Cinematography

Quality

Diegesis

The diegesis includes objects, events, spaces and the characters that inhabit them, including things, actions, and attitudes not explicitly presented in the film but inferred by the audience. That audience constructs a diegetic world from the material presented in a narrative film.

Amelie

Mise-En-Scene

All the things that are *"put in the scene:"* the setting, the decor, the lighting, the costumes, the performance, etc. Narrative films often manipulate the elements of mise-en-scene, such as decor, costume, and acting to intensify or undermine the ostensible significance of a particular scene. The representation of space affects the reading of a film. Depth, proximity, size and proportions of the places and objects in a film can be manipulated through camera placement and lenses, lighting, decor, effectively determining mood or relationships between elements in the diegetic world.

Her

The Royal Tenenbaums

Decor

An important element of *"putting in the scene"* is décor, the objects contained in and the setting of a scene. Décor can be used to amplify character emotion or the dominant mood of a film. This could also be referred to Art or Set Direction.

2001: A Space Odyssey

Color

Color can be used to create aesthetic patterns and to establish character or emotion in cinema.


Hero

Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?

Contrast

The ratio of dark to light in an image. If the difference between the light and dark areas is large, the image is said to be *"high contrast."* If the difference is small, it is referred to as *"low contrast."* Most films use low contrast to achieve a more naturalistic lighting. High contrast is usually associated with the low key lighting of dark scenes in genres such as the horror film and the film noir.

The Big Sleep *(high)*
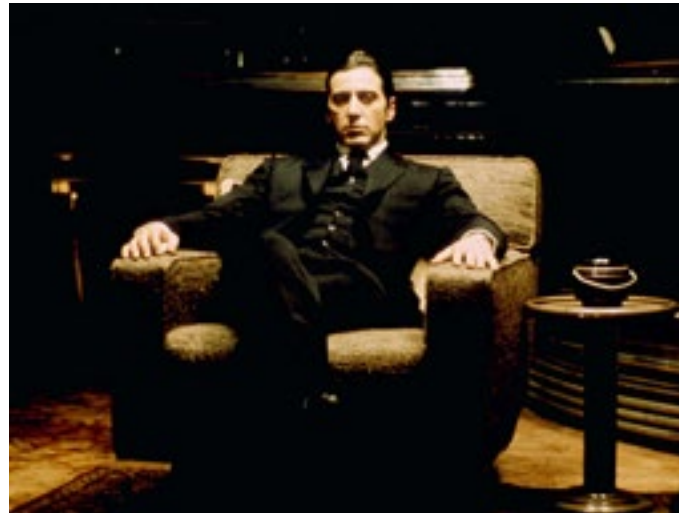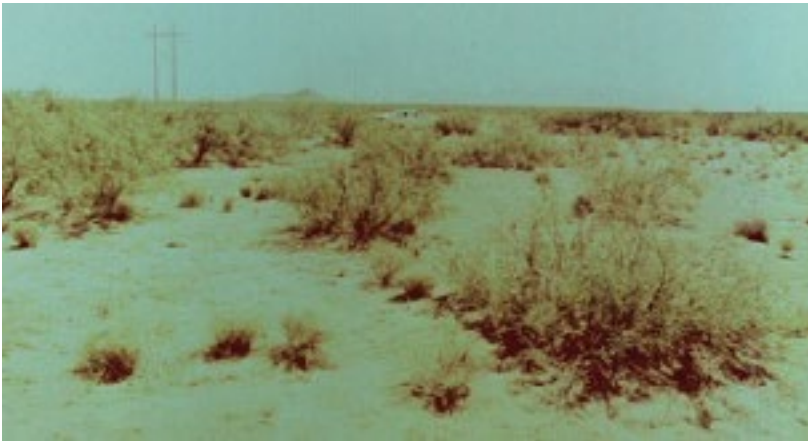

The Godfather *(high)*

Days of Heaven *(low)*

Exposure

A camera lens has an aperture that controls how much light passes through the lens and onto the film. If the aperture is widened, more light comes through and the resultant image will become more exposed. If an image is so pale that the detail begins to disappear, it can be described as "overexposed". Conversely, a narrow aperture that allows through less light will produce a darker image than normal, known as "underexposed". Exposure can be manipulated to guide an audience's response to a scene.

