

Shot-By-Shot Sequence Analysis

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Visual Composition

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Figure 1

In this shot, you can see Mrs. Chan walk into the food market. The camera is positioned in a way that the camera is looking down on the subject which is also known as a high-angle shot. Because this scene is not a narrative scene a high-angle camera position can contribute to the context of the scene. In this case, it gives us the visual context that Mrs. Chan is going to the food market. Also, as seen in this shot, as with most of the following shots, the arrangement of elements within this image/scene is set up in a very particular way. There is not a lot of light in most of the shots, there are a lot of shadows, and there is a frame within a frame. In this case, the stairwell is the frame within the actual frame and helps us focus more on Mrs. Chan. Also, this shot uses a soft focus which gives the shot/scene a romantic effect, which is what Wong Kar Wai is trying to achieve because the whole scene leads up to Mr. Chow and Mrs. Chan meeting each other when both of them know their significant others are having affairs. This is also known as the story of the scene. When we further analyze this shot, we can see that is a medium shot because Mrs. Chan is seen from the waist and up. The setting of the scene is a food market in British Hong Kong in 1962.



Figure 2

In this shot, it is clearly visible that Mrs. Chan is upset about something. The folded arms and her head slightly tilted down give away that something is wrong (which is true because her husband is having an affair). Again, the composition of the shot is very particular and contributes well to this shot. As in the last shot, there is not a ton of light which in my opinion contributes well to the somber thoughts she is having. Also, the light that is present is very carefully directed toward Mrs. Chan which makes Mrs. Chan stand out in this shot. What also contributes to our focus on Mrs. Chan is the use of soft focus. As you can see in this shot the people in the foreground are blurry. Furthermore, Mrs. Chan is displayed in this shot by a medium shot: Mrs. Chan is only seen from the waist up. All the shots taken in this scene are third-person shots, it cannot be a point-of-view shot because nobody is looking at Mrs. Chan from the point of the shot. Further analyzing this shot makes you notice that the camera angle has changed since the last shot. We are looking at the subject from a low angle right now which makes Mrs. Chan look more powerful. Her towering out over all the other figures in the scene contributes to this as well.



Figure 3

Again, in this shot is seen how upset Mrs. Chan is about her situation. Her head being slightly tilted downwards gives away that she is not happy about the circumstances. Again, the composition of the shot is very particular and contributes well to this shot. As in the last shot, there is not a ton of light which in my opinion contributes well to the somber thoughts she is having. Although there are a lot of similarities with the last shot, I think there is one difference that makes this shot stand out a little bit more. Compared to the last shot this one is very simple. As Ockham's Razor idea stated, "unnecessary elements decrease a design's efficiency". In the last shot, we could've been distracted by the other subjects in the shot and could've missed the signs of Mrs. Chan being upset. However, in this shot, the focus solely lies on Mrs. Chan and there is nothing that can distract us from us noticing that she is upset. Again, the shot is taken from a low angle which makes Mrs. Chan appear more dominant. As in all the other shots, there is a usage of soft focus combined with a medium shot.



Figure 4

In this shot, Mrs. Chan is leaving the food market. As in most of the previous shots they use a low angle and soft-focus shot. However, one thing has changed compared to the other shots which is the distance of the shot. Now they use a medium close-up shot which usually described a shot that contains the neck, the shoulders, and the head. Because the shot is taken closer than usual, I would like to say there is a higher face-ism ratio which helps the viewer focus more on the intellectual and personality attributes of the subject. This might help the viewer interpret Mrs. Chan as more intelligent, ambitious, and dominant. Also, I would like to argue that the composition of this shot is very balanced. As you can see Mrs. Chan is located on the mirror line. The right side of the shot is completely dark, but the other side of the shot is bright. By making one side of the screen dark and the other side bright, they balance each other out.



Figure 5

By taking a screenshot of this shot, I wanted to point out that the composition of the shot is very balanced. As I mentioned in the description of my last shot, the darker and brighter side of the shot balance each other out. Also, as you can see this shot doesn't consist of any subjects; therefore, it is a good indication that there is about to occur a change. The change does happen because for the first time in this scene, Mr. Chow appears.



Figure 6

This shot is very similar to the shot I wrote my first description about. In this shot, you can see Mr. Chow walk into the food market. The camera is positioned in a way that the camera is looking down on the subject which is also known as a high-angle shot. Because this scene is not a narrative scene a high-angle camera position can contribute to the context of the scene. In this case, it gives us the visual context that Mr. Chow is going to the food market. Also, as seen in this shot, as with most of the following shots, the arrangement of elements within this image/scene is set up in a very particular way. There is not a lot of light in most of the shots, there are a lot of shadows, and there is a frame within a frame. In this case, the stairwell is the frame within the actual frame and helps us focus more on Mr. Chow. Also, this shot uses a soft focus which gives the shot/scene a romantic effect, which is what Wong Kar Wai is trying to achieve because the whole scene leads up to Mr. Chow and Mrs. As you might have noticed this the same description as I gave for the first shot. This brings me to the design principle of consistency. Consistency is explained as “a system that is more usable and learnable when similar parts are expressed in similar ways.” Consistency will help enable people to efficiently transfer knowledge to a new context, learn new things quickly, and focus attention on the relevant aspects of the tasks. Now that we see Mr. Chow go through the same process of going to the food market as Mrs. Chan, we can use this knowledge and focus our attention on the fact that Mrs. Chan and Mr. Chow might meet each other in the food market.



Figure 7

As you can see in this shot Mr. Chow is eating in the food market. As in most of the shots they use a soft focus which gives the shot/scene a romantic effect. The distance of the camera makes this a medium close-up because only the shoulders, neck, and head are visible which makes this shot a shot with a high face-ism ratio; therefore, the viewer might interpret Mrs. Chow as more intelligent, ambitious, and dominant. Furthermore, the composition of this shot contains a good balance of light with just Mr. Chow being exposed to light and the sides of the shot being dark. This also helps us focus our attention more on Mr. Chow.



Figure 8

In this shot, Mr. Chow and Mrs. Chan finally meet each other at the food market. Compared to all the other shots this shot contains a lot more light which can represent a moment of joy between the subjects. Again, there is a usage of soft focus which helps emphasize the romantic moment the two subjects are having in this shot. Furthermore, the shot is taken as a medium shot because the subjects are visible from the waist up; therefore, there is a low face-ism ratio in this shot. This means the viewers are more likely to look at the physical and sensual attributes of the subjects which fit this shot fairly well. Also, the shot is taken from a low angle which makes the subjects feel more powerful.