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how do you capture a sense of industry—what does mechanical look like?   is it dark, worn and tired?

is it something you capture or is that the way you try to make it look...

a sense of place

i define a sense of place as the social, cultural and physical markings that reveal something of its identity and that of its inhabitants. we all carry traces of where we are and where we've been. like layers, these telling clues exist interconnected and they can be expressed visually and aurally.

where is the line between delicate and fragile?
and how do you draw that...

abstract

As time has gone by and people have asked me what it's about—
I've been able to boil it down to one sentence:

My thesis is about creating a sense of place through photography and sound.

In more detail:

My thesis is not just about how photography and sound are used to create a sense
of place. In a larger context, it also focuses on how visual language and sound
combine in a new media context to make this sense of place experiential and
memorable. In the process, it looks at how photographers, filmmakers, composers
and new media designers can and do encode this sense of place into their work.

In the process this thesis examines form, visual language and the expansion of
communication vocabularies into sound and motion to explore these concepts.

are you supposed to remember the details—or just the color?

if you shoot it at night, will it feel different to your audience?

Chat with cliffsofinsani.ichat

narrative

and isn't that an issue that keeps popping up with you?

that word

yes

jear

it's like terrific and gymnasium, never want to use it anymore

so what are you going to use now? i mean, what kind of projects are you thinking of doing for your thesis

exploring photography and (narrative) sound

more of what i've been doing

and expl

yeah

i love doing those two things

yes i really like your sound works

i'm more interested in "the poetic" or some sort of storytelling or storyful expression that doesnt have to get all tangled up in the confines of narrative

hey tks

i really really loved doing those

introduction

Early impressions

One of my favorite things to do as a kid was to pick up a copy of National Geographic and flip through the pages imagining myself in all the faraway places that filled the glossy perfect-bound sheets of each story. Most times actually, I wouldn't even read the stories, I'd just look at the pictures. I was absorbed into the world those pioneering photographers brought me. The images were just so powerful and expressive. The photographers themselves battled weather, physical danger, and distance to bring them back—all the time with only so many column inches of space at their disposal to tell a story in.

I used to wonder what would happen if they exposed an image incorrectly or lost a canister of film to the heat. What if they waited hours, days and even weeks and didn't get the shot they wanted? How did they pick three perfect landscapes and then find a way to capture an entire culture and its traditions, beliefs, joy and suffering in only a few frames after it? How did they manage to take an ordinary object and project social or political import onto its worn features or onto the faces of the people that surround it? How could one simple unknown woman from Pakistan come to be a symbol for suffering, hope and the perseverance of the human condition?

Years later, I found myself camera in hand, asking these questions—but in a very different light. How could I document my own journeys and bring back the experience for my own audience? How could I imbue the feeling that people and places gave me into my own photographs? Could I convey a sense of hope, warmth, desolation, struggle or timelessness into the color and chroma of an image? More importantly, could I truthfully reveal what I saw—not just what was on the other side of the lens—but what I saw as the reality and honest beauty of a place or the people in it? Could I tell that story or document the purity and drama of its existence?
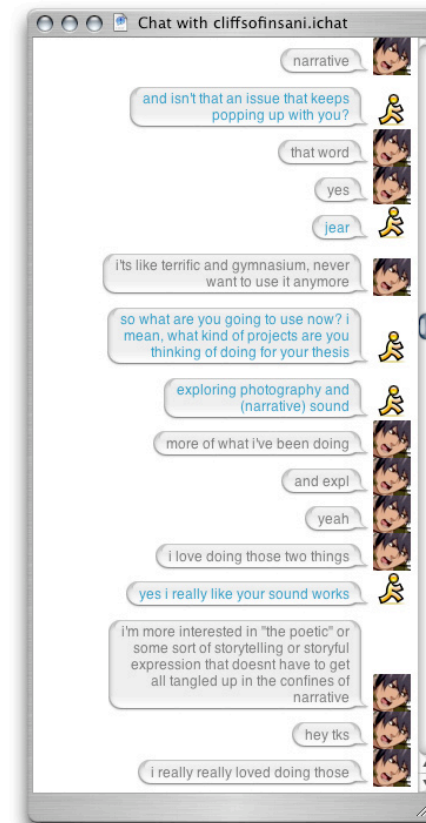
afghan girl. steve mccurry

The poetic versus literal intent

I would start here with a very very simple definition of "poetic" and "literal". One sentence for each definition.

