

CS 3660

Cinematography: Composition & the Camera in Machinima



“WALL-E”

How many different shots?
What angles, types of shots?

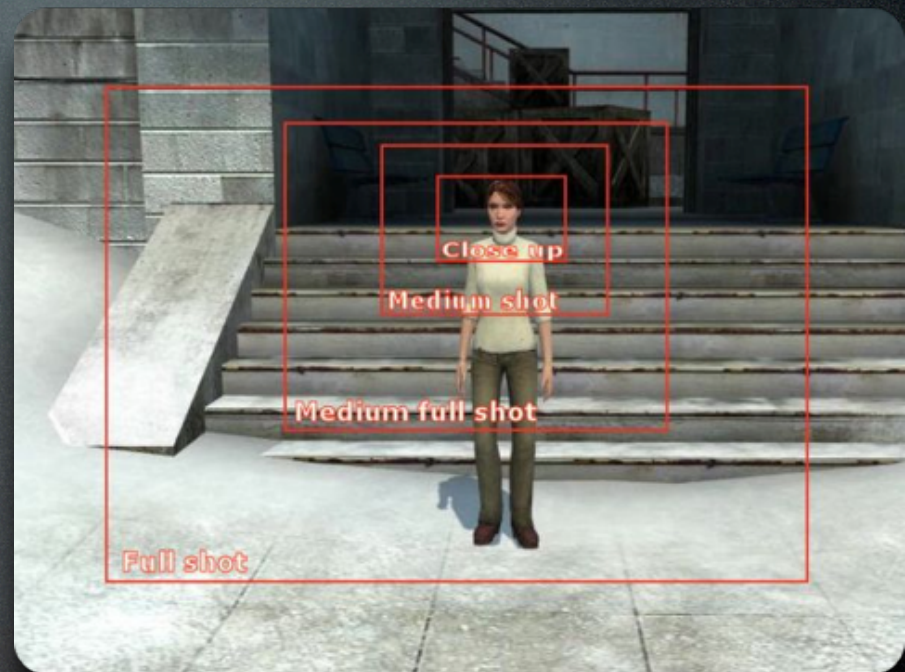
NUMBER ONE QUESTION:

What are you trying to
communicate?

Not just, what will look **cool?**

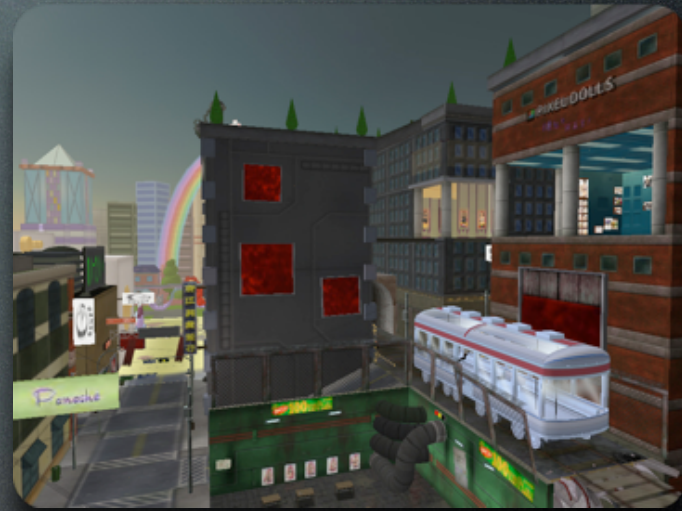
SHOT SIZES & TYPES

- A close up is a “tighter” shot while a medium full or full is a “looser” shot
- Can apply to whatever subject or object--animals, bugs, a box of cereal



Establishing Shot

- A wide angle shot that shows the location of the scene.
- Helps to familiarize the audience with where the scene is taking place



Wide Shot (WS)

- Includes the subject's full body and some of the surroundings



Medium Shot (MS)

- Includes about half of the subject's body and less of the background



Close-up (CU)

- Includes the subject's head, neck and sometimes shoulders
- Get's into the emotional space of the character



