblique lines are more dynamic and tend to sweep upward.

LENS AND FILTER

TELEPHOTO LENSES produce a number of side effects that can be exploited by storyboard artists for symbolic use. Most long lenses are in sharp focus on one distance plane only. Objects placed in front of or beyond that focal distance blur, or go out of focus. This deliberate blurring in the background, foreground, or both, can produce striking photographic and atmospheric effects. RACKING FOCUS is a technique that a storyboard artist can utilize knowing the effects of the long lens. By shifting focus within the shot, the storyboard artist can guide the viewer's eye to various distances or subjects without having to cut or change the camera's position.

LONG LENSES tend to flatten images, decreasing the sense of distance between planes of depth. Two people standing yards apart might look inches away when photographed with a telephoto lens. With very long lenses, distance planes are so compressed that the image can resemble a flat surface of abstract patterns. When anything moves toward or away from the camera in such shots, the moving object can appear to be barely moving at all.

WIDE-ANGLE LENSES have short focal lengths with wide angles of view. These are the lenses used in deep-focus shots, for they preserve a sharpness of focus on virtually all distance planes. Distances between various planes of depth are also exaggerated with these lenses. Two people standing a foot apart can appear yards away from each other in a wide-angle shot. In close-up ranges, the wide-angle lens can distort images. Movement toward or away from the camera is exaggerated when photographed with a short lens. Two or three ordinary steps can seem like inhumanly lengthy strides, an effect which can be useful in emphasizing a character's strength, dominance, or ruthlessness.

FILTERS can be used to distort images in many ways, both subtle and severe. An image can be softened with a haze filter, for example, which can create a glowing, dream-like quality in a shot, or conversely, an image can be given a hard, stark quality by using a high-contrast filter. Filters can also be used to shift the color balance of a scene. Color tends to be a subconsciously emotional element in film. Color symbolism is probably culturally acquired, though its implications are usually quite similar in many societies. In general, cool colors (blue, green, violet) tend to suggest tranquility, aloofness, and serenity. Cool colors also have a tendency to recede in an image. Warm colors (red, yellow, orange) suggest aggressiveness, violence, and stimulation. They tend to come forward in most images. Colorization can throw off the compositional balance of a shot, creating a new focus of attention. In stories dealing with the darker side of the human condition, filmmakers generally avoid bright colors, which are incongruously cheerful.

LIGHTING STYLE

There are a number of different styles of lighting. Usually designated as a lighting key, the style is geared to the theme and mood of a film. Comedies and musicals, for example, tend to be lie in HIGH KEY, with bright, even illumination and few conspicuous shadows. Tragedies and melodramas are usually lit in HIGH CONTRAST, with harsh shafts of light and dramatic streaks of blackness. Mysteries and thrillers are generally in LOW KEY, with diffused shadows and atmospheric pools of light.

Lights and darks have had symbolic connotations since the dawn of humanity. The bible is filled with light/dark symbolism. In general, artists have used darkness to suggest fear, evil, the unknown. Light usually suggest security, virtue, truth, joy.

A face lit from below almost always appears sinister, even if the actor assumes a totally neutral expression. Similarly, an obstruction placed in front of a light source can assume frightening implications, for it tends to threaten our sense of safety. On the other hand, in some contexts, a silhouette can be soft and romantic.

When a face is obviously lit from above, a certain angelic quality, known as the halo effect, is the result. BACKLIGHTING, which is a kind of semi-silhouetting, is soft and ethereal. Love scenes are often photographed with a halo effect around the heads of the lovers to give them a romantic aura.

Through the use of spotlights, an image can be composed of violent contrasts of lights and darks. The surface of such images seems disfigured, torn up. A storyboard artist can uses such severe contrasts fro psychological and thematic purposes.

OVEREXPOSURE of an image – producing a blanching flood of light over the entire shot – can be effectively used in nightmare and fantasy sequences. Sometimes this technique can suggest a kind of horrible glaring publicity, a sense of emotional exaggeration.

