moving frames

Table of contents.

Attestation of authorship.

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Acknowledgements.

Abstract.

The project is an attempt to offer multiple viewing perspectives in a narrative. The objective is to experiment with communication via multiple screens effectively by using moving images. By moving images, I mean "a form of entertainment that enacts a story by a sequence of images giving the illusion of continuous movement".

How does interpretation/perception change when temporal (time) and spatial representations are depicted juxtaposed?

By having a visible separation between the apparatus (screen/monitor), the experimentation is for the spectator to judge looking at the project in different time frames as opposed to simultaneously. The objective is to experiment with the notion of multitasking, theory of spectator engagement (interacting with the project), viewer editing (specific ways of arranging scenes) and comic book panel's implication on moving images.

For instance, can the comic book concept be adapted into moving images? The comic book concept is how imagery, words and sound are interpreted from visual representations (the comic panel).

Prologue.

Methodology of tinkering

A combination of 3 research methodology designs that best fits into the genre of this project has been chosen.

The first stage in the development of the practical work is to critically reflect on historical and theoretical ideologies about dialectic perception and editing in cinema as well as visual arrangement through the use of hermeneutics. In order to be reflexive on past ideologies and the historical context, the process of hermeneutics needed to be applied. "Hermeneutics can be understood as a theory, methodology and praxis of interpretation that is geared at the recapturing of meaning of a text, or a text-analogue, that is temporally or culturally distant, or obscured by ideology and false consciousness."[1] The key context discussed here is recapturing the meaning of text. This is essentially important when dealing with theories that are inconclusive and opposing in views, i.e. comic book theory of arrangement and panel reading.

The second stage consists of analysing and using the collected data to formulate working prototypes and experimentations. To produce results for data collection, the process of hermeneutics is used to interpret and analyse case studies and film/comic book theories to get a clearer meaning for the reflexive process to begin. As the project does not only reflect one focused concept; multiple perspectives in discourse (historical and theoretical) on the subject matter of film editing, animation, comic books and perception will also be discussed. However in developing the practical work, judgement is inherently important to create a balance within the project so as not to rely entirely on historical influences. This ensures that the novelty and vision of the project are retained.

At the third and final stage, I sought out perspectives and actively engaged the audience by shifting through new aspects of ideas based on judgement. The method of "bricolage" plays a huge significant role in the production process; there is no exact equivalent meaning in English for the French term "bricolage", tinkering is the literal action attached to the term but the analogy is not. Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss writes, "In its old sense, the verb bricoleur applies to ball games and billiards, to hunting and riding, but always to invoke an incident movement: that of the ball that bounces, of the dog that strays away, of the horse that swerves from the straight line to avoid an

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1   Dementerio III, F.P.A. (2001) "Introduction to Hermeneutics", San Beda College, Mendiola, Manila, Philippines

obstacle. And, in our days, the bricoleur is still the one who works with his hands, using indirect means compared to those of the craftsman." [2]

By definition of indirect means, the concept is that a bricoleur makes do with what's there and what he/she encounters. As Levi-Strauss explains, "The bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks. However, in contrast to the engineer, he does not subordinate each one of them to the acquisition of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the project. His universe of tools is closed, and the rule of his game is to always make do with 'what's available' that is, a set, finite at each instance, of tools and materials, heterogeneous to the extreme. This is because the composition of the set is not related to the current project or to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions that have occurred to renew or enrich the stock, or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions".

The bricoleur uses the inventory semi-defined elements: they are at the same time abstract and concrete. They carry a meaning, given to them by their past uses and the bricoleur's experience,

knowledge and skill; a meaning which can be modified, up to a point, by the requirements of the project and the bricoleur's intentions.

The practice project, Royal Flush is a combination of inventory-elements based on a reflexive process of experience and judgement. As such, the proportional weighting of 70% practice based work and 30% written exegesis structure is chosen, whereby much of the practice theory is applied in the project with substantial detail in the exegesis to quantify the concept.

2   Levi-Strauss, C (1962) "La Pensee Sauvage", Librairie Plon, Paris

Introduction.

When this project began, it was merely an interactive movie with defined paths; however with defined paths, the question of user defined paths versus author-defined paths brought about an evolution of a new idea. The notion of dual reception points spawned from the interactive movie's dual path split screen.

The general idea was to make character perspectives true to its nature, meaning if there are two characters in the narrative, the audience should watch dual character perspectives instead of a third person view on a single reception point. The question is now what happens in between the screens? The in-between becomes the relational link between the visual images and the audience, a common spatial area where both visual meanings are collected, hence the gutter.

Investigation into the idea began with a look into comic books and graphic novels as synonymous to the medium are panel and grid control, much like split screening on moving images but on print (static) medium. Over the last ten years, cinema has taken the comic book movie with the fervour formerly reserved for action movies. The sharp decline in comic book sales during the mid to late 90's pushed publishing houses to look at other domains, this meant when movie producers came

knocking, there was little resistance to the idea of comic book characters being put up in lights. In making a comic book into a film, how does the essence of a reading comic book panels now fit into moving images?

By beginning with a static medium and progressing to moving images, it reinforced the idea and notion of gutter relationships and the way shots are composed/edited to justify screen fragmentation. The progression evolved into trying to adapt comic books into moving images, whilst still retaining the core concept of comic book reading – perspective anticipation; anticipation of what is going to happen on the next page, character's reaction to action and how the narrative will play out.

The aim of this project is to make perspectives no longer a singular proprietary notion in moving images but rather in multiplicity, like in comic books. Instead of cutting to multiple shots, there is a camera point of view permanently fixed on character. Which means the anticipation becomes more intense during face-offs and confrontations as compared to a straight montage cut.

The objective is to experiment with spectator engagement (how the spectator believes that he/she is the character portrayed or primordial mirror)

and viewer editing (how the spectator re-arranges the scenes shown on each screen and how sense and closure is made from that arrangement).

The following chapters are the documentation of ideas, discussion, concepts and experience of creating a story in the gutter. The essence of the project will be addressed first followed by an analysis of historical context in film montage and the role of identification. Discussions will continue with the cinematic gaze and display/exhibition strategies.

What lies in between?

The gutter; a general term in comics used to describe the separation and fragmentation of the visual narrative between panels. The action that takes place within the blank space can be attributed to development of temporal and spatial connotations within the narrative itself. Comics academic, Mario Saraceni describes the action, " The reader has to guess the missing elements in order to reconstruct the flow of the story. The gutter is similar to the space that divides one sentence from the next." [3] The act of guessing in this context is merely a generalised summation of the idea behind understanding what happens between the gutter. Saraceni's concept spawns from the analogy between the construction of grammatically correct sentences and the structuring of visual representations.

Scott McCloud, comic theorist attributes the notion of guessing to our individualised percept system, "All of us perceive the world as a whole through the experience of senses but our senses can only reveal a world that is fragmented and incomplete; thus our perception of reality is an act of faith based on those fragments." [4] The term he coins as

closure means to observe the parts but perceive as a whole; which is practised in comic books and also in cinema whereby the art of picture in picture is no longer considered to be purely of aesthetic value but a possibility for directors to produce suspense and to challenge the audience. He goes on to explain, "comic panels fracture both time and space offering jagged staccato rhythm of unconnected moments, but closure allows us to connect these moments and mentally construct a continuous unified reality."

In the project *Royal Flush*, the gutter is often referred to as not only the physical space between the transmitters but also the space between the viewer and the transmitter. The gutter in a literal sense (in relation to the project) is defined as a collection of 'implied meaning' to be transferred to from one transmitter to the next and it also refers to the transference of meaning from the transmitter to the viewer as well. The concept of gutter from my point of view is storage; much like a water gutter where collected water flows from one point to the other, similarly with information. As information flows, it brings along its meaning and the simulated experience (time and space) to the next point be it the viewer or another transmitter. The implied meaning in reference to the project objective is to design the in-between space and expand on what

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3   Saraceni,M (2003) "The Language of Comics", London. Routledge. page 9

4   McCloud.S (1994), "Understanding Comics: The invisible art", New York: Harper Collins page 62.

is not shown but implied. In the latter pages, I will describe the system used to determine the implied meaning in the gutter.

Fellow comic strip artist, James Kolchalka states that the fragmentation mentioned by McCloud is more of a metaphor for world building and the comic panels are merely units arranged in a rhythmic pattern. The comic units do not only construct presence of time but creates and activates the imaginary world. [5] The argument suggests that McCloud assumes readers' moves through the narrative via space (the physical separation between two panels) and thus creating a temporal sense between the panels. Kolchalka suggests a point of view opposed to McCloud; whereby readers create the world between the panels/units thus creating the imaginary space and time in that world rather than in the panels as McCloud suggests. Thus the summation of both McCloud's and Kolchalka's theory is that comics are able to bridge the gap between words and images by manipulating space (juxtaposition), creating relationship (sequence), and evoking simulated experience (communicating temporal information and/or producing a response.)