Photographers like Steve McCurry, who took the widely recognized photo of a young woman in a red shroud with green eyes from Afghanistan for National Geographic's June 1985 cover, document and tell the stories of life and in doing so, make choices of poetic versus literal intent. Not unlike the way Painters, musicians and other artists choose to portray their own subjects, choosing how to portray a mood, an emotion or a particular tonality can affect how something is interpreted. Steve McCurry deliberately chose how to portray his subject to try to bring back a real sense of the character, her surroundings and in this case, suffering. That's why when I speak of the poetic versus the literal I refer partly to intent. There is intent in telling any story. The recording or documenting of what is seen is very purposeful when gathering evidence for a point of view whether it's a photograph, a series of images, soundbytes or other content that solidifies the storyteller's perspective for the user or audience.

It could be argued that the intent to tell a fictional story lends itself to more poetic means while the act of documenting something, even while embedding an opinion or point of view, yearns for more literal treatment of the subject matter. In some cases but not all, I'd have to agree. If I were telling the story of a land torn by war I might take poetic license and recreate the scene of a battle purposefully focusing in on a small set of characters and their emotional struggle through the heart of it. I might even make reference to loved ones and "back home" life situations that lend emotional credence to a character's persona. If I wanted to convey the importance of the events more literally, maybe more historically, I might choose to focus instead on the economic impact of the war's events on its people and infrastructure or try to capture the devastation that occurred to its physical landscape in a more journalistic form, almost as if to say "here is what happened and here is what the place looks like now." It is a small example but one that practically suggests how poetic and literal intent can play a role in capturing, recreating and coloring the events and characters surrounding an event or story.

as an artist you struggle with control. how much do you want to control what you want them to see?
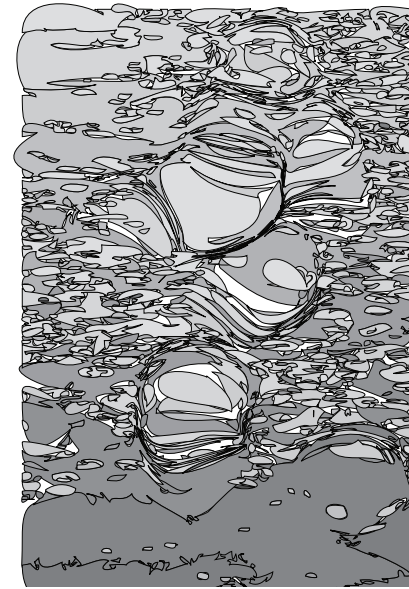
thesis projects: playing with abstraction

Issues of technology and representation

Methods of representation stem from an author's intent. The basic question the artist or author asks themselves is how will I do it? how do I want it to look, feel or sound? In doing that will I use direct and more concrete measures that are easy to decode or do I employ more abstract terminology and materializations in my character development?

As artists and graphic designers we have tools available that grant choices over how we represent almost anything in our documentaries and narratives. From something simple like adding a strong contrast to a person's picture or bringing out the grit in a background texture we can call out the culture and economic station of the place they come from. We can take a sound recorded from everyday life and reshape it for a television show, or use it as filler in a multimedia installation. We can even edit and distribute it over a wide variety of easily accessible digital portals to counter politics or raise awareness on a mass level.

So what does that all mean? Is technology an enabling force or a creative instrument? Today we have more powerful toolsets at our disposal which provide us great opportunities to be more prolific in our communications and then deliver them to a large audience. We can recreate an experience to all the senses except smell and taste. We can incorporate visual, aural and tactile devices into our communications and thanks to technology, implement them in continually evolving exploitations of form. The ability to then broadcast our work globally makes the creative playing field larger allowing for spontaneous performance and collaboration that simply was not possible even ten years ago. Technology has lowered barriers to entry into the arts by making the creation, manipulation and distribution of creative content more accessible. In essence, technology allows anyone with a computer to participate but it does not of course, make them a storyteller.

