**Visual Techniques**

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| **Allusions** | References to other images/visual media, including art, films, pop culture, religious icons, etc. Sometimes in the form of a parody (referencing another image but making it humorous), these usually recontextualise or “change the meaning” of the original media. |
| **Angles/Lines** | The ‘direction’ of an image based on the angles or lines within it. Horizontals create a sense of calm, verticals a sense of structure and diagonals a mood of unease or being off’balance. |
| **Body Language** | Facial expressions, body language and gestures used to show character’s attitudes, moods or personality. Often focussed on overall body movement and positioning. |
| **Close-up Shot** | When the frame is mostly or entirely filled with a character’s face, an important object, etc. Used to create viewer focus and show that whatever is being shown is important. Often used on character’s faces in highly emotional images. |
| **Colour (Hue/Tone)** | Colours are symbolic of different emotions, moods, etc. and are used to evoke corresponding responses in audiences. Purple is a colour of royalty, wealth and luxury whereas red symbolises lust, passion, anger and so on. Also consider how saturated colours are (are they bright and vivid or dull and desaturated?). |
| **Composition** | What an image is made up of – where things are placed, how it is framed, the colour and lighting used, etc. This generally refers to the image as a whole. |
| **Contrast** | Placing things that are considered opposite close to each other. Contrasts can be between colours (black and white), sizes (large and small), textures (rough and smooth), etc. to create interest and complexity. One small contrasting colour/size/shape in an image is also usually highly salient because it stands out. |
| **Framing** | The camera shots and angles used in images/films to create different audience reactions and emotions. E.g. close-up, extreme close-up, mid shots, aerial shots, etc. |
| **Gaze** | Where a character looks, which then directs viewer’s eyes. A ‘demand’ gaze involves direct eye contact between a character and the viewer, an ‘offer’ has the character look at something within the image, drawing the viewer’s eyes there too. Can also be used to express emotion/intent. |
| **High Angle Shot** | A shot taken from slightly above something/someone, looking down on it/them. Creates a sense of the character being weak, helpless, intimidated, etc. May also be used to represent someone literally looking down at an object/scene (point of view). |
| **Law of Thirds** | By dividing an image into equal thirds along the horizontal, the vertical axis you can break it into 9 equal sections which each have different connotations, Movement is expected to from the left thirds to the right thirds, otherwise it’s read as moving backwards (literally or figuratively). Characters in the top right third are seen as powerful or in control, while those in the bottom left thirds are weaker or being controlled. |
| **Lighting** | How a shot is lit or not lit. This includes natural lighting (the sun, open windows, etc.) and man-made lighting (lamps, torches, etc.) as well as feature lighting such as coloured lights, spotlights, moving lights, etc. Lighting has a major impact on the mood and atmosphere of an image (low light is seedy, harsh light is unnerving, soft light is intimate, etc.). |
| **Long/Wide Shot** | A shot that is made up of a large landscape, cityscape or other kind of scene, Generally these are used to get across lots of information at once, such as the layout of a room, the location of an event, the number of people around, etc. |
| **Low Angle Shot** | A shot taken from slightly below someone/something, used to present them/it as being in a position of power, dominance or control. It may also be used to have someone literally look up at someone/something (point of view) |
| **Mid Shot** | A shot that is approximately half-filled with a figure, object, etc. Usually these are ‘regular’ shots and are very common for character conversations/interactions or showing a select area or object within an area (a desk, chair, etc.). |
| **Point of View** | How the shot is framed in reference to the viewer or a character. Does the shot take the character’s point of view (a shot of a character leaning out a window cutting to an aerial shot looking down from a window) or is the audience placed level with, above or below the characters/objects/action? |
| **Positioning** | Where have objects and characters been placed in the shot? What is in the foreground, middle ground and background and why have they been placed there? |
| **Salience** | How much any section of an image draws the viewer’s eyes – the most salient feature of an image is whatever/wherever the viewer’s eyes are first drawn when they look at it. Salience is always deliberate and usually created through contrast, colour, framing and layout. |
| **Symbolism** | The use of one image/object to represent an idea or concept that is more complex than it is. Religious symbolism, pop culture symbolism and animal symbolism are all very common. |
| **Text** | Words used within images to convey a literal or figurative message. Consider the font, colour, size, weight, etc. of the text, where and how often it has been used and the connotations of the words actually used. |
| **Vectors** | The lines or paths viewer’s eyes follow when looking at an image, usually vectors are deliberately created to lead the eyes to a focal point or important feature. Because we read left to right we tend to follow vectors in the same direction across an image. |