Saraceni describes, "readers rely both on explicit indications of links (cohesion), mainly in the form of repetition, and on their capacity to find other, more implicit connections and infer whatever is missing from the narrative (coherence). [6] He implies that the conceptual aspect of time and space is related to a grammatical sentence, and the gutter is controlled by the use of sentence adjectives (short, narrow, long, etc.) to describe the temporal and spatial attributes between the panels. The cohesive link described by Saraceni is the visual representation of the comic panels. McCloud reinforces this idea by stating, "if visual iconography is the vocabulary of comics then closure is its grammar." [7]

Closure in the gutter means a transitional realm that links two images, not unlike the way a transitional sentence links two paragraphs together in a logical sequence. This analogy has other implications. The phrase, "a picture is worth a thousand words" might seem to be a commonplace expression, but is nevertheless, a useful description of the value of an information-rich visual image. This is especially true as one

5   Kolchalka,J(1999)," The horrible truth about comics"

6   Saraceni,M (2003) "The Language of Comics",London: Routledge. page 56

7   McCloud.S (1994), "Understanding Comics: The invisible art", New York: Harper Collins page 67.

considers the number of words required to "translate" these images into written paragraph form. If a picture really is worth a thousand words, we might begin to view images and other visual evidence as something like thousand word paragraphs. In the same way that a prose composition links paragraphs together, we might link these "visual paragraphs" in sequential order, joined by transitional gutters, thereby constructing something that resembles a "visual essay". [8]

The system for determining the spatial "meaning" between both transmitters begins with juxtaposition, in order to create tension and the illusion of movement (limited animation). Observing the basic notion of trained Western response of reading left to right and top to bottom can lead to various options. While it may not be the best option, it accomplishes the task of controlling the eye of the viewer and reaffirms what we know as a common viewing habit. The control of image sequences within the panels determines the relationship between both juxtaposed panels; the gutter then replicates what a cut means in cinema, a fragmentation of the continuity to create mood and rhythm of the narrative. This rhythm will become the participative module for the

Figure 1, retrieved from Bendis, B.M (2000) "Sam & Twitch vol.1 book of Udaku", Image Comics

8   Berger,P (1972)," Ways of Seeing", BBC and Penguin Books.

audiences to connect both panels together hence closure is achieved. An emotional response will be invoked through experience whereby we as the audience recognise the visual representation as a simulation of reality; the visual image will speak to us the same way memory does with full sensory participation.

The juxtaposition in this instance plays a significant role, in (figure 1). The control of the eye begins at the bottom because by experience, the reader brings forth knowledge that smoke travels upwards, so it is read from bottom panel upwards. However from a camera point of view, it can be viewed and start from the top panel, the action replicates a pan down movement. By viewing from the bottom panel upwards, it depicts a singular individualised point of view as opposed to viewing it from the top panel in a downward action which then depicts a third person point of view. The project experimentation led to a number of sequences in the project that exploited the switch between first and third person perspectives. On (figure 2) both panels are on the same time frame, the temporal significance in both scenes is the same and both characters are in the same space but different rooms. The scene depicts the protagonist waiting for the elevator to arrive. The juxtaposition of the panels can be read from top to bottom or

vice versa, to suggest anxiety and nervousness in waiting and also the notion of the character being watched. On the opposite monitor, the 4 frames do not depict any relationship with the previous character but reveals the third person point of view via the closed circuit camera.

The switch between first and third person perspective in this instance allows the narrative to flow from one to the other and yet still ensuring that both perspectives are from different characters. The relationship link in this instance is the closed circuit camera that acts as the third person view device. Suffice to say, it may be considered as a fourth person perspective as the viewer is watching the camera capturing images of the third person. The relationship link creates the meaning of the representation. An interesting observation is the

usage of visual ellipsis for the panels in figure 2, the decision to omit portions of the body was based around the rationale that the audience would make the connection between the image of the head looking toward the elevator display and the tapping of the feet. The space between the panels creates enough closure for audiences to realise that they are the same connected visual. The concept can similarly be applied to a larger context, in this case, the gutter.

The spatial element within panels was taken into serious account in order to prove that the physical spaces within the panels were changing and also to dynamically link both transmitters. (figure 3) on the next page, depicts a sparring dojo; the panel in panel sequence suggests that the establishing shot begins on the right as with the Eastern way of reading. What is interesting to note here is the spatial connotation of the 'sensei' image sitting in the middle of a confined pane mainly implies that he is in a different section of the room. However, it also creates the panel's relationship to the establishing shot, second and fourth panel. It is almost as if he is observing the character actions of the three panels. One of the aims in this project was to replicate a similar situation but to make the space between panels more dynamic and responsive to the narrative.

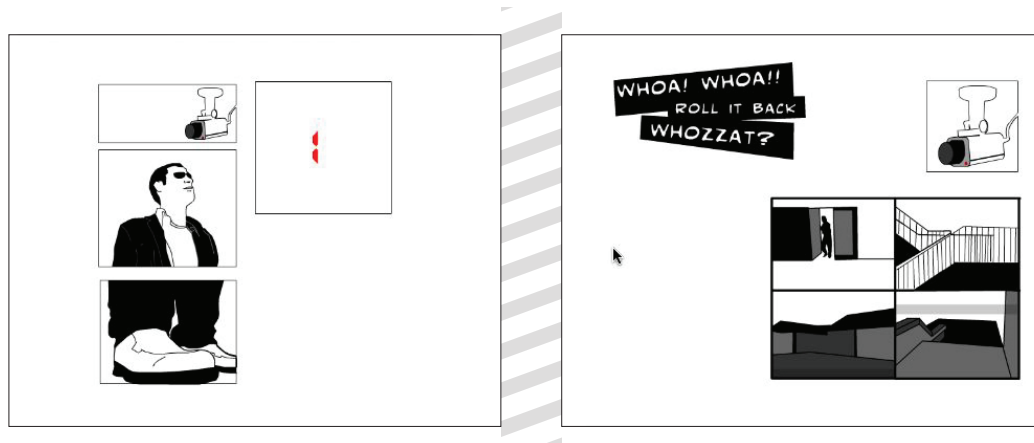*Figure 2, retrieved from Royal Flush, timestamp 1minute: 21seconds*

Figure 3 retrieved from Takehiko.I (2001)
"Vagabond volume 2", Viz LLC

In figure 4 observe the actions represented in these sequences; a closed panel for the character on the left to signify he is in closed corridor environment whilst the police cars are on open white space, which is a metaphor for being in a external environment. As the police cars get closer, the character panel shrinks smaller until eventually he is cornered. The time and space environment here is orchestrated to shift inter-panels (from right to left), whereby the focus is on the gaze of the character eye levelled with the police cars and the audio representation of movement along the space created. Although in reality, from a perspective point of view, it is unrealistic to have the eye levelled but here however, the focus is on the dynamic movements of text in space and how it is triggered by the actions of the opposing panel.

Figure 4 retrieved from Royal Flush,
timestamp 3minutes: 33seconds
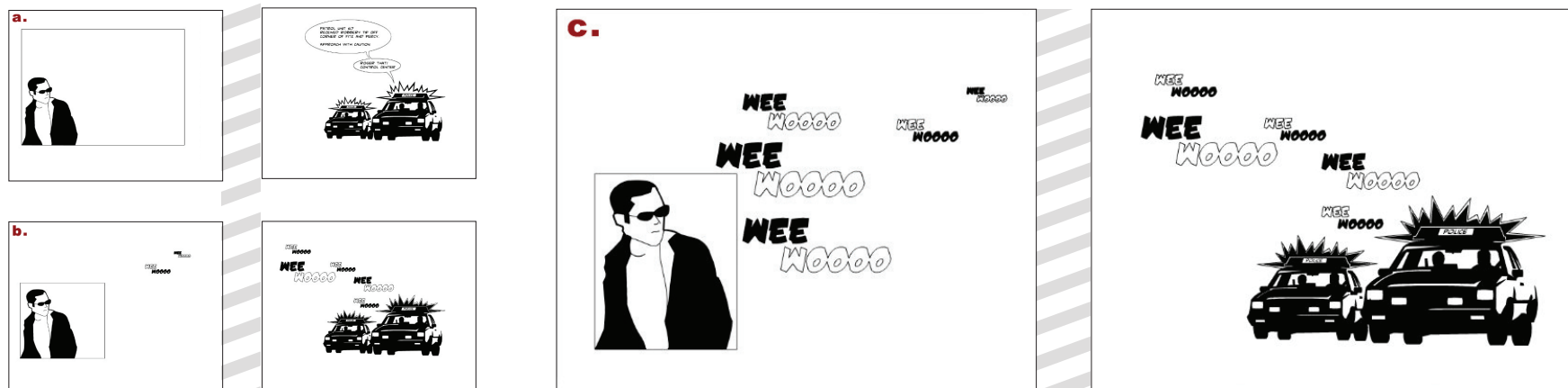
Comics and Montage.