Traffic (*overexposed*)

The overexposure in the background adds a dream feel to this sequence from *Run Lola Run* (1998). Notice how the white bleeds with people's profiles. The actress in the foreground is normally exposed.

Run Lola Run (*overexposed*)

Punch Drunk Love (*overexposed*)

Barry Lyndon (*almost underexposed*)

Depth of Field

The distance through which elements in an image are in sharp focus. Bright light and a narrow lens aperture tend to produce a larger depth of field, as does using a wide-angle rather than a long lens. A shallow depth of field is often used as a technique to focus audience attention on the most significant aspect of a scene.

Pulp Fiction

Seven

Deep Focus

Deep focus requires that elements at very different depths of the image both be in focus. Some auteurs use it consistently for they believe it achieves a truer representation of space.

Citizen Kane

Touch of Evil

Shallow Focus

A restricted depth of field, which keeps only one plane in sharp focus; the opposite of deep focus. Used to direct the viewer's attention to one element of a scene. Shallow focus is very common in close-ups.
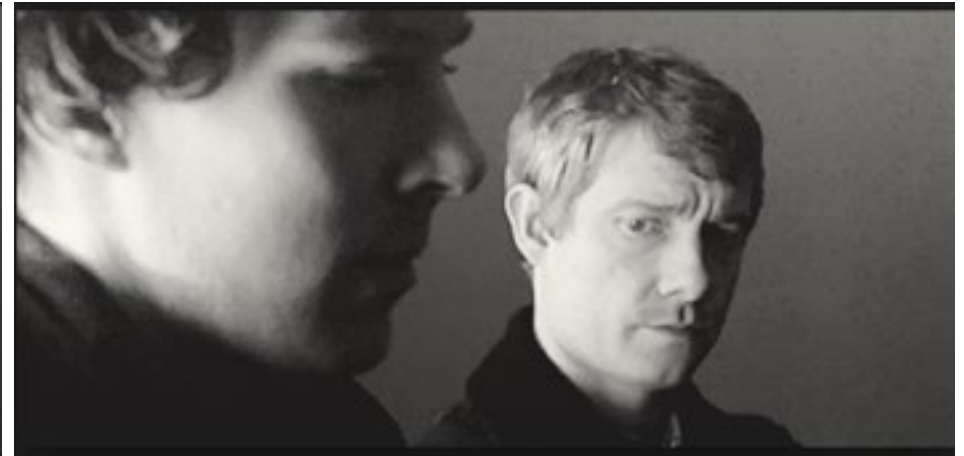

The Master

Rack Focus

Racking focus refers to the practice of changing the focus of a lens such that an element in one plane of the image goes out of focus and an element at another plane in the image comes into focus. This technique is an even more overt way of steering audience attention through the scene, as well as of linking two spaces or objects.

Sherlock Holmes

Telephoto Shot

An image shot with an extremely long lens is called a telephoto shot. The effect of using a long lens is to compress the apparent depth of an image, so that elements that are relatively close or far away from the camera seem to lie at approximately the same distance.

Telephoto lenses are ideal for tight shots and narrowing depth of field. This selective focus in *The Graduate* (1967) keeps our attention on Ben.

Paycheck

The Graduate

Wide Angle

A lens of short focal length that affects a scene's perspective by distorting straight lines near the edges of the frame and by exaggerating the distance between foreground and background planes. In doing so it allows for more space to enter the frame (hence the name "wide"), which makes it more convenient for shooting in a closed location, for instance a real room, rather than a three-wall studio room. In addition, a wider lens allows for a bigger depth of field. In 35mm filming, a wide angle lens is 30mm or less.

The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou

The Royal Tenenbaums

The Last Emperor

The Hurt Locker

Zoom Shot

The zoom shot allows the filmmaker to change the focal length of the lens while the shot is in progress. We seem to move toward or away from the subject, while the quality of the image changes from that of a shorter to a longer lens, or vice versa. Zooms are commonly used at the beginning of a scene, or even a film, to introduce an object or character by focusing on it.

