

Visual aesthetics in: once upon a time in the west

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Like Kahlo's art, " Frida" is entirely focused on expressing the aesthetic psyche beneath the surface of its subject. In rare form, the film's aesthetics skillfully incorporates Kahlo's paintings into real scenes, often focusing for several minutes on the slight differences between realized canvas and filmed reality. The visuals are one of the film's strongest points. The same fluid efficiency that the direction produces during the scenes focused on the interplay between paint and flesh impressively permeates the whole film. The camera work, lighting, and costumes assist in producing the aesthetic visualizations of the film.

Another part of the movie's visual aesthetic is the rather stilted animations that occur between certain scenes of the film. Borrowing images from Kahlo's work and almost always centered on death another very visible theme of the movie, these transitions are eerie and strangely powerful. A scene early in the film, when Rivera is proposing to Kahlo, he tells her that while he can never be faithful, he promises at least his loyalty. The film itself makes a similar promise to its audience, and while in one sense " Frida" isn't worthy of its subject, it always remains loyal to her aesthetics.

Once Upon a Time in the West

The film's constant visual backdrop is of a new town in the process of being built in the middle of the desert, a town that will be called Sweetwater, due to its valuable water supply which will be an important way station for the coming railroad line. The establishing shot, when we are first shown the town, showcases these masterful visual aesthetics: a sweeping score builds and towers as a crane shot rises above the train station to reveal the bustling town-in-progress.

The famous 20-minute opening scene in *Once Upon a Time in the West* is representative of classic visual aesthetics: expansive and beautifully photographed desert vistas interspersed with extreme close-ups of sweaty, grizzled, unshaven faces, with every pore of a face made to be textured. Title inserts randomly appear in these initial scenes. The director wisely opted for no soundtrack music in this opening sequence; instead, the creaking windmill and other ambient sounds aesthetically mark time and convey the long expanses of time that the audience imagines it took for anything to happen in the frontier West.

Sources Used