The cinematic montage in its truest form is a juxtaposition of images by editing. The very essence of montage means to edit and can be literally translated as 'putting together' to create sense or meaning. Soviet Montage theorist Sergei Eisenstein writes, "The basic aim and function of film montage is the need for connected and sequential (meaning) of the theme, the material, the plot, the action. The movement within the film sequence and within the film drama as a whole ensures that not only is the narrative logical connected but contains maximum of emotion and stimulating power." [9]

9   Eisenstein, M.S(1986), "The film sense "(J.Leyda, trans)London. page 13 chapter one, word & image.
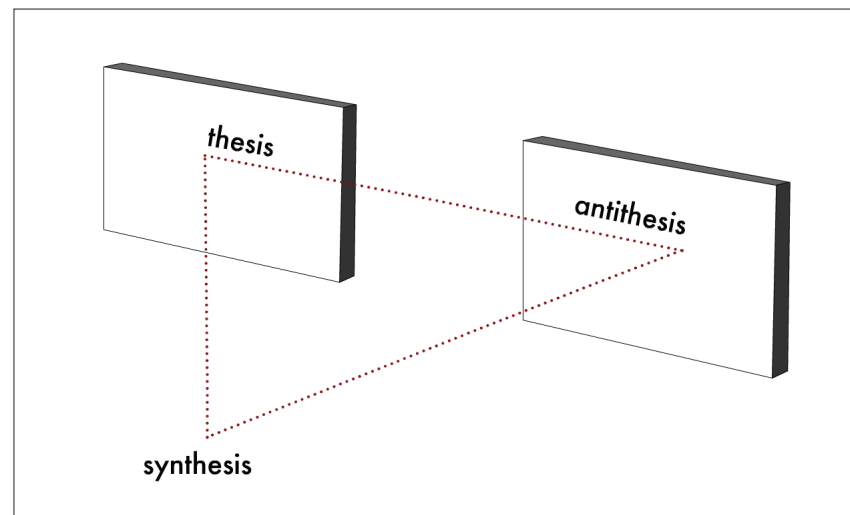

figure 5 - the triangulation of synthesis

The montage was a tool for Eisenstein to cut images together in ways that would cause conflict and visual dissonance. The placement of shots on one another would make the viewer perceive something of a greater meaning than individual shots alone. The editing involved the audience more than the passive reception of information from static and shots. As viewers, we then actively come to the symbolic realisations of intellectual montage.

In my opinion, Eisenstein's montage theory can be based on visual meaning created by the juxtaposition. The subject (thesis) exists to create the initial meaning, the subject in contrast (antithesis) exists to invoke the implied meaning (synthesis) which do not necessarily mean a combination of both visual meanings but both thesis and antithesis can evoke separate implied meaning, hence the triangulation process of conveying the meaning to the audience as labelled on (figure 5).

The consideration for Eisenstein's theory is, that in cinema the gutter between both thesis and antithesis is too minimal to notice because of persistence of vision. However, in its application to the project, the meaning is carried from thesis to antithesis (or vice versa) and it is in this gutter

that this implied meaning is being perceived. As previously explained, the gutter in this context does not only portray the physical separation between both screens but also the juxtaposition between the audience and the implied meaning. Therefore in the process of synthesis, the implied meaning gets thrown into a triangulation.

Criticism of Eisenstein's montage theory came from compatriot Vsevolod Pudvokin who believed that the montage should be shots linked as building blocks instead of fragmentation. He believed that controlled and coordinated shots in a conceptual line would exude the same emotions from complimentary imagery. Pudovkin's idea of montage stems from his theory of relational editing. He wanted his montage to be seamless, not drawing attention to itself, and be used solely to support the film's narrative. He promulgated the idea that film sequences, various shots and various scenes, should be combined in a consistent narrative establishing a story-line and allowing the audience to travel through the story as if guided by the camera and visual images.

The conflict in views led Eisenstein to later write, "Linkage-P and Collision-E" [10] which annotates Eisenstein's affirmation that, "shots should not so

much connect as collide, and that the viewer should be affected by their collision" [11] and later associate Pudovkin's montage theory to linkage.

Eisenstein declared that each shot by itself is neutral (no meaning until it positions itself to the next shot), which dismisses the notion of intertextuality or semiotics in imagery. According to Eisenstein's montage theory, the original meaning is only the first part of the visual statement. It is therefore, open and incomplete. In simple terms, the thought or action in the evolution to the next shot "throws the meaning" back to the previous shot hence the second shot itself is incomplete and asks for the next shot. This then creates continuity and explains why viewers are fixated when anticipation is thrown into the mix.

With Royal Flush, (figure 6) contrasting visual images work towards the conclusion to reveal the plot and make use of Eisenstein's idea of "throwing the meaning" between the two visuals. If we watch the left panel image alone, the "open meaning" as described by Eisenstein here can be interpreted as the character getting caught or shot or both, the permutation of meanings can be endless. With the opposing visual, the project uses the contrast of black with white, not only to

10   Eisenstein, M.S(1986), "The film sense "(J.Leyda, trans) London. pg37

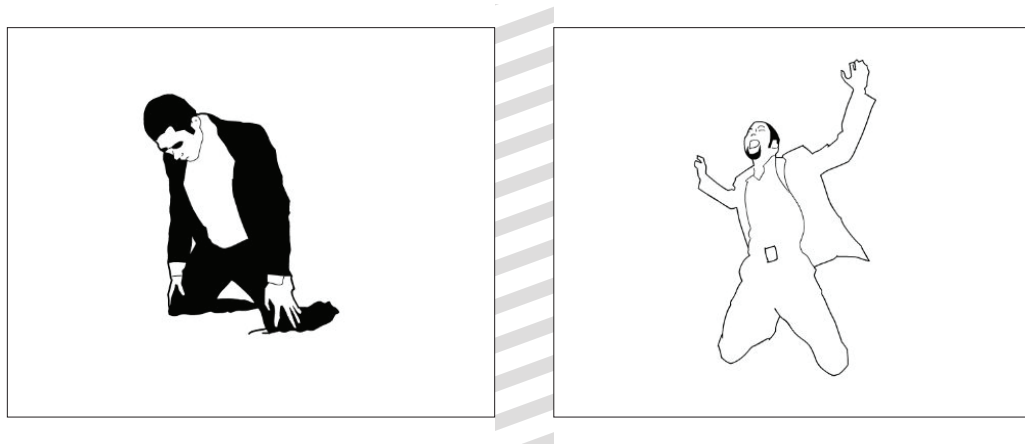11   Bordwell,D & Thompson.K(1997), "Film Art: an introduction" USA

figure 6 retrieved from Royal Flush
4minutes :11seconds

tie in the genre but also to indicate a metaphor. Here, the colour white suggests surrender and is complimented with the visual of arms being thrown up. The two actions compliment each other in implied meaning but contrasts as visuals. This is where the idea of "throwing the meaning" occurs. The first panel depicts the protagonist's body language is slumped which suggests that he has given up reluctantly. On the opposing panel, we find the antagonist has surrendered. The intended rationale was for the audience to now question the intentions of the antagonist, as it takes on the new implied meaning, whilst the process starts anew.

The idea of montage has long been associated with the development of comics, "why must it be that by some strange correlation two juxtaposed [images] must tell something, going from one

image to two images, is to go from image to language." [12] Comic images are arranged spatially unlike temporally arranged images of film. Film images projected at twenty-four frames per second is aided by persistence of vision to transform a sequence of images into a continuous motion. However the heart of the concept remains the use of juxtaposed images, hence the synonym for montage.

French comic strip theorist Thierry Groensteen explains," A panel/frame is always the indication of something-to-read. When meeting a panel/frame, the reader is obliged to suppose that there is, in the interior of the frame, content to decipher. The panel/frame is always an invitation to stop and scrutinise." [13] Thus if Eisenstein's theory is to be applied into the context of panel arrangement, the roles would have to be varied as explained further.