Indiana Jones

Jaws

Vertigo

Poltergeist

Rate

A typical film is shot at a frame rate of 24 frames per second. If the number of frames exposed in each second is increased, the action will seem to move more slowly than normal when it is played back. Conversely, the fewer the number of frames exposed each second, the more rapid the resulting action appears to be.

Fantastic Mr. Fox *(stop motion)*

Hurt Locker *(slow motion)*

Limitless *(fast motion)*

Zombieland *(slow motion)*

Framing

Angle of Framing

Many films are shot with a camera that appears to be at approximately the same height as its subject. However, it is possible to film from a position that is significantly lower or higher than the dominant element of the shot. In that case, the image is described as **low angle** or **high angle** respectively. Angle of framing can be used to indicate the relation between a character and the camera's point of view. It is often used to suggest either vulnerability or power. Or can simply be used to create striking visual compositions.

Psycho (high angle)

Psycho (low angle)

Saboteur (high angle)

Touch of Evil (low angle)

Canted Framing

Canted framing is a view in which the frame is not level; either the right or left side is lower than the other, causing objects in the scene to appear slanted out of an upright positon. Canted framings are used to create an impression of chaos and instability. They are therefore associated with the frantic rhythms of action films, music videos and animation. They are also common when shooting with a Steadycam.

The Birds

Do the Right Thing

Inception

Following Shot

A shot with framing that shifts to keep a moving figure onscreen. A following shot combines a camera movement, like panning, tracking, tilting or craning, with the specific function of directing our attention to a character or object as he/she/it moves inside the frame.

Boogie Nights

Eyes Wide Shot

Goodfellas

The Shining

Point-of-View Shot

A shot taken with the camera placed approximately where the character's eyes would be, showing what the character would see; usually cut in before or after a shot of the character looking. Horror films and thrillers often use POV shots to suggest a menacing and unseen presence in the scene. Films that use many point-of-view shots tend toward dynamic and non-naturalistic style. POV is one of the means by which audiences are encouraged to identify with characters.
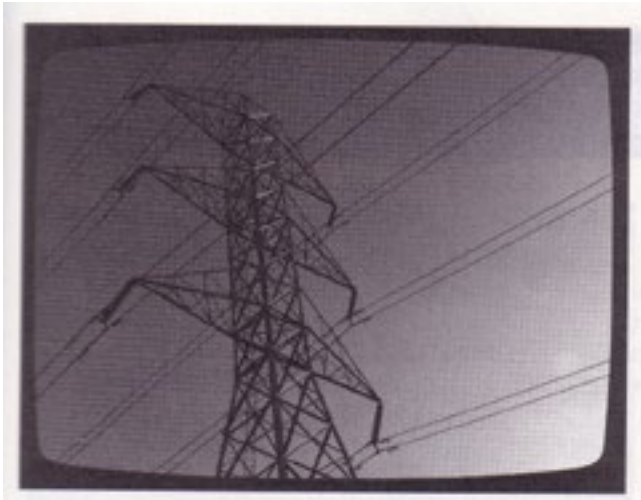

Goodfellas

Reservoir Dogs

Breaking Bad

Peep Show

Graphic/Index Vectors

Graphic vectors are created by lines or an arrangement of stationary objects that lead the eye in a certain direction. Index vectors are created by someone or something that points unquestionably in a particular direction.
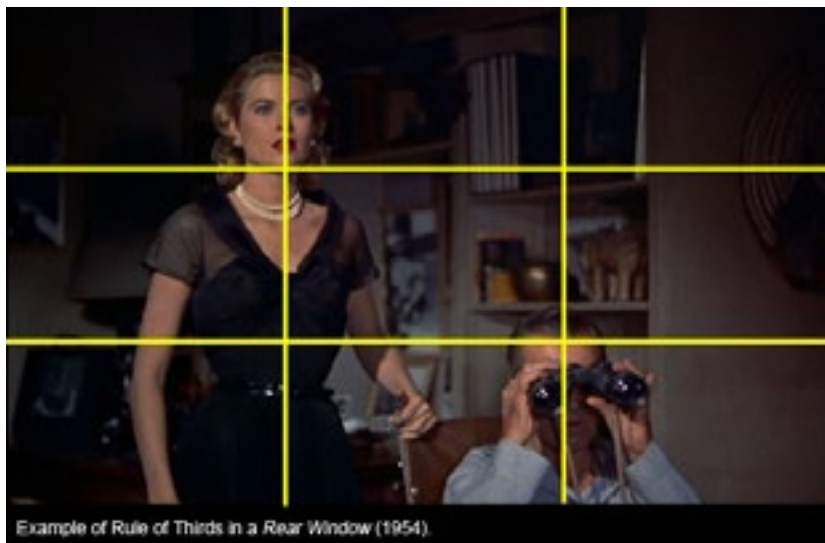
Rule of Thirds

