

IN-CAMERA VIDEO CONSTRUCTION .

ASSIGNMENT 01.

DUE 29 January 2013.

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Daily concerns assign to instruments a place which has nothing in common with pure geometric distances: my glasses, . . . once they are on my nose, are much farther from me than the object which I see through them.

. *Jean-Paul Sartre, 1953*

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o b j e c t l e s s o n

Observe the space that is involved in an interaction between a person and an everyday object. Use the video camera to explore and articulate the characteristics of this space.

The object that you select should be inanimate. It has a center of gravity. It might be portable and/or kinetic. It probably produces sounds. Is it a piece of natural landscape or was it designed by somebody? Does it exist as a result of mass production?

Perhaps it is utilitarian, a tool or implement—fork, chair, garden hose, light bulb, kitchen sink, article of clothing, clothesline, paper bag, bath towel. Or an architectural feature—doorknob, tree, windowsill, column, handrail, curb, or flight of stairs.

Consider the size and shape and directions of the zone of engagement. What are the trajectories of gesture, the rhythms and cycles and the lapses of time? Does the character of the space defined by person and instrument change (over time, for different purposes, in the employ of different users, etc)? Experiment with a variety of camera locations, angles, and moves. Frame shots by moving the camera and your body; *do not use the zoom except for focusing and framing your shots!* What is the minimum set of views that will suffice for constructing the sense of this space? In addition to using your eyes, explore the acoustics of the space and repertoire of non-verbal sounds that characterize the action. What is the best position for the microphone?

Since a primary purpose of the exercise is to get acquainted with the feel and the presence of the camera (and microphone), you are welcome to shoot as much as you like. *However the "edited-in-camera" sequence which you plan and select to show next week should not exceed three minutes. Please cue your media to the head of your selection before class. Experienced videographers may alternatively elect to download sequences to computer and export high quality h.264 QuickTime files for presentation.*

Although each student shall submit an individual project, you are required to work with one or two partners. In trading moviemaker and assistant roles, everyone should experience both operating the camera and taking sound. You are requested to wear headphones, and you are encouraged to use an external microphone.

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i n s t r u m e n t a l s p a c e

acoustic movie

A S S I G N M E N T T W O

Spontaneous Cinema for Design Research CCA DESGN-614-03

present work-in-progress 05 February finished edit due 12 February 2013

Sound makes the distance of the image possible, surrounding audients in the space of a world whose visible aspect is collapsed to projections on a flat screen. The sound is more continuous and more pervasive than that sequence of images which stop and start during the blink of your eyes. The chatter of the television persists after you turn your back, and it still pursues you walking out of the room. . .

how do you HEAR a place?

The simplest relationship between image and sound is synchronicity — when a visible movement or change is accompanied by an audible effect, the impression is more vivid. Sound can also constitute the subject, source or motive of visible action — it may not merely accompany the spectacle of a flock of birds taking off (commotion of flapping wings), but contain their cue (a sudden explosion) as well. Sounds are not confined within the boundaries of the screen — a sound emanating from outside the field of view might alert us to activity occurring elsewhere, or lead our gaze to a new vantage point. Sounds associated with one scene can overflow pictures of another to induce anticipation or suggest continuity. Because sounds assume the coloring of the particular space where they are produced, variations in timbre supply information about the features of the acoustical landscape. The same fly buzzing around sounds very different when we move it from a small crowded room to a large empty hall, or take it outside. Acoustic closeups, like directional microphones, allow us to tune in individual sounds that would otherwise be drowned in the general din.

Your second video assignment is an exercise in collecting the sounds of a place. The objective is to discern and amplify dimensions of ambient sound — those fundamental noises of a place which ordinary sense is so well practiced at tuning out — like the dripping faucet in my kitchen sink, the hum of the refrigerator next door, a lawn sprinkler going all night, the poplar branches creaking in a breeze, the drone of traffic two blocks away. . .