Observe the sequences (figure 7) from Battleship Potemkin's "Odessa steps" scene where Eisenstein uses his intellectual montage. The first frame (figure

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12 Metz.C, (1974), "film language: the semiotics of cinema" (Taylor.M,trans) New York

13 Groensteen.T (1999)," Système de la bande dessinée" Presses Universitaires de France

Figure 7a, b, c and d retrieved from S.M Eisenstein (1925) "Battleship Potemkin", timestamp 51minutes. 00seconds, Goskino Studios

7a) is the thesis or subject of composition. The opposing shot or antithesis in contrast in the second frame (figure 7b) results in an emotive response of anxiety, which Eisenstein theorises as the synthesis or the relationship link. The roles again are varied, whereby the continuous process will then proceed to make figure 7b the thesis subject and figure 7c the contrasted antithesis. Yet through all these, the contextual meaning and emotion remains the same. The process will then proceed to the fourth frame and so on.

It is interesting to note that the juxtaposed arrangement of (figure 7) images in this document conveys the similar emotive response as depicted in the film. It can be argued that there are similarities in montage and reading comics, in which Eisenstein mentions in his film essay, "in nature we never see anything isolated, but everything in connection with something else which is before it, beside it, under it, and over it." [14]

The contrasted meaning (synthesis) conveyed in the sequence (figure 8) makes use of the intellectual montage idea showing that even though the antagonist loses everything in a gamble; assistance in the form of the protagonist is on the way, and thus paves the way for the plot of the story to be revealed. The position of the car pointing toward the antagonist's point of view provides a sense of movement towards the antagonist even though the panels show the

Figure 8, retrieved from Royal Flush, timestamp 0minutes: 39seconds

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14   Eisenstein.S (1825) "Conversations with Eckerman", (Oxenford.J, trans)
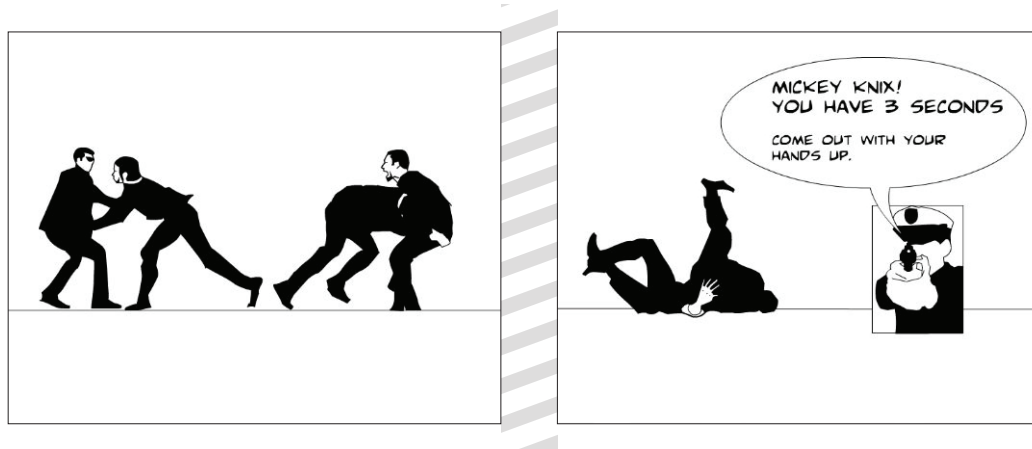
anxiousness of the protagonist (looking back and forth) to bring about the idea that he is unsure about the situation. The variable meaning here gets tossed between looking front and back almost like an internal conflict. Although the action could be depicted in one panel, the fade-in effect would have indicated a shift in not just parallel time but also in different spaces.

The project uses both Eisenstein and Pudovkin's contrast-linkage montage theories extensively throughout the project as an example that both theories working together could create a far better visual message through the two transmitters, which is then passed on to the viewer.

The relative montage (figure 9) is applied when a guide is used for the visual action to take place,

but notice how the policeman is pointing the gun at the viewer. Once again, the rationale for the montage is to depict motion and action in the first 3 panels, the action warranted once transferred to the viewer assumes the viewer as the protagonist hence the outcome of the final panel regards the viewer as the character. There are two notions to be discussed here; one involves the relationship of the gutter between both juxtaposed images and the other, the role of the gutter, which will be further discussed in the next chapter. The latter is the concept of viewer/apparatus relationship with the montage theory, which is discussed in the coming sections.

Figure 9 retrieved from Royal Flush
4minutes: 00seconds

The gutter's role in film space.

The fight sequence seen previously, prompts the gutter's role and questionable intention in film space. Throughout the project, a distinct pattern of what role the gutter plays exists; it serves as a juxtaposition of spatial depth e.g. different rooms and locations. The gutter not only acts as a catalyst for perspective views and creates the relational link between the juxtaposed images but also physically creates depth in a two-dimensional world. In Lev Manovich's early article on "Cinema & Digital Media", he writes about perceived simulation and how users accept simulated moving images as reality. He writes, "the fake part of cinema's visual reality is not reality but photographic reality, reality shot by a camera lens. What is faked is only a cinematic image. Once we come to accept moving photographs as reality, the way to its future

simulation was open. Conceptually, simulated worlds already appeared with the first films of the Lumiere brothers and Georges Melies in the 1890s." [15]

The spatial depth in the project is the simulated world implied by the gutter and visualised by the audience. It is this simulated world that connects the juxtaposed images together. Hence a physical image exists in the gutter even though we do not see it. (refer to elipsis observation on page 10).

In the opening sequence and establishing shot (figure 10), the gutter's presence is to enable visualisation of continuation not fragmentation. This is Pudovkin's theory in practice, building the images as a process of continued and related blocks for a connected meaning. This then establishes a pattern of understanding, an unwritten agreement on a formatted system of viewing between audience and subject. As opposed to a simple camera pan down, the idea is to build a system of understanding. This can be achieved by controlling the rhythm of the narrative (visuals appearing left and right to form content) – this is how the film is to be seen and this the interaction with the film.

Figure 10 retrieved from Royal Flush
0minutes: 18seconds
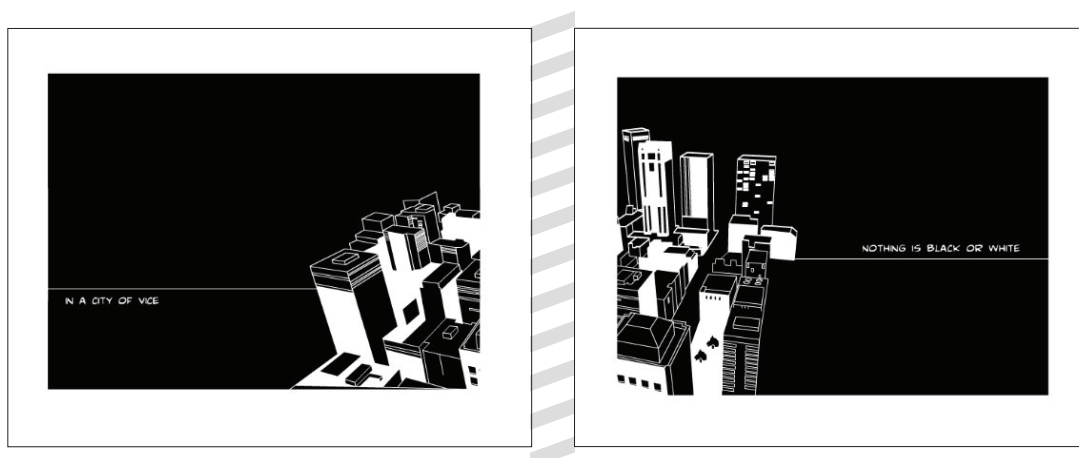
15   Manovich.L (1996) "Cinema & Digital Media"- Published in Perspectives of Media Art, Ostfildern, Germany