Modern digital creation tools allow us to push the envelope on our creative expression, especially in multi-sensory ways that enhance or improve upon traditional methods of communication. It is important to notice however, that creating visually appealing or aurally-rich and connected multimedia content does necessarily make it more meaningful. . Creating something that is pleasing to the audience does not take the place of good narrative and well employed storytelling techniques. Throughout this thesis I'll refer to artists, past and present, working in various forms of media that have mastered their craft but more importantly, given us valuable examples of how visual and aural language can be used to communicate a message or story or create an experience — despite a lack of technology.

Then why a sense of place?

Communicating a sense of what was and what is, a sense of place and the people in it that carry its historical and social marks, its anthropology, is a recurring theme in my work. A photographer carrying a fifty pound camera, sulfur and rolls of film could do it without the technology we have today because they knew how to communicate. They knew how to to tell a story and frame a moment, capturing a feeling that only a picture could. They knew that the picture and it's subject had to bring back something of the people and the environment. It had to posess a sense of culture and spirit and how it was surviving or buckling under the political, natural and economic conditions that defined it—all in a photograph.


sometimes you stumble upon your material

Art really is experience

Providing an experience can mean the difference between looking at something and seeing it. It can be the means by which we see what the photographer sees at the moment of exposure on the other side of the lens that metamorphisizes pixels into color and detail that is telling and carries mood or feeling back to its audience. John Dewey describes the beginning of an experience as a pulling of the entire body or an "impulsion," separating its meaning from mere attempts at persuasion or recitation declaring that, "impulsion designates a movement outward and forward of the whole organism to which special impulses are auxiliary. It is the craving of the living creature for food as distinct from the reactions of tongue and lips that are involved in swallowing; the turning toward light of the body as a whole." He goes onto say that, "because it is the movement of the entire organism in its entirety, impulsion is the initial stage of any complete experience… impulsions are the beginnings of complete experience because they proceed from need." The metaphor speaks to the biological organism that needs elements of sustenance like food and oxygen but in an artistic sense we could say the same of engagement in a new media experience.

Can we create a need strong enough for our audience to crave the narrative sustenance that it requires to interact with a system that will reward its thirst for information or story? Or do we settle for a mere touching to the lips, the meaningless "clickthrough" or passing glance that keeps them outside the realm of absorption and stimulation? Our goal is to bring them in, to get them to respond, to crave expression not just discourse. Our goal is to draw on memories and life experiences not just demographic data that suggests "possible matches." We must engage with expressive exploitations of form and establish a sense of place and belonging that uses the schemes of representation most tangible to the audience in a given situation and even in the age of new media, the availability of digital means must not outweigh the importance and effectiveness of more analog and traditional vessels of communication when and if appropriate. One of the goals of this thesis is to substantiate and evaluate the audience experience within the various forms and mediums.

and when you do you're faced with a question.
do you bring it back the way it is
or the way you saw it?
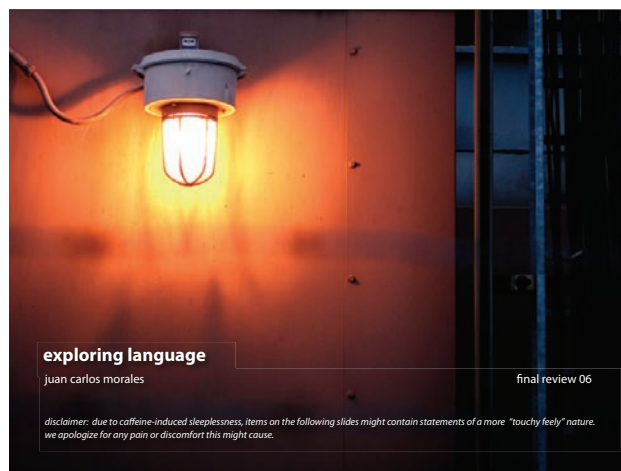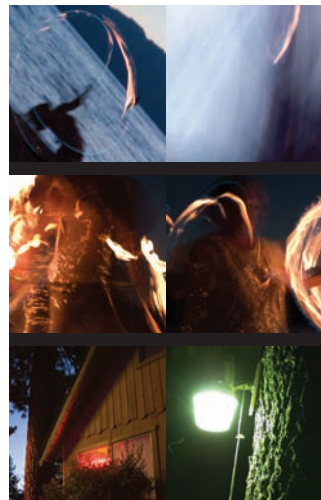
exploring language
juan carlos morales   final review 06

disclaimer: due to caffeine-induced sleeplessness, items on the following slides might contain statements of a more "touchy feely" nature. we apologize for any pain or discomfort this might cause.