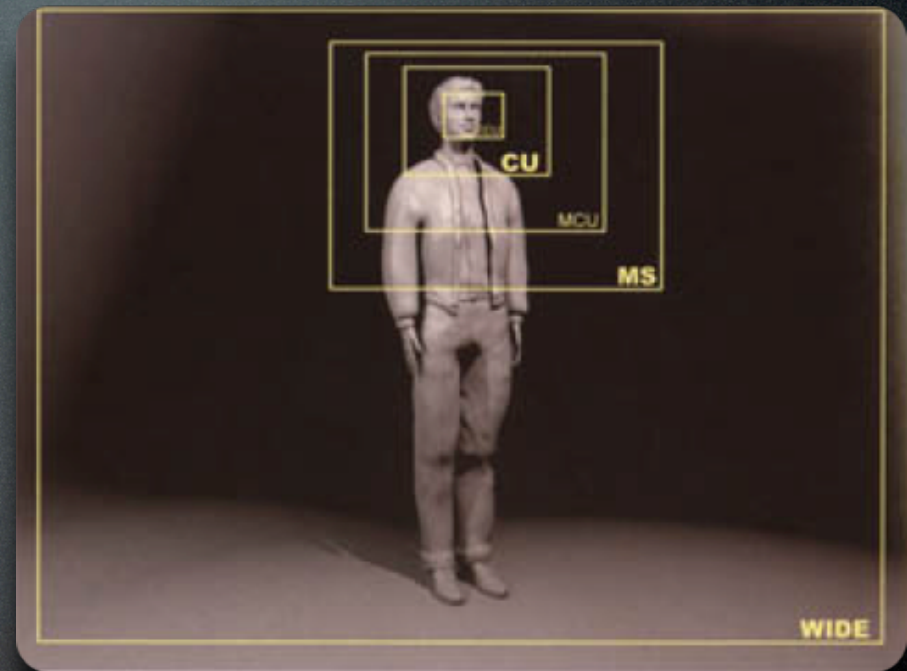
Extreme Close-up (ECU)

- Includes only part of the subject's face
- Heightens facial expressions and intensity of actions
- Beginning students are afraid of close ups, meaning they don't use them enough.



Shot Sizes

- A couple of ways to label but just be consistent within your own system



Two Shot

- Includes two actors and shows their relative distance from one another
- It's usually a medium shot
- A three shot has three characters, etc..., up to a “crowd shot”



Over the Shoulder (OTS)

- Includes two actors, but the face of one and the back of the head/shoulder of another
- Also called a “dirty shot” (compared to a “clean shot” that is not OTS)
- Psychologically brings characters closer together



Point of View (POV)

- The camera captures what one of the characters sees from their perspective
- The other character is often looking straight into the camera, if there is another character
- Cinema constantly goes in and out of POV mode



Cut Away (CA) or Insert

- A shot of an object in the scene that allows for an easier transition between shots--should be narratively driven
- Shot is usually outside the immediate action
- A clock is a common one but not always the best



Cut In (CI)

- A shot of an object in the scene that is within the action
- Ex--hand pulling a gun from a drawer, or hands typing a letter



High Angle

- The camera points down from above
- The subject often looks more vulnerable or insignificant



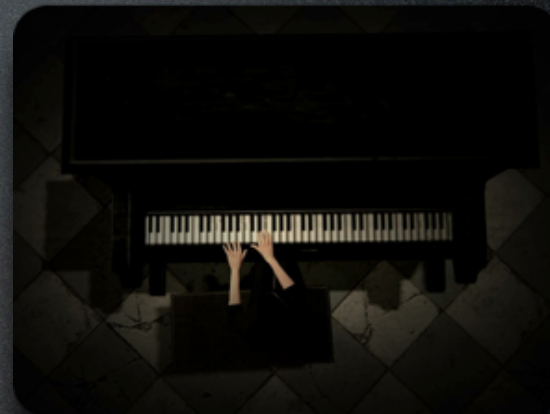
Low Angle

- The camera points up from below
- The subject often looks more powerful or intimidating



Bird's Eye or Aerial

- The camera points directly down onto a scene or subject, like a bird looking down onto the scene