The arrangement of panels (figure 11) tries to emulate crossing the 180-degree line in terms of camera space not objects relative to the characters. A 180-degree line inverts the positions of the characters and alters the characters spatial relationship to other objects. The only reason for crossing the gutter was to involve the audience as the observer and move away from perspective shots; a replication of two camera angles (front and back). Although the images are edited in a discontinued way (the constant switch between first person and third person views) the narrative is evident because we have been "briefed" by the system of gutter continuity and we make a hypothesis as to what is going to happen.
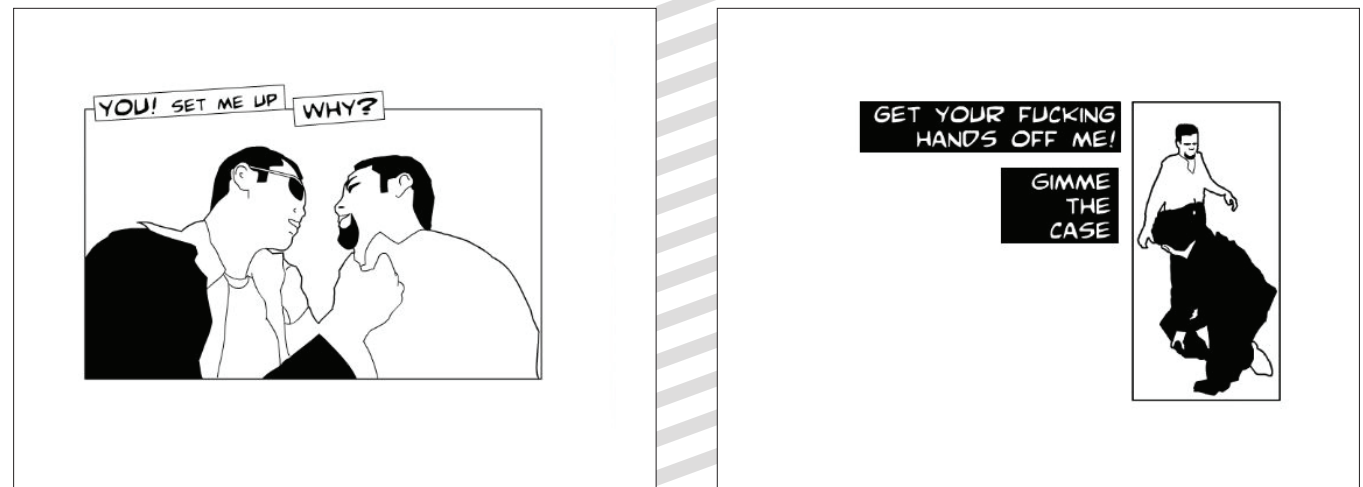

Figure 11 retrieved from Royal Flush
timestamp 3minutes: 45seconds

You are the camera.

Figure 12 retrieved from Bendis.B.M (2001), "fire" Image comics

French film theorist Christian Metz in his essay 'The imaginary signifier' states, "the cinema involves us in the imaginary, it drums up all perception, but to switch it immediately over into its own absence, which is none the less the only signifier present."[16] Metz proposes that the act of perception is conceived in real time, but because the spectator is viewing the object that has been pre-recorded, the object thus becomes a mirror because it replicates the original form and involves us in the imaginary. Watching a film for Metz involves identification because without it, meaning cannot be generated. However, Metz does not specify

what identification really consists of. The obvious answer here would be the character but there are instances whereby even with characters present, the identification is with the apparatus itself, the re-creation of the act of looking (the mirror).

Writer and artist Brian Michael Bendis in the graphic novel "Fire", uses the identification method to create anticipation and anxiety as seen in (figure 12). The two visuals juxtaposed on the page spread establish who is in control while the gutter acts as a transition from one character's point of view to another. The second line of panels, accentuates the feeling of anxiety. The gutter shifts eye movement to key points (cocking the gun and tear rolling down) as the role shifts back, the audience is already anticipating the action.

In Royal Flush, the sequence seen on the next page (figure 13) was made to convey the feeling of anxiety; the camera not only assumes the position of the protagonist knocking the door but also notices the closed circuit camera. In the gutter, the shift occurs, a replication of a panning shot across the wall. Here, the gutter represents the dividing room or wall. The audience then assumes the position of the antagonist overlooking his shoulder.

The role of identification can be linked to film

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16   Metz, C (2000). 'The Imaginary Signifier' in Film and Theory: An Anthology, ed. by Robert Stam and Toby Miller. Oxford: Blackwell.
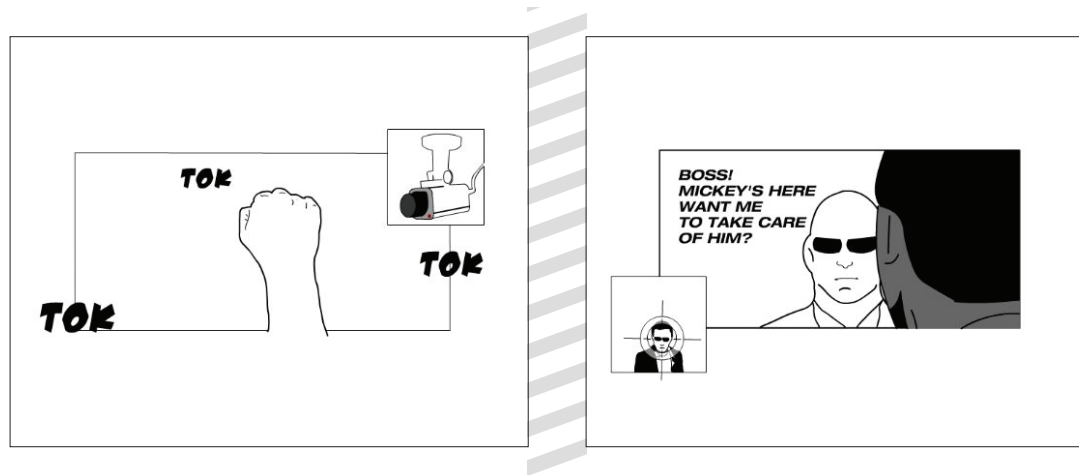
Figure 13 retrieved from Royal Flush
1minute: 37seconds

theorist Jean Louis Baudry's concept of 'the child in the mirror', whereby the concept of the mirror functions as a 'gazed experience'. The gaze is the mechanism through which an image imposes its meanings, and therefore creates constitutive effects. The child experiences its own body in a mirror while viewing it as uncoordinated and fragmented. In this instance, the child has been provided with a visual impression of individual physical wholeness in the mirror image. The mirror image appears to him/her as an ideal ego. The identity available to the child, his ego-logical subjectivity is thus derived from a site external to itself.

Contemporary film analyst Slavoj Zizek who criticises Metz's misinterpretation of the cinematic mirror challenges the role of identification. He argues that the mirror gaze is merely a blind spot in field of vision. I believe that the blind spot Zizek mentioned is within the context of the 'gutter' between the screen and viewer. He continues," the function of interface occurs when subjective and objective shots in a film fail to produce a suturing effect. In the usual process of suture, the first shot generates a feeling of anxiety in the spectator, which is alleviated by the second shot showing the first to be from the point of view of a particular character. In this instance, the second shot attempts to represent the absent subject." [17] Suture in this context has the same connotations, as the concept of comic closure by Scott McCloud. It is interesting to see Zizek come to the conclusion where he objects the use of suture/closure in film as he argues that it closes the gap of representation thus limiting the experience.

I disagree with Zizek's views that closure diminishes the ability for the viewer to identify and the fact that proper interfacing occurs only when closure does not. The established concept of meaning attached to the sense of closure is vital for the recipient to decipher the visual arrangement.

17   Zizek, Slavoj, 2001. The Fright of Real Tears: Krystof Kie□lowski between Theory and Post Theory. London: BFI Publishing.

Moreover, by limiting the gap of representation, it would mean shots take on a more than one-dimensional approach to deliver the experience.

An example of Metz's identification with the apparatus can be defined with cinema's use of shot-reverse shot where, the camera replicates the head movements positioned over the shoulder and the more obvious the point of view camera. "I am the projector, receiving it, I am the screen; in both these figures together, I am the camera, pointed yet recording." [18] As Metz recognised that identification is as important as spectator pleasure, he thus introduced the theory of voyeurism to spectatorship. "The voyeur is very careful to maintain a distance... between the object and the eye.. as with those cinema spectators who take care to avoid being too close or too far from the screen". The voyeur sequences places us in a position to see things we do not normally see, hidden from the characters we are watching.

Royal Flush uses the two methods frequently when composing shots for the panels in the project; there is a constant alternating between involving the viewer as a voyeur and the spectator as

a replica of camera. The distinction between viewer and spectator in this context refers to the literal meanings behind each word. When viewer takes on the role of the character in the narrative (singular identification), he/she views the camera as the eyes to the imaginary world. However, as the spectator takes on the role of an observer, he/she watches the spectacle, has the ability to interact with different characters and assumes the role of the third person in the room. The spectator point of view gives the audience an opportunity to see things from a different perspective.

Even though there are two main characters in the project, we are constantly revolving around the role of viewer and spectator, switching roles as the narrative plays along. The choice to use the first person point of view was to engage the protagonist's current state of mind. This scene (figure 13) occurs after audience discovers that one of the characters in trouble and has requested the presence of the other.

The project uses not just the identification with apparatus theory Metz was referring to but also regards the viewer as the voyeur. These aspects are put into practice in this development shot (figure 14). The environment setting is used to establish the distance and the depth of the room.