A prominent horizontal line can best be divided by a vertical object located at about one-third the distance from either the left or the right screen edge. This way the screen is not divided into two equal halves, which makes for a more dynamic and interesting composition.

Seven

Example of Rule of Thirds in a *Rear Window* (1954).

Rear Window

Foreground, Middleground, Background

A distinct division of the z-axis into foreground, middleground, and background creates the illusion of depth.

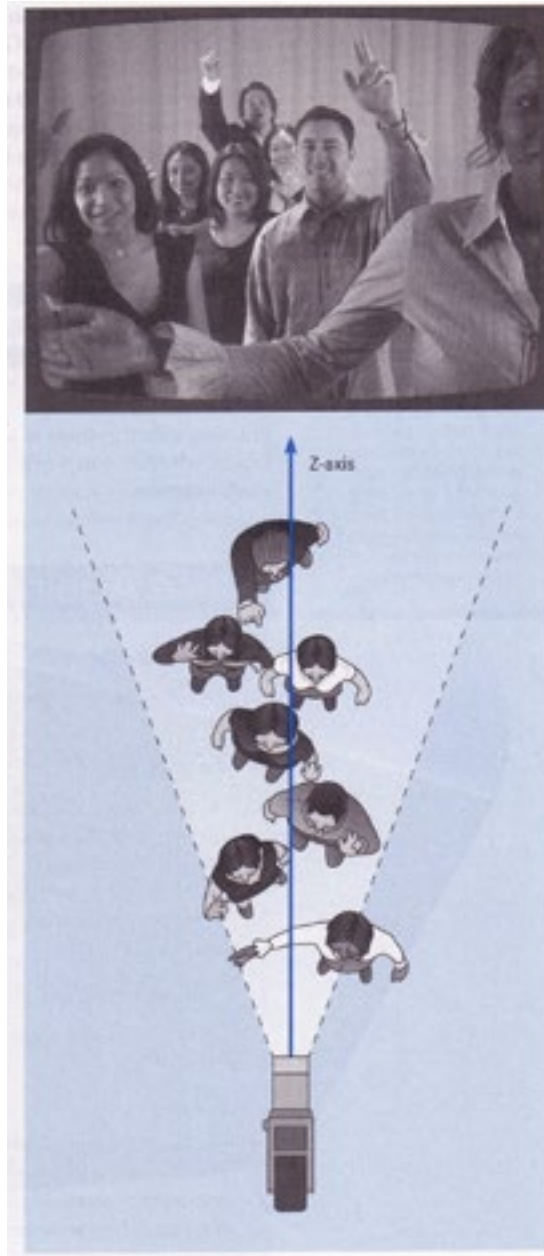American Beauty

Stranger Than Paradise

Citizen Kane

Z-axis Blocking

Blocking along the z-axis in a small space provides more depth.

Headroom

Correct headroom neutralizes the magnetic pull of the upper edge and makes the person look comfortable within the frame. Without headroom, the person seems glued to the top edge of the screen. Too much headroom tends to dwarf the person and push the image against the lower half of the screen.
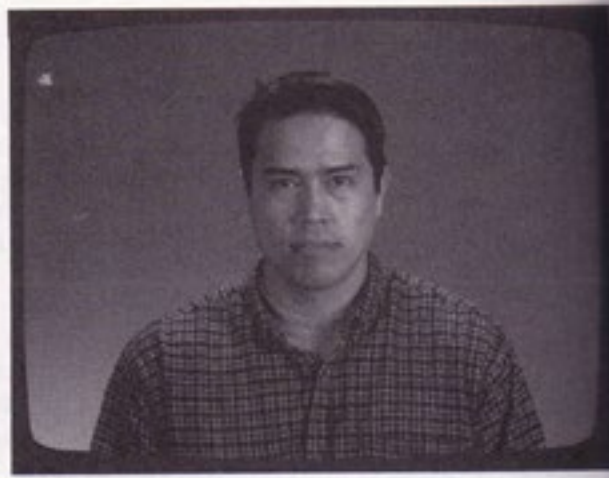
Noseroom

Proper noseroom should counter the pull of the screen and the force of the glance. Without any space between the nose and the screen edge, the person seems to be glued to the screen edge or crashing into it.