My own body of work and evolution at DMI

When I think about why I chose new media, I have to think back to those pre-technology pre-internet media days because the answer now is as simple as it was back then. I wasn't interested in programming and interfaces and bandwith issues. I was interested in the details and how they became a story. I was interested in the story and how it lives and breathes from one moment to the next and how all its different parts and pieces come together to make it vibrant, lasting and impactful.

In the time I've come to explore the combined disciplines of new media at DMI I've done everything from write stories to paint pictures and make photographs. To my surprise, I even started creating sounds and soundscapes. To put it simply, I got to play again. Play however, is the result of work. The areas of photography and sound were new to me. I was as unfamiliar with sound composition and sound design as I was with exposure and shutterspeeds and that's why I give such importance in the following pages to those that have mastered their craft through expression and storytelling, not just technique. Having said that, the technology and nature of new media made the most sense because it gave me the most options. It allows me the most room to explore because it is both the needle and thread. It made these mediums, individually and combined, accessible enough for me to experiment with. The blending of multiple forms of media also enables us to create more in-depth experiences that engage our audiences beyond the possible flatness of employing a single medium. It is easier and perhaps more appropriate to attempt creating a sense of place through audio and visual media simply because people and places are fully experienced and felt by both the sense of seeing and hearing. Tactile elements would contribute to the experience as well.

A great deal of my work has focused on form and how I could use photography, sound and subsequently sequences and video to explore communication. Some of my projects were attempts at narrative while others were devoted to creating impressions of people and places. A variety of form experiments provided the basis for many of my projects by exploring sound visualization and conversely, the scoring of sound to visual media. I continued to explore place through interactive pieces that combined real characters and settings into a user experience that gives the audience a real sense for where and how they live. One of my final projects brought my work full circle by taking a simple narrative made up of photographs, sounds and video footage and then alternating areas of narrative content to explore the resulting impact on the story. In the end, the intent of my work comes down to the story or feeling I want someone to leave with when they experience my work. Throughout this thesis I'll explore these projects as well as the work of photographers, composers, filmmakers and others who succeeded in capturing and encoding this same sense of place in their own work.

building a landscape for the story
class: design as experience

an early foray into the process of
encoding this sense of place into my work

the self portrait, because no self-respecting art student would
call their education complete without one...

you spend so many years clicking keys and moving a mouse that
you almost forget what a pencil or brush feel like.

if you want to start telling the story you look for the markings. you unearth something of its history, it's past...
class: elements of media