18   Metz, Christian, 2000. 'The Imaginary Signifier' in Film and Theory: An Anthology, pg415
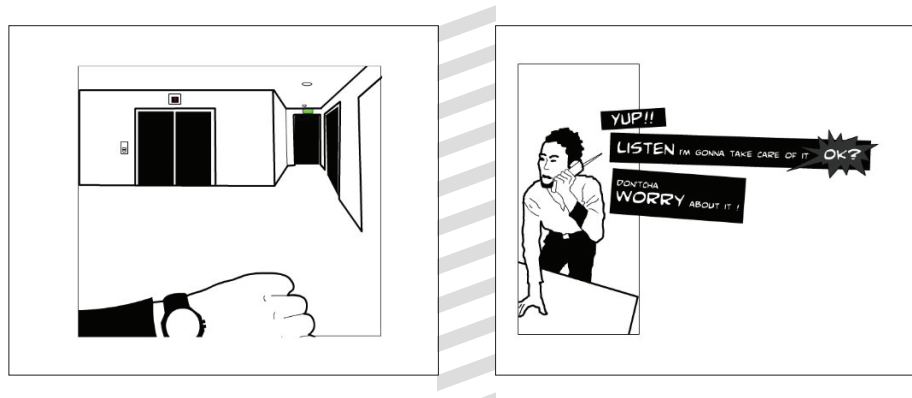
Figure 14, retrieved from Royal Flush timestamp 1minute: 01seconds

antagonist's thug. The implied meaning is to depict two things: the antagonist is trapped (small frame around) and his nervous body language (hands on the table as he emphasises a point). From my point of view, the mentioned actions could not be replicated via the apparatus gaze and the voyeuristic approach had to be used to achieve the emotions portrayed by the character in order to focus on the character's body language. Again, the use of space highlights the importance of each character's status, i.e. the large open space for the protagonist and the confined space for the antagonist.

An interesting point to note here is the difference in implied meaning in the gutter and from the panels to the audience (secondary gutter). It can be said that the relationship between the panels is narrative oriented, whereby the narrative implication of betrayal begins to take shape. The question was then how to translate that perceived knowledge to emotionally attach the audience. One method was to use a personal approach (the point of view identification) to make the audience question the predicament they are in as the protagonist and to understand the reason behind the plot. As the narrative progressed on, there was a switching of roles within the panels – characters (protagonist and antagonist) and observer (the

But more evident here are the actions of the character who looks at his wristwatch immediately after arriving. The signified meaning I wanted to achieve in this scene was personal. I have found that anyone stuck in a predicament he/she does not want to be in, looks at the wristwatch as a sign of impatience. The subtle direction of where the character is facing (the only green sign used) the exit also indicates his intentions. It was easier to use this single identification method to prove the character's intended feelings rather than to watch as a third perspective observer because the intended actions are more personalised and the emotions evoked are not as pertinent to an observer.

In the opposing panel, the roles are switched, this time as a spectator. It can however, also be translated as the angle from one of the

thug and the guard). This creates a more systematic engagement - first person views (characters) and third person views (secondary characters). The association moulded how the panels were composed, which is what will be discussed next.

Looking beyond the panels.

"The eye can be led to a particular feature of a panel through the arrangement of its contents, especially those larger panels which exploit the standard 'Z' scanning pattern from top left to bottom right." [19](The standard changes to the 'S" scanning in cultures that read from the back). Whilst Groensteen had meant this for a comic strip, I think that the similar system of composition can be implemented if not improvised when on physically juxtaposed transmission. Movement in this context is relatively important as a point of focus. Semantics theorist Peter Stockwell explains that ," movement and change attract attention, while the static is 'swiftly lost to attention." [20] Realistically this aspect of focus and attention in the exegesis is an unexplored area. The reason for this is that while the exegesis's objective is bring to light the concepts used in production of the project, I feel that the area of psychological visual attention, meaning the way humans think and how thinking affects the way we see things is important, are topics for further investigation meant for higher stage of academic level.

The panel system for which the project uses to compose most of the shots derives from the form function practiced by filmmaker Brian De Palma and the theory of "mise en page" by Theirry Groensteen. De Palma's characteristic use of style elements like the double parallel action sequences and split screen serve not only to show-off his directing skills but also enables the audience to identify by watching two sides of a character. "What better way to lay bare the mechanisms of fate, choice, power, obsession and betrayal than to let your audience experience the subjectivity of truth firsthand through multiple points of view, or to follow two people who are either polar opposites or a close match within the same storyline?" [21] For Groensteen, space and place are elements in what he calls "le spatio-topie" where it forms mise en page (the layout and organisation of the page). In "le spatio-topie", he notes that the privilege locations on the upper left and lower right that places the first and last images of any two-page spread have the ability to create the visual-narrative effect. The visual-narrative he refers to is similar to the relational link discussed in the topic of the gutter.

19 Groensteen.T (1999)," Système de la bande dessinée" Presses Universitaires de France, page 142

20 Stockwell, P (2002) "Cognitive Poetics: an introduction", London and New York, Routledge, pages 18-19

21 Gelderblom,P (2005) retrieved from http://www.24liesasecond. com/site2/index.php?page=2&task=index_onearticle. php&Column_Id=79 on September 22,2006.

To explain influences in panel compositions, the elements of the relationship gaze and its implications in the film 'Dobermann' directed by Jan Kounen, and television series '24' will be analysed.

The sequence that uses the split screen method in dobermann deals with the start of the planned heist. The visual style Kounen was trying to achieve was meant to depict the multiple perspectives of the setup.

The relational link in (figure 15) is a juxtaposition between the three shots that belong together (men in suits) against the shot that is not only juxtaposed in terms of content but colour. The relationship gaze

Figure 15 retrieved from Kounen.J (1997) "Dobermann" Miramax Films
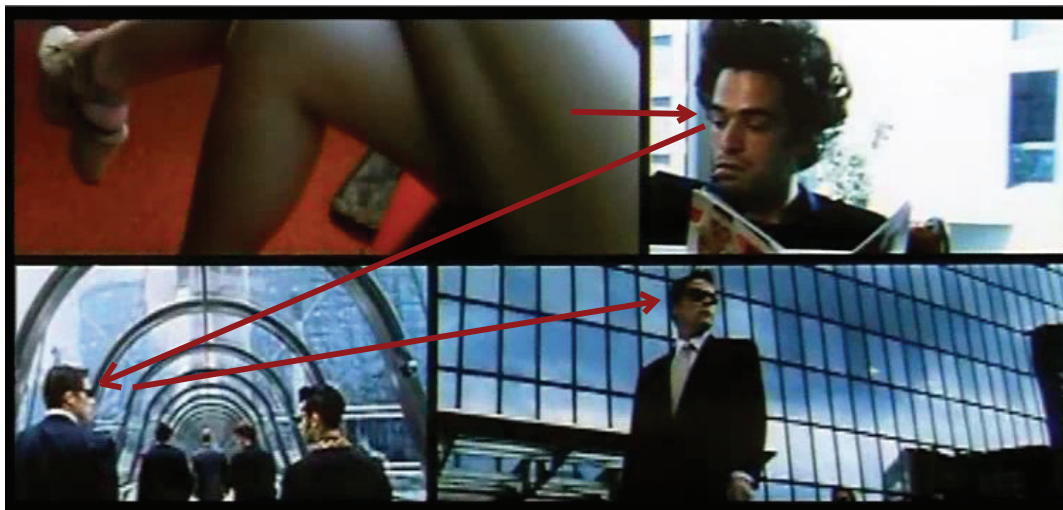
begins with panel two from the top, even though in reality he is actually staring down a woman's leg. The implication changes when the panel is split as it introduces the concept of the relationship gaze whereby the character is actually looking down at the panel across (men in suits walking in the tunnel) and the gaze is passed onto the next panel as well as the secondary gaze across. The juxtaposed meaning here can then be translated as the go ahead signal for the heist in place, a similar action to the nod.

The relationship gaze is similar to how a comic book is read. How does a reader know which panel to look at after reading the contents? The reader is faced with at least two panels adjacent to it. Again, we go back to Groensteen's scanning of the 'Z' pattern. The attention focus is not deterred when looking at static images as there are no forms of distraction to complicate the flow of relationship. However in moving images, the distraction appears in the form of twenty-four frame movements per a second. The system of scanning now relies on the actions of the content to guide the spectator back to the notion of the gutter.

The system does is not necessarily constricted to the 'Z ' scanning pattern though. The relationship gaze applied here can differentiate spatial and

its identification shots (figure 16). The juxtaposed meaning is not the graphical map but the panel that suggests the point of view shot (bottom right), the sequence depicts the threat and as it goes through a relational gaze, the implied meaning to lead the next course of action needed from the person that assumes the point of view shot, in this case, you as the viewer.