Leadroom

With proper leadroom the laterally moving subject or object seems able to move freely in the given direction. Without proper leadroom the laterally moving subject or object seems oddly impeded by the screen edge.
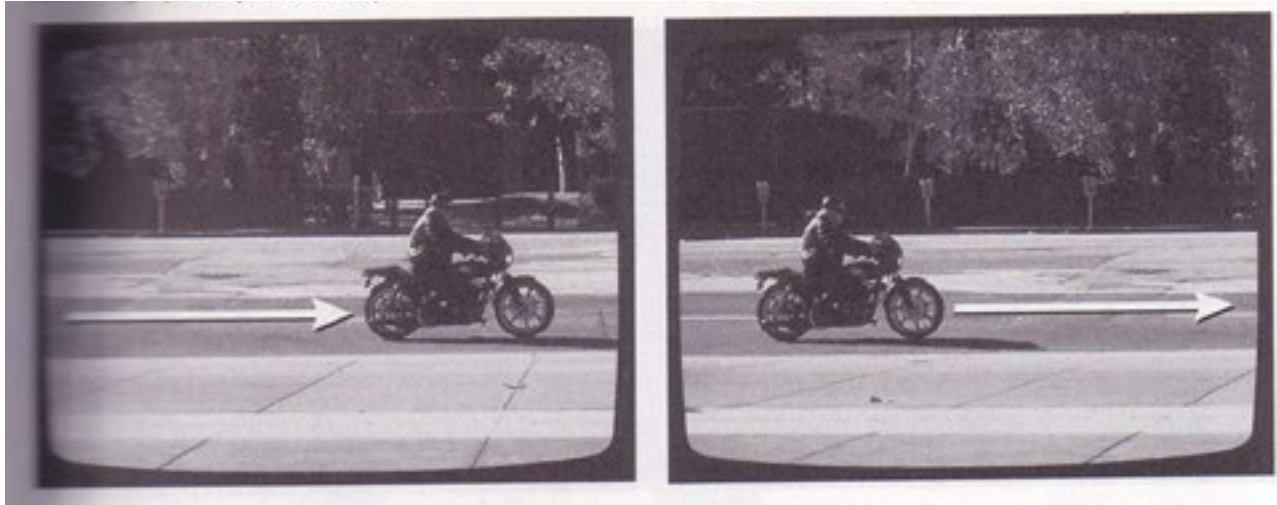
Scale

Extreme Long Shot (XLS)

A framing in which the scale of the object shown is very small; a building, landscape, or crowd of people will fill the screen. Usually the first or last shots of a sequence, that can also function as establishing shots.

The Fighter

The Lord of the Rings

Eyes Wide Shut

A Summer Tale

Long Shot (LS)

A framing in which the scale of the object shown is small; a standing human figure would appear nearly the height of the screen. It makes for a relatively stable shot that can accomodate movement without reframing. Another advantage of the long shot is that it allows to show a character and her/his surroundings in a single frame.

Eyes Wide Shut

A Summer Tale

Medium Shot (MS)

A framing which is usually waist up. Medium shots are used for dialogue sequences, and they allow the viewer to pick up on the character's movements and gestures. The medium shot often is partnered with a close-up shot, because it is not necessarily used for establishing shots.

Eyes Wide Shut

A Summer Tale

Close Up (CU)

A framing in which the scale of the object shown is relatively large. In a close-up a person's head, or some other similarly sized object, would fill the frame. Framing scales are not universal, but rather established in relationship with other frames from the same film. The shot could start at the neck or upper chest relative to the other shots.