The place might as well be anywhere in the vicinity of your two ears. Perhaps it is a place whose soundtrack unfolds during a passage of time, or it might be a sequential space you construct by moving from one earshot to the next. What are the sizes and shapes and directions of these particular sounds that waft and echo and dissipate about the location? Where do they come from? Where do they go?

how do you SEE a place when you LISTEN to it?

Constraint one. The camera is your microphone. What does it happen to see when you must use it to listen?

(A microphone's logic of placement and movement, its distance and direction from the various sound sources, are frequently at cross-purposes with useful orientations of the videographer's lens. Yet if your camera offers no provision for plugging in an external microphone, or when there is no helper qualified to handle the external microphone, then for the sake of sound you must treat this camera as predominantly a listening tool rather than an imaging device. Whatever is the best position for the microphone in the scene you are capturing is where you must place the camera.)

Constraint two. This assignment may be produced as an in-camera edit, if you prefer. Alternatively, you are welcome to select and trim and assemble clips with editing software of your choice. The limitation is that your finished movie is 3-5 minutes total running time. Bring an h.264 QuickTime file to present in class.

point of view

(person . place . portrait)

A S S I G N M E N T 0 3 due 26 Feb 2013

Making a motion picture could be simply discovering a way in particular to test moving and how things move, through the process of exercising, exploring, and sharing the experience of having a point of view. Discover/invent/develop as many points of view as possible.

“Subjective” and “objective” views are explicit conventions in cinema. What the camera “sees” is called objective, and what the character “sees” is called subjective, with no regard to what might be going on in a character’s mind. What’s more, “cutting on a look,” as Jean-Luc Godard has pointed out, “is almost the very definition of montage.” Keep in mind that perspectives are not disembodied; each vantage point wants to be attributed to some sentient entity that lives and breathes and assumes a presence in the scene.

The point of view is where an individual is engaged at any moment in the fabric of the world. It amounts to a kind of periscope that can be positioned, aimed, focused, and filtered. The utility of any viewpoint is defined by the particular filter it imposes on our information receptors, enabling us to establish bearings in a world far too vast to apprehend all at once. Because any point of view is one of many and no single viewpoint can tell the whole story, it has the further value of reminding us that there is no preferred perspective on this place.

We think with our bodies as well as with our minds. The body is, in the words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “our point of view on the world .” We apprehend the physical world in the direction of our moving eyes and bodies, as they make differences in this world by being part of it. We know more than we can tell.

We grasp external space through our bodily situation. A “corporeal or postural schema” gives us at every moment a global, practical, and implicit notion of the relation between our body and things, of our hold on them. A system of possible movements, or “motor projects,” radiates from us to our environment. Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument, and when we wish to move about we do not move the body as we move an object. We transport it without instruments as if by magic, since it is ours and because through it we have direct access to space. For us the body is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1962

Your 3rd production assignment is to portray a person and/or survey a place through a series of viewpoints that:

- a) are not omniscient.**
- b) belong to a subject (“1st person”).**
- c) and/or belong to other sentient being(s) that inhabits the same environment as subject (“2nd person”).**

Alternatively you might catalog some place with respect to a variety of viewpoints. No doubt this place would present a different shape if we were snails, butterflies, or paper airplanes.

This assignment calls for montage as well as *mise en scène*. Post-production selection, cutting, and assemblage of clips (with iMovie, Final Cut Pro, or Adobe Premiere) is expected.

Total running time approximately 5 minutes. Export your edited video as a high quality h.264 QuickTime file for presentation in class.

map (of a place or process)

A S S I G N M E N T F O U R

due 12 March 2013

A map invites attention alike synoptically and analytically. What kind of a road is marked; through what kind of country does it run? Its symbols are translated into images, and these are assembled in the mind's eye into meaningful associations of land and life.