The relationship gaze here changes three times. The top right panel is linked by the content created from the left. However, there is no linkage

across panels to suggest the spatial difference of the characters yet the implied meaning is strong enough to be carried through. The linkage between the bottom two panels is evident and last linkage you will find is between the last panel and the viewer.

The relationship gaze here changes three times; the top right panel is linked by the content created from the left. However there is no linkage across panels to suggest the spatial difference of the characters but still the implied meaning is strong enough to be carried through. The linkage between the bottom two panels is evident and last linkage is between the last panel and the viewer.

Based on the construction of '24' and 'Dobermann', relationship gazes in Royal Flush are constantly used to link spatial differences especially for when the two characters meet, the difficulty was to distinguish their surroundings.

On the next page (figure 17), the narrative continues from where the protagonist has just been allowed into the room. This is the first time when the viewer actually sees the antagonist appear on the protagonist's part of the screen. The reason for this is to indicate a role change to the audience so that they consciously switch from a viewer to

Figure 16 retrieved from Willingham.C (ed) "24 day 5" (2005) 20th Century Fox
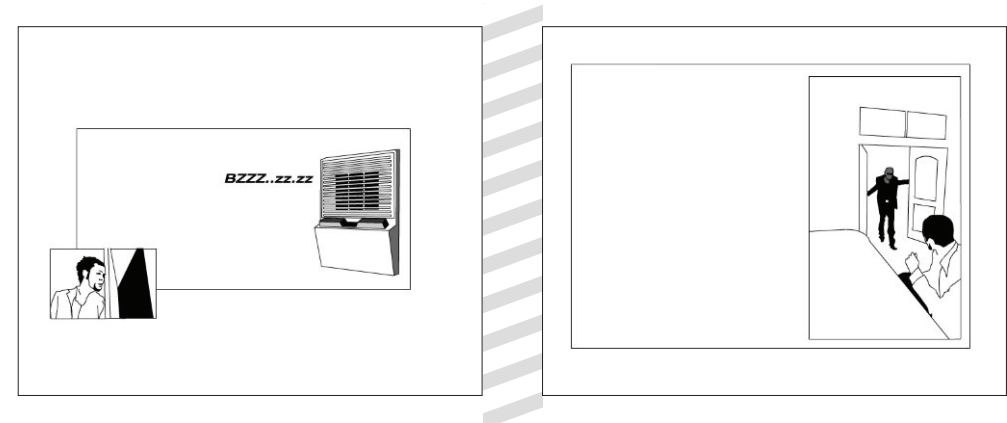
a spectorial observer to reinstate the idea that protagonist has to be cautious.

On the next panel, still in observer mode, we see the switch of the protagonist on the antagonist part of the screen. The reason for inter-cutting panels was to suggest that the system is not, by any means, meant to be seen as individualised screens. Even though a frame surrounds the panels, the gutter is transparent and not bound in space. I wanted this concept to be clearly stated as later in the scenes, panels are used less (for spatial connotations).

In the action sequence depicted, the antagonist creates the relationship gaze with a metaphor of the protagonist being let in. This leads the linked meaning to the next panel, whereby you as the spectator create the relationship link with the character walking in.

Display in the gutter.

In the early stage of exhibition, the strategy was basically a display of two screens side by side pointing toward the street and away from the space of the gallery. The rationale behind this intention was to break away from pseudo-theoretical and conceptual art. The juxtaposition between both screens was now in question as this was the most logical and straightforward display strategy but it lacked in the questioning of the essence of the project – the gutter. The juxtaposition did not portray the relationship the two transmitters have and more importantly the relationship to its audience. The environment did not suggest the genre or the 'feel' of the plot, the location presented the project in a different emotive state than I expected.

The alternative display options was to then move into a colder and darker environment (e.g. the butcher's cold room or the back room of a restaurant). The reason being aside from wanting the audience to witness the where the plot of the narrative was planned, is to more importantly, reinforce the alternate meaning of "life in the gutter" and tie it back to the concept of the research question. "Life in the gutter" in its most general meaning suggests living in the streets and basically doing anything to survive, which is similar to the reason behind the narrative theme.

The change in location means that a probable environment for the installation would be the stairwell leading to the main display area or an empty cellar room. The environment will be dressed down to make it look worn out, dirty and unpleasant.

The idea of interacting gutters was then raised (figure 18) 'X marks the spot' where the audiences look into the narrative and assume the observer role of identification. The gutter is the interaction between observation and narrative, whereby the editing actually happens during synthesis. The audience looks at one perspective, moves towards the next and forms the logical connection.

Figure 18
X marks the spot

Figure 19
The planning set
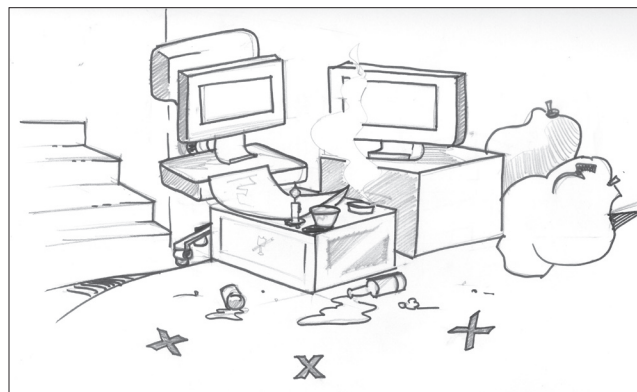
Another idea for the environment is the depiction of the planning stage (figure 19). Here, the gutter is the surrounding environment, where audiences imagine themselves planning the plot with the characters. The role of identification assumes the audience as a participatory character within the narrative, and therefore the screens are mounted low and on milk carton stacks and unused boxes.

"The whole medium of moving images capitalises the spatial factor, permitting manipulation not only as an image but an object." [22] The experience of the gutter is what I will try to achieve in the display strategy as the experience of this project depends on the suggested environment (the defined space) not in a two-dimensional space pre-defined by the boundaries of the screen.

Post viva voce analysis (refer to Appendix 1): During the exhibition, one particular issue regarding the experience of the gutter had surfaced. The core concern of the work was largely based on the simulated meaning created by the gutter. However, during the exhibition, the decision was taken to "dress-up" the area in between the transmitters as part and parcel of simulating the feel of the intended environment.

The "dress-up" decision contradicted the essence of the gutter, which is supposed to be minimal to encourage the idea that the narrative does actually continue in that space. The result of having physical items in the gutter resulted in a convoluted meaning when the viewer "fills in" the meaning between. The meaning should come from the display in space rather than the narrative from both transmitters. Though this issue is not clearly addressed in this exegesis, it provides a foundation for consideration should the gutter theory be

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22   Frank.P (1978) "Video Art Installations: the TV environment" Harcourt
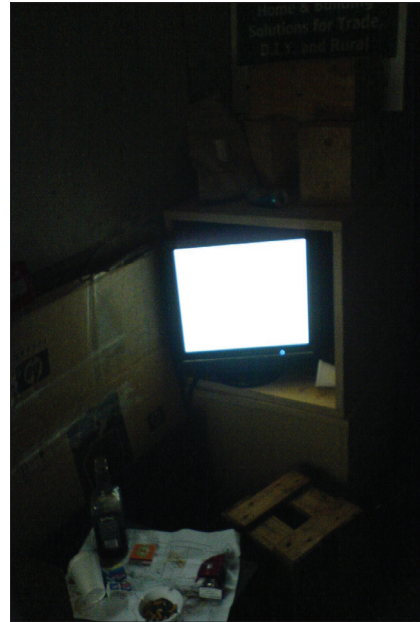
further examined.

Another factor that I decided to add on the spot was the inclusion of audio - a looping soundtrack during the exhibition for the mere purpose of elevating the brooding nature of the genre. The audio background could have created a larger impact had it not been for the audio distractions from neighbouring exhibits. The looping soundtrack was meant to create an ambience for the set rather than to play a significant role within the portrayal of the narrative. The sample track was taken from the original soundtrack from Taxi Driver, "Thank God for the rain"* which epitomises the genre of downtown sleaze jazz played at 40% volume. The track is used within the constraints of the academic environment. Should the work be used in a commercial environment, the task is to hire a sound designer to produce the appropriate audio background.

* the formal copyright is located at the copyright acknowledgement page

The parting shot.

In the beginning, the idea and the notion of the entire project were to discover how could two transmitters convey meaning. However, it has evolved into an understanding of gutter relationships within transparent boundaries and then using that knowledge to build a system of arranging what the audiences watch.

The general consensus when looking at multiple screens is to rationalise they are connected by narrative. In actuality, it is the gutter that brings meaning to the juxtaposed images. It is the invisible connected meaning, implied but not seen. The question here is what happens when viewers enter the fray?