Eyes Wide Shut

A Summer Tale

Extreme Close Up (XCU)

A framing in which the scale of the object shown is very large; most commonly, a small object or a part of the body usually shot with a zoom lens. Faces are the most recurrent images in extreme close-ups.
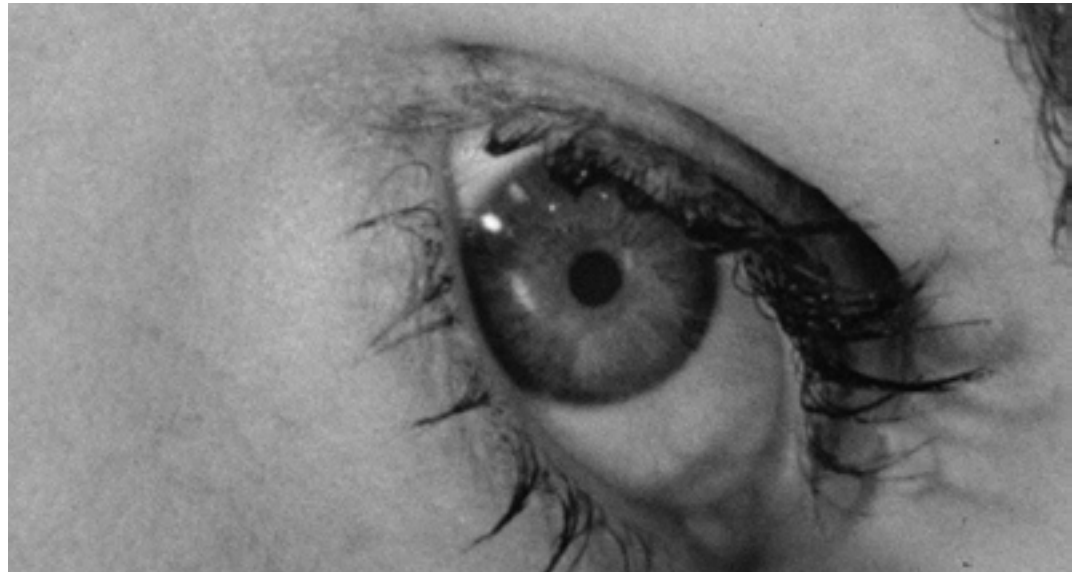

The Blair Witch Project

The Color of Paradise

Citizen Kane

Psycho

Movement

Crane Shot

A shot with a change in framing rendered by having the camera above the ground and moving through the air in any direction. It is accomplished by placing the camera on a crane or similar device. Crane shots are often long or extreme long shots: they lend the camera a sense of mobility and often give the viewer a feeling of omniscience over the characters. ATUS say they have a Jib which can be used to get a higher angle.
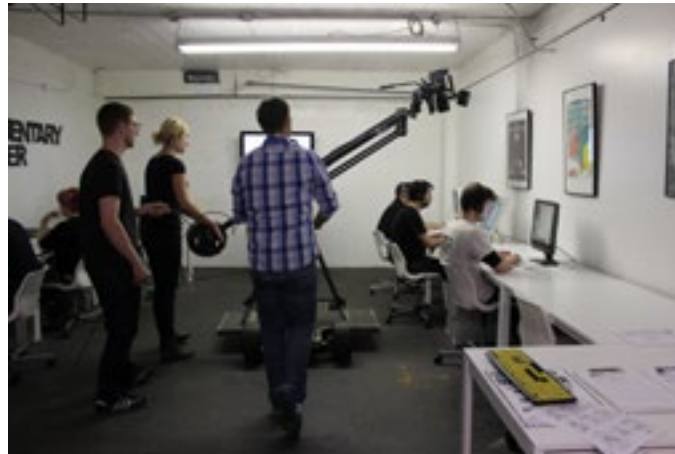

High Noon

Shawshank Redemption

Inglorious Basterds *(crane)*

BFA Workshop *(jib)*

Handheld/Steadicam

The use of the camera operator's body as a camera support, either holding it by hand or using a gyroscopic stabilizer. Whereas hand held cameras give a film an unstable, jerky feel, they also allows for a greater degree of movement and flexibility than bulkier standard cameras at a fraction of the cost. Steadicams make it possible to create smooth "tracking" shots without cumbersome equipment.