FIGURATIVE COMPARISONS

Storyboard artists must explore the possibilities of the image as a conveyor of abstract ideas. This can be done through a number of nonverbal figurative techniques. A figurative technique is a device that suggests abstract ideas through comparison, either implied or overt. The three most common are:

1. MOTIFS

2. SYMBOLS

3. METAPHORS

All of these terms are "symbolic" in the sense that an object or event means something beyond its literal significance, but they are distinguished from each other by their degree of obtrusiveness.

MOTIFS represent the least obtrusive of the techniques. Motifs are so totally integrated within the dramatic context of a film that they are almost submerged or invisible. A motif can be a technique, an object, or anything that's systematically repeated in a movie yet doesn't call attention to itself. Even after repeated viewings, a motif is not always apparent, for its symbolic significance is never permitted to emerge or detach itself from the narrative. For example, in the movie "Cries and Whispers", a recurrent motif is the human face split in two, suggesting self-division, the hidden self, and the public vs. the private self.

SYMBOLS imply additional meanings that are relatively apparent to the observer. Additionally, the symbolic meanings of these things can shift with the dramatic context. For example, in "The Seven Samurai", a samurai and a peasant girl are attracted to each other, but their class differences present barriers. In a scene that takes place at night, a raging fire acts as a barrier, emphasizing the separation between the two characters. But their attraction is too strong, and the characters then appear in the same shot, the fire now suggesting the sexual passion they both feel. They go inside a hut, and the light from the fire outside emphasizes the eroticism of the scene. Suddenly, the girl's father discovers the lovers, and the billowing flames suggest his moral outrage.

A METAPHOR is usually defined as a comparison of some kind that cannot be literally true. Editing is a frequent source of metaphors, for two shots can be linked together to produce a third, symbolic, idea. Cinematic metaphors are always somewhat obtrusive. They are less integrated contextually, less realistic in terms of ordinary perceptions. For example, a cinematic metaphor is used in the final shot of "Psycho", where the skeletal image Norman Bates' mother flickers briefly beneath her son's features.

There are two other kinds of figurative techniques in film: ALLEGORY and ALLUSION. An allegory is a total avoidance of realism. A one-to-one correspondence exists between a character or situation and a specific symbolic

idea. One of the most famous examples of allegory is the character of Death in "The Seventh Seal". An allusion (or homage) is an implied reference, usually to a well-known event, person or work of art. For example, protagonist of "Scarface" was modeled after Al Capone who had a well-publicized scar on his cheek.

ROCKY

REV. 2/10/75

39.

INT. ROCKY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rocky and Adrian enter his one-room apartment. She is nervous and taken aback by the bleakness of the room. Rocky goes to the icebox.

ROCKY

Would ya like a glass of water?

ADRIAN

...No, thanks.

Adrian looks at the mirror above Rocky's dresser. She sees a high school photo of Rocky. He once was handsome and smooth-faced. Rocky steps up behind her, and his face is reflected in the mirror.

He turns on his cheap RECORD PLAYER. He reaches into his turtle bowl.

ROCKY

Here's the guys I was tellin' ya about--this is Cuff an' Link.

ADRIAN

I sold them to you.

ROCKY

(embarrassed)

...Oh, yeah, I bought the whole kit--Yeah, ya sold me the turtles, the bowl, an' the mountain--I had to get rid of the mountain 'cause they kept fallin' off.

ADRIAN

Do you have a phone?

ROCKY

I had it pulled. People callin' all the time. Who needs it--Who'd you wanna call?

ADRIAN

I wanna let my brother know where I am.

ROCKY

D'you really wanna call?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADRIAN
Yes, I do.

ROCKY
You sure?

ADRIAN
Yes.

ROCKY
Why?

ADRIAN
I think he might be worried.

ROCKY
I'll call your brother.

Rocky flings open the window and bellows like a foghorn.

ROCKY
Yo, Paulie--Ya sister's with me!
I'll call ya later!

Rocky closes the window and faces the woman. She is not smiling. She looks frightened.

ROCKY
What's the matter? Ya don't like
the room?

ADRAIN
It's fine.

ROCKY
It's only temporary.

ADRIAN
It's not that---

ROCKY
What's the problem? You don't like
me--Don't like the turtles--What is
it?

ADRIAN
I don't think I belong here.

(CONTINUED)