The collaborated meaning forms the synthesis that exists in the physical space between the viewer and transmitter. The synthesis in this project happens in a triangulation where after the implied meaning has been established by the juxtaposed images, the transference of 'understanding' occurs in the space between. In conclusion, the more gutter control is established, the more effective the visuals influence the audience.
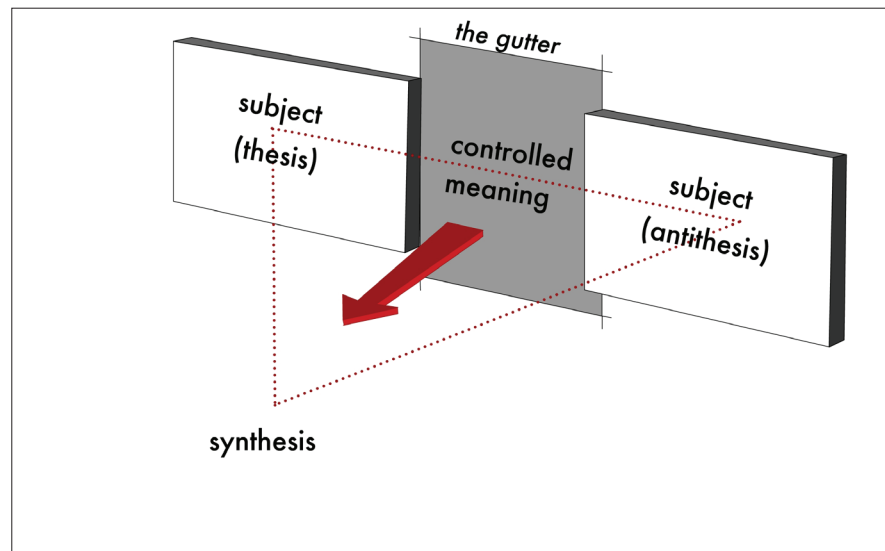
This would not work if the juxtaposed images were not connected or have conflict in the narrative plot, which brings us to the arrangement of the images. The way images work is to establish a connection with the audience, by way of mirror gazing. The audience should receive the meaning as an observer or a viewer. The role the audience plays in the narrative enables the process of experience to begin. As the narrative plays out, the switch in character roles increases involvement and participation. What we see is this interaction carried through the gutter, making logical sense of the images thus creating an understanding between what you can and cannot see.

More than just two screens

This research brings about more in-depth questions that need to be asked through separate investigations namely the complimentary use of sound and the role it plays. Even though I felt that an audio track would suggest environment and indicate mood, I decided against the use of ambient sounds for the project. This is because it would not just upset the tempo of the narrative but also detract attention from the visuals especially in the stereo environment. The further usage of sound for dialogue deserves a much more in-depth discussion and quite possibly investigation into the implications of dialogue versus speech bubbles and how it changes the comic book concept on the part of moving images. The concept of surround sound in this context is interesting because the idea of immersion is core to the concept of multiple speakers adding individualised ambient meaning to the images. Would the fragmentation of audio transmitters work the same on transparent space?

A detailed discussion might be needed to frame the fragmentation of time and space created by transitions of still images. Currently the transitions are made according to eye movements but further investigation could be made to pan out these transitions to relate to both or multiple frames, and thus further reinforcing the relationship between panels and reception points.

Another area worth venturing into is spectator interest. As the project is being shown on multiple screens, the subject of trying to hold the spectator attention arises. Because of the narrative division, the temporal aspect is affected depending on the whether the movies are started simultaneously. The implications of watching an uncoordinated movie (i.e. one movie starts before the other) would result in the visual meaning between the panels changing which also impacts the overall understanding of the narrative. To understand the narrative changes would mean to explore every possible permutation of shots in movie One versus shots in movie Two. This daunting task requires a higher level of mastery in coupling transitions and composition of shots on two movies, perhaps more provision of time and a higher degree of research would create a possible answer to this question. This effect however, will not be explored in the context of this project as both movies are meant to be watched simultaneously.

During post viva voce analysis, certain views were expressed in lieu of the installation; in particular the issue of changing physical stance whilst

viewing the work. The physical change occurred when the viewer had to move according to the narrative of the work, most viewers indicated that it was challenging to follow the narrative as the position of the transmitters (monitors) were awkwardly placed thus one had to view the work two times or more to fully understand the complete narrative. There was a level of fatigue involved after repeated viewings. Although I had not taken into account the issues of body movement within the scope of the exegesis, particularly because I had been so focused on the content development, this feedback has been very valuable and is a part of a reflective approach to the research methodology. I would certainly be exploring the consequences of transmitter placement in anticipation of the next exhibition, with results garnered from the feedback. The area of narrative pacing would be the next step in further investigation to ensure that the delivery of visuals comprehends with message intended by the gutter more effectively.

Lastly, throughout the project, I have been experimenting with the notion of duality. In theory, the concept should work on multiple screens (more than two) but would the inclusion of 'more than two' fragment the implied meaning and could human attention span be capable of 'multitasking'

the synthesis of meaning then?

Despite the potential of further investigations, the outcome of the project is satisfactory. The research conducted has highlighted that between juxtaposed visuals there is an effective and direct implied meaning carried from one location to the other. This meaning resides in the between the gutter and even though it is not seen, it makes the connection between the visuals. The systematic arrangement of the visual elements, solidifies the connected meaning by identifying and prefixing a role for the audience. After discovering what lies in between perhaps the next question to ask would be what lies ahead?

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Copyright acknowledgement

Appendix 1.

## Commentary

The state of the stairwell before the exhibition looked like a storeroom for the main gallery, I felt it was well suited for the project. The space offered a claustrophobic environment with high ceiling and a narrow passage way suitable for only one individual.

One significant problem surfaced during setup was the relocation of the items stored in the stairwell. Rather than to store away the items, i decided to use it as part of the environment. Empty boxes and cartons are stacked on the side of the wall to provide the "secretive" nature of the project's storyline.

Location :
Emergency stairwell, Main gallery
St. Paul's street gallery
AUT University Art & Design building
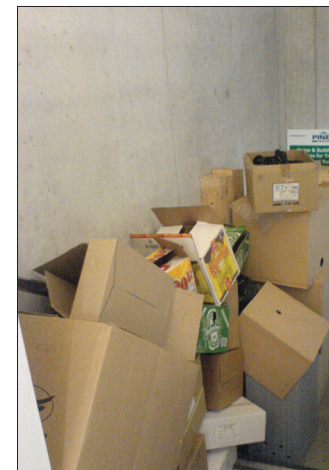
The transmitters sits inside the hollow wooden boxes; the installation is dressed as the dirty, backstreet world of crime. The use of props such as littered cigarette butts, bottles of alcohol and make shift stools contributed to the environment setting.

Lastly, because the project location is away from the main gallery it seemed difficult to attract visitors to move from the other exhibits into project area. Therefore the decision was made to use a pedestal with exit signages to encourage curiosity.
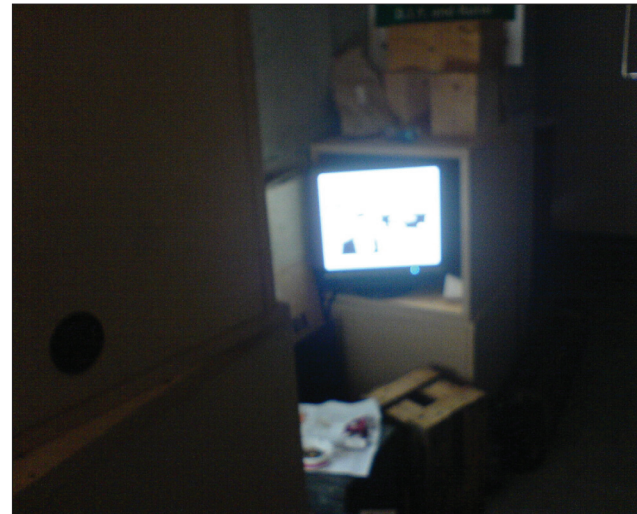
Appendix 2.

Note:

PC Users - the CDROM will autoplay the interface menu. Make your selection from the interface.

Mac Users - launch the "appendix" application and **double click** to make your selection from the interface. Click on the close windows link to close all open Finder windows.

CD contents.

• Final *Royal Flush*

Launch the 2 movie files: final mick & final vinnie

Best viewed on:

- 512MB ram

- Dual monitor setup

- Quicktime 7 Pro

• MA02 Moving Frames

Year 2 seminar presentation

• MA01 In Transition

Year 1 Semester 2 experimentation presentation

• MA01 Gumshoe

Year 1 Semester 1 experimentation presentation