

How visual design has affected style

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Visual Design's Impact on Style

Of all the different styles and forms that art takes, there is none quite as unique as the art of cinema, yet it seems to be the most overlooked. It is easy to look at a famous painting like the Mona Lisa and know in an instant what a masterpiece it is, or how easily a somber piece of classical music can make you feel and appreciate its worth. These arts, while complex in their own right, only deal with one sense each. When you study a painting, it is entirely a visual experience, just as when you listen to a song it is purely auditory, and therefore it is easy to understand and appreciate the qualities of each, as you aren't distracted by any other sensory stimuli. However, in a film, sounds and visual presentations are both used extensively, and neither is more important. When these qualities are used together, a film can certainly show itself as the work of art that it is, but separated, the visuals and the audio each are their own type of art that help contribute to the whole movie watching experience in their own different ways. Visual design in particular is very important in determining the look and feel of a certain scene, or even the entire movie.

The shot design and camera angles are used often to set the tone from the beginning of the film. You can usually tell from the beginning of the film, or at least within the first twenty minutes or so, what style of filming is going on, or what the cinematographer expects you to realize. Certain angles, the arrangement of set pieces/props, lighting and use of editing can all give you certain clues as to what is going on in the scene, and all of these together help determine a film's style. However, there isn't just one way to do every

kind of style. For example, both *Stranger than Fiction* and *Psycho* are films that are hailed for their realism, but almost no one would put these two movies in the same category.

Both of these movies are indeed hailed for their realistic qualities, but for different reasons. *Psycho* is unique in that it was the first to show so many things on screen that had never been shown before. Something as simple as flushing a toilet on screen had never been done before, yet it was used almost casually when Marion flushed the ripped up papers down the drain. And of course the famous murder in the shower had never been done quite to the extent to which *Psycho* brought it. The film was brought to life by showing things that until that point, modern cinema had been hiding from viewers. In fact, so full of life and intensity is the movie that people have been known to describe the blood as red in the movie, even though it was shot in black and white. But the content isn't all that contributed to the style of this film; film editing and shot outlining were also important. The types of shots used depended on the emotions of the characters at the time. A steady, unmoving long take was used whenever they were deep in thought, and fast cuts and jarring camera movement were used when they were in trouble, such as in the shower scene. Hitchcock even went as far to use a smaller lens on the scene where Norman spies on Marion in order to closely replicate human vision, or to construct a showerhead that was 6 feet in diameter in order to get a proper shot looking at it head on. All of these actions, combined with the excellently used score, make *Psycho* a very realistic and unnerving film.

Stranger Than Paradise is also praised for its realistic traits, but they are not at all like those of Psycho. Paradise showed the viewers snapshots in the life of the main characters in long takes, and not everything that happened was particularly interesting or relevant to the plot. This type of film style emulated real life, which is as realistic as filmmaking can get. Life is basically a series of long takes, with the only cuts occurring when you are asleep. Also, not everything you experience in life is fun or amusing, but it happens nonetheless. Stranger Than Paradise basically showed us the lives of three people, leaving in all the awkwardness and unfulfilling conversations that often occur in everyone's life. Aiding this was the choice to have basically no soundtrack except for when someone listened to music in the film, another similarity to real life. Also, the style of filming followed after one of the apparent themes of minimalism present in the rest of this movie. Very little camera movement occurred, and the only cuts were at the end of scenes. So while Stranger Than Paradise definitely had its own style, it also captured the feeling of realism while still remaining completely different than Psycho, although some consider Paradise just as unnerving.

While these two movies excel at drawing the viewer in and creating a world in which everyone could place themselves in, other movies directly strive to do the opposite, again using visual design extensively. Citizen Kane is one such movie. It seems that at no point does Orson Welles try and make Kane relatable or realistic. The only realism in the movie is that which is based off of Hearst, which is hardly relevant to the average moviegoer. In fact, with all of the different camera angles and match on actions used in the film, it seems that Welles deliberately made a film that we are supposed to

understand as fantasy. Rarely do audiences see such sharply angled shots such as the low and high angle shots used frequently in Citizen Kane, and they are almost too noticeable to be passed off as real. The famous long-take that starts outside and moves in, while very effective in terms of the scene and Kane's character, it makes the audience realize they are watching a movie. In addition, the costumes are grand and lavish, as is the entire setting most of the time. All the different uses of angles and cinematography give the movie this feel of unreality, which is not a bad thing at all. In fact, many famous movies (i. e. The Wizard of Oz) do this, and this trait is probably what led to the belief that watching movies is a form of escape.

So, visual design plays a huge part in determining a movie's style. There are so many ways to film each genre in cinema, and each way utilizes different ways of manipulating the camera or set pieces somehow to change the visual design. It is the depth in which visual design occurs that makes film such a unique art. No other medium can combine two different facets of sense and still maintain the importance of each on its own. It is because of this that the visual design of a movie greatly affect its style, if not determine it altogether.