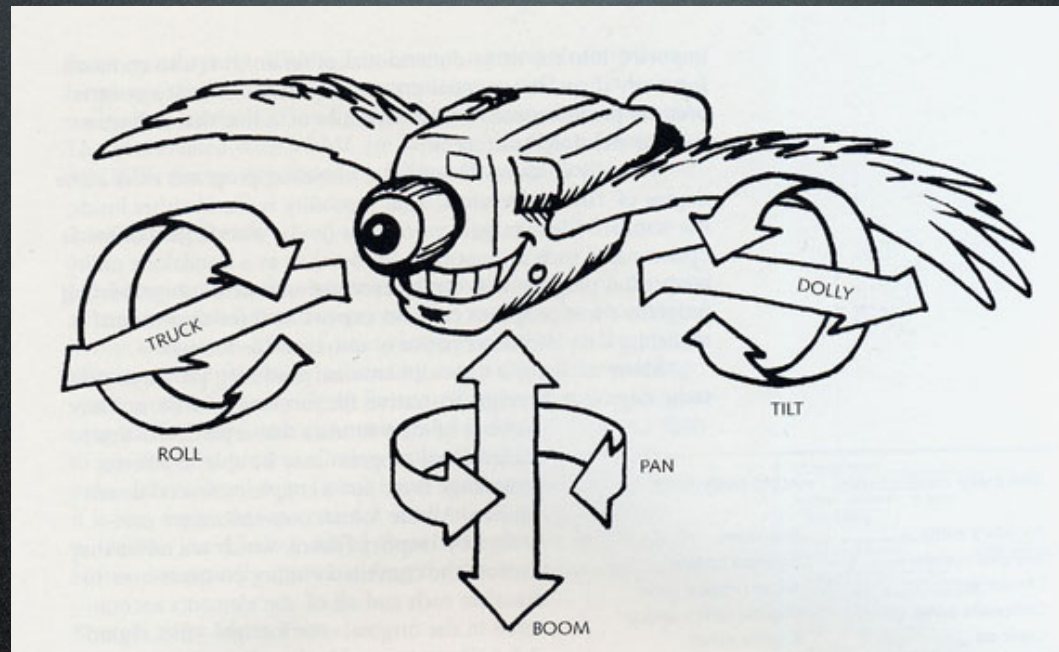


Worm View or Crotch Shot

- The camera points directly upward, looking straight up at the subjects
- Worm/bird...get it!
- Most shots are at “eye level”



CAMERA MOVES



Camera Movement

- Motivation is key!
- The camera should only move if it has a reason to
- Does it follow action, reveal something, shift focus to another part of the scene, or have an emotional effect?
- Just because it can move doesn't mean it should
- Good camera work often goes unnoticed

- **Pan**--stationary camera rotates side to side, left or right
- **Tilt**--Stationary camera cranks or bends up or down
- **Pedestal**--Camera moves only vertical up or down
- **Track & Dolly**--The camera moves on a track, often following action. OR move in on emotion
- **Jib & Crane**--The camera is mounted on a crane and moves to follow action or establish a scene



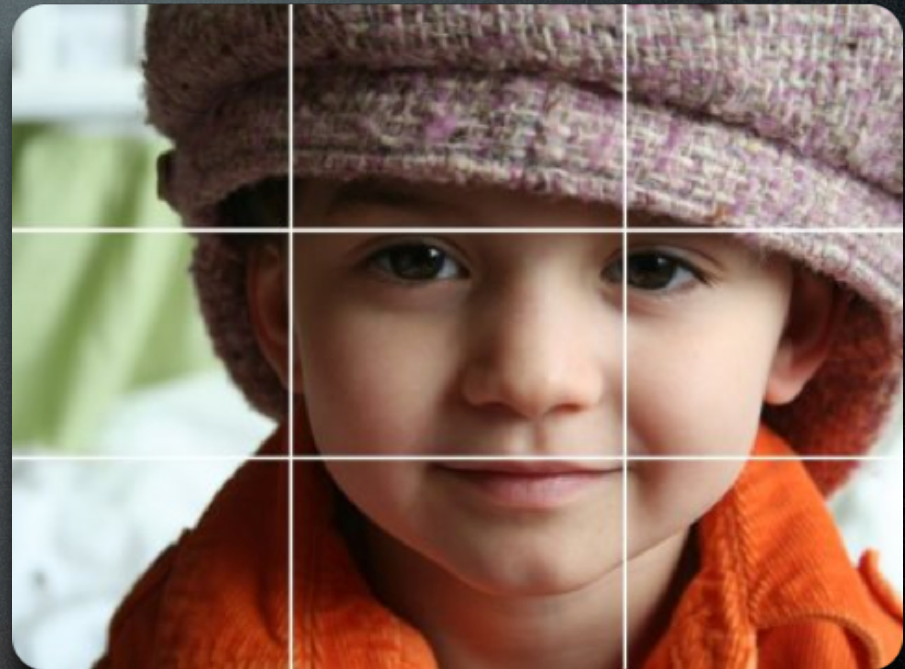
COMPOSITION



- What you exclude in the frame is just as important as what you include

The Rule of Thirds

- Avoid placing the subject dead center in the frame (there are exceptions--news anchors)
- In a close up, the eyes often fall on the top line



The Rule of Thirds

- The horizon of a landscape usually should NOT be in the center of the frame
- Exaggerate either the sky or the ground, for example



Leading Looks

- Directs the eye and indicates where character is looking off-screen (vector)
- More ease when room for leading look, more tension when not
- Especially important with moving shots
- Often will motivate an edit.



Backgrounds

- Pay attention to where your subjects are placed in relation to the objects in the background
- A cluttered background distracts the viewer's attention from the subject
- Text especially distracts the eye



Balance

- Leading look changes balance, has weight
- Masses--scale, volume, space (white/empty)
- Tonality--relation of bright & dark; eye drawn to bright
- Color--amount in frame, saturation, hot/cold



CLOSING WORDS

- Be conscious of what your shooting and how; each choice changes the effect of the shot on your audience
- A few minutes usually makes the difference between a good shot and a bad shot
- Let your instincts guide you