The Art and Science of Depiction

What is a Picture?

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Photoshop assignment

• Perspective
  – Converging perspective is OK in the 3D real world
  – It is not in 2D

• Distracting elements
  – Are usually not distracting in “reality”
  – But are harder to “filter out” in the picture
  – The image does not “read” as well
Reading

• Photo-surrealism
  – Unable to detect discrepancy
  – Non realistic physics helps tell story

• Jet Lighter
  – New approach to making images
  – Photos are the new building block to make photos
  – Very different from traditional montage
  – The same may happen to cinema (Lucas)
Discussion

• Visions of Light
Visions of Light

• Intuition, realize afterwards
• Craft, not art
• Dominance of the actor
  – Must be beautiful
  – No shadow on faces
  – Dietrich more luminous, pops out
• Film noir
• Color in The Last Emperor
• Communication Director Photo-director
Visions of Light

- Formal rules / breaking rules
  - The rules are broken, not eliminated
  - Only when necessary
  - The counter-example does prove the rule
- Difficulty with new language
  - Silent to talky, Black and white to color, wide format
- Invention
  - Technological
  - Pictorial, new language
- Importance of fresh eyes
- To be “realistic”, do not use formal rules
Relativism of realism

What is a picture?
Questions

• What makes a picture a picture
• Would a 100% faithful hologram be a picture?
• Could it be artistic
  – Would it be better than a “normal” picture
  – Would it be inferior?
• Example of cinema
  – Static to dynamic
  – Silent to talkie
  – Black and white to color
  – 3D
What is art

- Craft (Painting, Cinema)
- Religion
- Beauty
- Self expression
- Emotion
- Enhanced experience
Plan

• The chain of representation of reality
• Duality of images 2D/3D
**Reality**

- Objective, physical
- May be imagination
  - But always references to reality
The Artist

• Visual system
  – Not straightforward!

Artist

Reality

What is a picture?
What is a picture?

The Artist

- Visual system
- Intention
- Context

**Artist**

Context  
social  
historical  
artistic

Visual system

selection  
interpretation  
intention  
message

**Reality**

Light  
transfers

Objects  
Material

optics  
perspective
The Picture

- Flat, limitations
- Seen in a given environment, conditions
The Beholder

- Visual system
- Interpretation
- Context

What is a picture?
The Chain of Depiction

- Differences, Mismatch
  - Context
  - Conditions
  - Perception
  - Message Selection

What is a picture?
**Context**

- Historical
- Political
- Gender
- Artistic

What is a picture?
What is a picture?

**Conditions**

- Darker
- Distance
- Etc.

**Artist**
- Context
  - social
  - historical
  - artistic
- selection
- interpretation
- intention
- message

**Reality**
- Light transfers
- Objects
- Material
- optics
- perspective

**Beholder**
- Context
  - social
  - historical
  - artistic
- selection
- interpretation

**Picture**
- environnement
- limitations
- optics
- perspective
Perception

• Is the perception of pictures different from the perception of reality?

What is a picture?
Perception picture/reality

- Photos usually do not look distorted
- Why is the photo of the photo distorted?
Picture vs. Reality

• We see reality the way we see pictures
• Not the other way around

• Make up
• Stage lighting
• Statues as 2D views
• Architecture un-distortion
What is a picture?

Message, selection

- How can the artist transmit a message and select what the viewer perceives
Selection

- Viewpoint selection, framing

What is a picture?
Selection

- Depth of field
Selection

• Edge burning
Selection

• Lighting
What is a picture?
**Message, selection**

- How can the artist transmit a message and select what the viewer perceives?

**Caption**

What is a picture?
What is a picture?
Caption, context

- Christina’s world, Wyeth
Making pictures

• Simple in principle:
  Draw or paint what you see

What is a picture?
Making pictures

• Simple in principle: Draw or paint what you see

• Problem: what we see is not so simple

What is a picture?
What is a picture?

Making pictures

• Previsualization (Adams)

**Artist**
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- Visual system
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  - interpretation
  - intention
  - message

**Reality**
- Light transfers
- Objects
- Material

**Picture**
- Environment
- Limitations
  - optics
  - perspective

Title
Making vs. analyzing pictures

- Practice
- Feedback
Making vs. analyzing pictures

- Practice
- Feedback
- Clouds, Constellations
- Rorschach
Goals of pictures

- Optical vs. Haptical
- What we see vs. What we know
- What we feel/mean
- Other “channels”
  - Sound, data, etc.
Do we always need photo-realism?

What is a picture?
Plan

- The chain of representation of reality
- Duality of images 2D/3D
Duality of pictures

• Pictures are both
  – Flat 2D objects
  – Depictions of 3D scenes

• The dialectic between these two essences is crucial
Duality of pictures

- Magritte
- Anecdote
- Matisse

What is a picture?
Duality of pictures

- Magritte
- Anecdote
- Matisse
2D/3D

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Is it 2D, is it 3D?

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What is a picture?
What makes it 2D

• The surface of the picture is visible
• The marks are visible (brush strokes, grain, scratching film…)
• Absence of one visual channel (color, texture…)
• Letters
• Accidental viewpoint
• Absence of shading
• “non-realism”
Interaction 2D/3D

- Celtic knots
- Islamic arabesques
What is a picture?
Interaction 2D/3D

- The image is 3D
- The message is in the 2D
Do we always need photographs?

• Focusing on the 2D aspect emphasize the “potential” side
Perspective correction

- 3D verticality must be translated as 2D verticality
**Perspective distortion**

- The 3D symmetric sphere is projected as a 2D asymmetric ellipse
The School of Athens, Raphael

- Sphere should project to an ellipse
3D and 2D attributes

- Show a dice to children (~6-7)
- They usually draw a rectangle
- The rectangle can stand for one face
3D and 2D attributes

- Show colored or numbered dice to children (6-7)
- The still draw a rectangle
- But different colors or many points
3D and 2D attributes

- Show colored or numbered dice to children (6-7)
- The still draw a rectangle
- But different colors or many points
- The rectangle stands for the whole dice
- The notion of 3D object with corners is translated as a 2D object with corners
Discussion

• Why is black and white photography considered “more artistic”
Assignments

• Feedback
• Image
• Reading
• Piranesi
Reading

• Do not forget Gombrich
Assignment

• Piranesi tutorial
  – Demo version on the class web page
  – Non-photorealistic rendering
  – Tutorial 1 to 3
  – Skip 2.4
Talk

- Vague decision next week
Degree of realism

- Non-figurative
- Remote
- Realistic
- Recording
- Photojournalism (objective, “neutral”)
- Holography
Misc.

- Different techniques for the same goal
- Knots for 2D/3D, posters, trompe-l’œil