Carl Ortwin Sauer. "The Education of a Geographer" (1956)

Maps represent sets of spatial or temporal relationships. They provide an open-ended system for accumulating, storing, and retrieving geographic experience. Yet anything else that can be spatially or temporally conceived can be mapped. Moviemaking shares with cartography this proposition of expressing spatial and temporal relationships. Compared with conventional maps, cinema furthermore has the ability to portray actions and characters, to capture spontaneous observations, to frame multiple points of view.

Experiment with different verbs for experiencing a place, such as:

- **finding** the place
- **exploring** the place
- getting **lost** (becoming misplaced)
- **inhabiting** the place (placing oneself)
- **rearranging** the place (placing things)
- **departing** from the place
- **listening** to the place
- **recalling** what took place there (placing memory)

Consider formal conventions commonly employed by cartographers, eg:

- designation of size through scale.
- designation of orientation with respect to compass points.
- systematic vocabulary of graphic symbols, such as contour lines and color, or the attribution of different fonts to different categories of placenames.
- the legend.

and various functions that maps intend to serve:

- **measuring** the **distance** to a place.
- determining the **time** it takes to get there.
- **finding** where one is in a place (orientation/navigation).
- defining **relationships** among multiple places.
- forecasting and strategic planning (identification and analysis of **patterns**).
- recording and accumulation of **data** (the assessor's map, for example).

How do you avoid getting lost in a movie?

Make a video map. You might choose to map:

- a spatially contiguous place — a room in your apartment, backyard, parking lot, gas station, etc.
- the route that connects several familiar destinations that are remote from one another — on foot perhaps, or involving multiple modes of transport.
- a district or neighborhood, a site which you are presently designing, a stretch of time, a point of view. . .
- alternatively, a procedure, ritual or routine. How do you capture its algorithm and rhythm, while expressing essential relationships among parts in the sequence?

Consider whether this journey has a beginning, middle, and end. Not necessarily in that order. Consider establishing shots, connections, and landmarks along the way.

superception

A S S I G N M E N T F I V E

due 16 April 2013

Environments are invisible. Their groundrules, pervasive structure, and overall patterns elude easy perception. -Marshall McLuhan, 1967

The intention of this movie is to expose and impart intelligibility to phenomena that otherwise slip through the gaps and riddles of humans' ordinary sensory perception. Consider how cinematic techniques that involve special lighting, unequal sampling and playback rates, optical magnification or distortion, time ordering and scene juxtaposition manipulations, multi-perspective framing, investigative sound capture, etc. might be deployed to reveal unseen features in our midst or to apprehend invisible patterns of behavior.

For example:

Your cinematic approach might TRACE reactions to some invisible agent (wind, temperature, gravitational or electromagnetic field) on the part of audible and visible objects that happen to find themselves in the zone of influence.

You might set out to DISCERN and DISTILL a pattern whose frequency or size or spatial distribution escapes humans' ordinary perceptual ranges, or whose visibility is hidden from a standard eyelevel binocular gaze.

You might BRING TO LIGHT a phenomenon that naturally occurs in darkness.

While it may be maintained that "ideas", "concepts", "issues", and psychological constructs are invisible, such subject matters do not qualify for this exploration. Selection of subjects is open to the scope of your imagination, with the provision that your attention will focus on phenomena of kinds that are physical, behavioral, social, and/or experiential.

Cinema as a medium is itself an illusion. Although the mechanics still aren't well understood, movies play upon faults in our visual system. A series of static images, flicked past our eyes rapidly with intervals of darkness in between, can provoke us to see a stable scene displaying movement. -David Bordwell, 2012

Note that the apparatus of photography and cinema, from their very invention, were regarded as powerful instruments of scientific visualization. Coupled with microscopes, telescopes, and x-rays, photography furnished visible inscriptions of phenomena unavailable to the naked eye. Some of film's earliest practitioners, including Étienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge, were scientists who operated under the influence of a 19th century persuasion that "seeing is believing." Bringing the natural world to view would enable it to be documented, classified, and ordered, which according to that system of belief was the basis of knowing it.