Cloverfield

District 9

Requiem For a Dream

(steadicams)

Proper Handheld Techniques

The small camcorder is steadied by both hands with the elbows pressed against the body. Leaning against a support will steady both camera operator and camera. Before panning, point your knees in the direction of the pan, then uncoil your upper body during the pan. Walking backward rather than forward makes it easier to keep the camera steady.
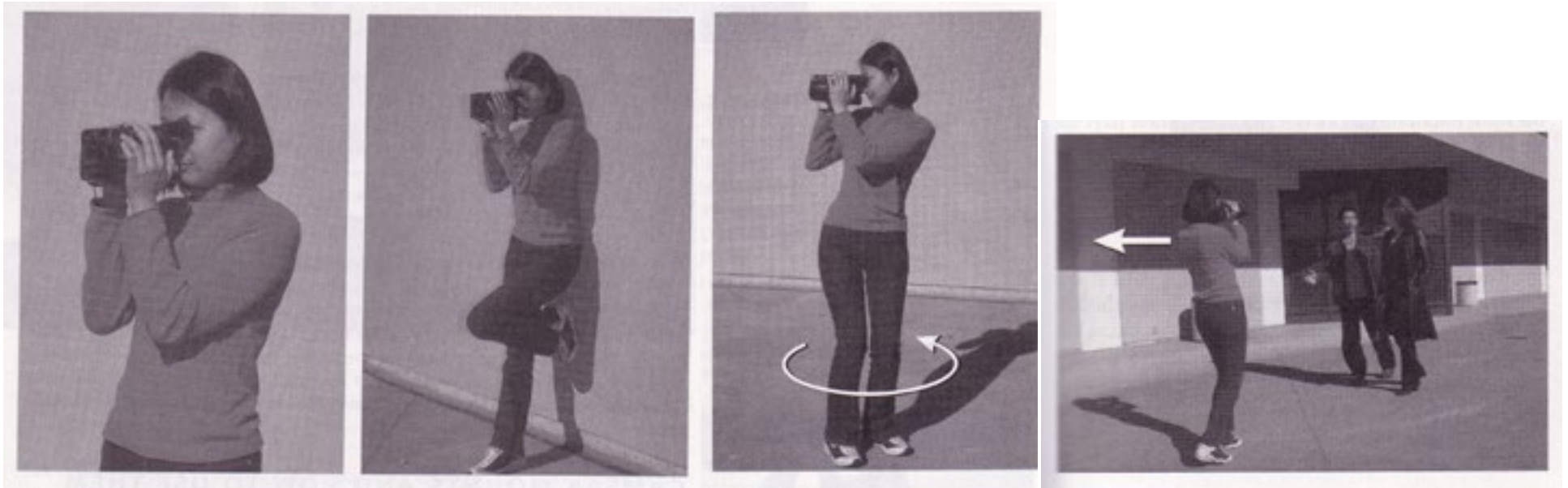
Pan

A camera movement with the camera body turning to the right or left. On the screen, it produces a mobile framing which scans the space horizontally. A pan directly and immediately connects two places or characters, thus making us aware of their proximity. The speed at which a pan occurs can be expoited for different dramatic purposes.

Traffic

Tilt

A camera movement with the camera body swiveling upward or downward on a stationary support. It produces a mobile framing that scans the space vertically. Its function is similar to that of pans and tracking shots, albeit on a vertical axis. A tilt usually also implies a change in the angle of framing. It is also a means of gradually uncovering offscreen space.

Traffic

(tripod tilt up)

Tracking Shot

A mobile framing that travels through space forward, backward, or laterally. A tracking shot usually follows a character or object as it moves along the screen. Contrary to the pan, which mimicks a turning head, a tracking shot physically accompanies the entire range of movement. It therefore creates a closer affinity with the character or object moving, since the spectator is not just watching him/her moving, but moving with him/her. Created by moving a camera along rails or a track to ensure smoothness of movement. Some DIY solutions use bicycles, wheelchairs, skateboards, carts and so on. ATUS has sliders for checkout.

The Darjeeling Limited

Birdman

(track)

(dolly)

(slider)