it can mean entirely something different depending on what you put before it or after it.
class: design as experience
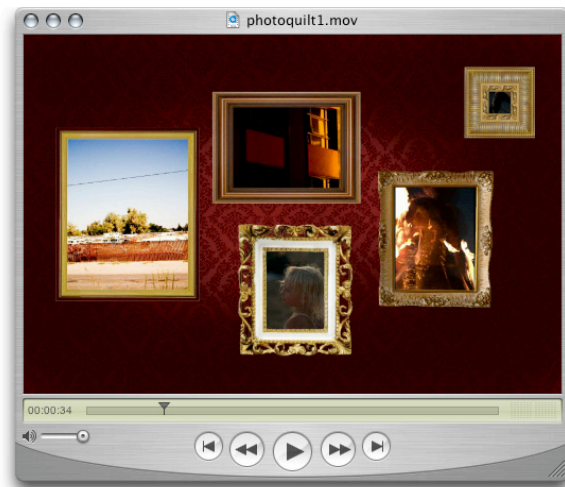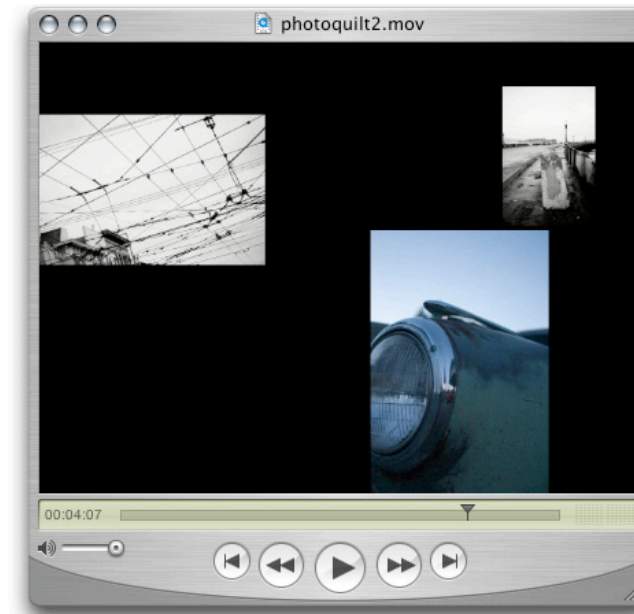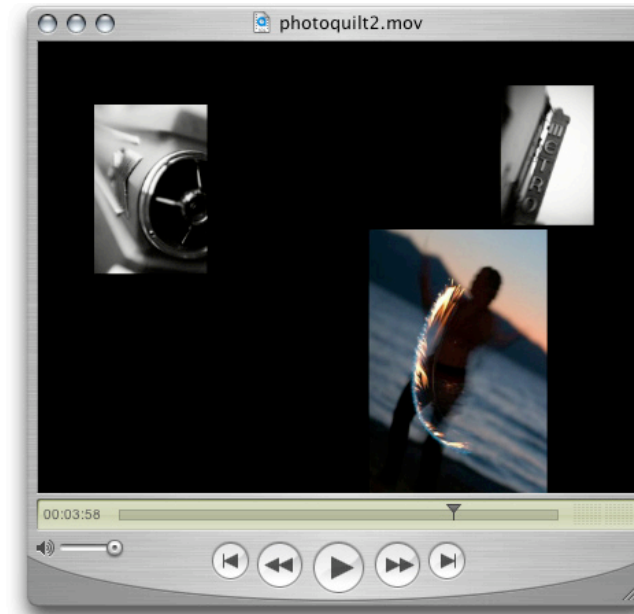
a quilt of images and sounds, impressions of place
class: thesis project

simplifying the patchwork of images.
improvisational long form piano textures.
class: thesis project

a panning landscape of images.
class: thesis project

accompanied by interactive ambient recordings, compositions and sound.

how do you encode a sense of place into a photograph . or even a sound?

rewind

My early memory of New Media

If I had to pinpoint one of my earliest new media experiences I think I'd have to go back to the old days of the commodore 64. I grew up in a working class family with a simple set of values: worship god, go to school and work hard. One day my father came home carrying a big bulky keyboard of a contraption that contained the guts of a computer and a black and white monitor. It couldn't have measured more than thirteen inches in size. Apart from an abacus it was about the farthest thing you could imagine from the slick titanium boxes that sit on our desks today. It was noisy, ugly, clunky and when you typed on it you could hear the springs underneath each key reacting to every letter you typed. It reminded me that this thing was an appliance or something utilitarian you weren't really supposed to enjoy using. It did however spark something inside me that would materialize along with my passion for storytelling and creative expression. At the time I didn't realize it but my new media career had begun.

One event in particular marked this, my first tangible new media experience. The last section of the manual contained two or three pages of code that you could type in to "try making your own program." The one that caught my eye was one of a musical keyboard. I took one look at the code and realized that I didn't understand any of it, but I typed it in anyway and told the computer to "run." It was a simple program but at the time it fascinated me because it rendered a pixelated image of a piano keyboard that played notes depending on the keys you pressed on your computer's keyboard. It sounded horrible and it looked simplistic but it was interactive, and that's what mattered. The code was was expandable so given time and effort, more notes could be added. It could be as large and feature rich as you wanted it to be so it didn't take me long to realize that the computer was an incredible invention that would open doors to a whole new way of thinking and creativity.

the poetics of space

Why the poetic?

It is appropriate when we begin to speak of narrative and means of creative expression like visual and cinematic language that we deal with the construct of place in poetic terms. There is simply no filter or switch for illiciting the emotional response needed to materialize the poetic sensibilities of a character and their environment. We cannot simply expect meaning to be attached to the character's relationship with the current setting simply by putting them there. There must be a subconscious at work that makes a connection beyond the surface of physicality and proximity to a higher level of cultural and social ties. Thes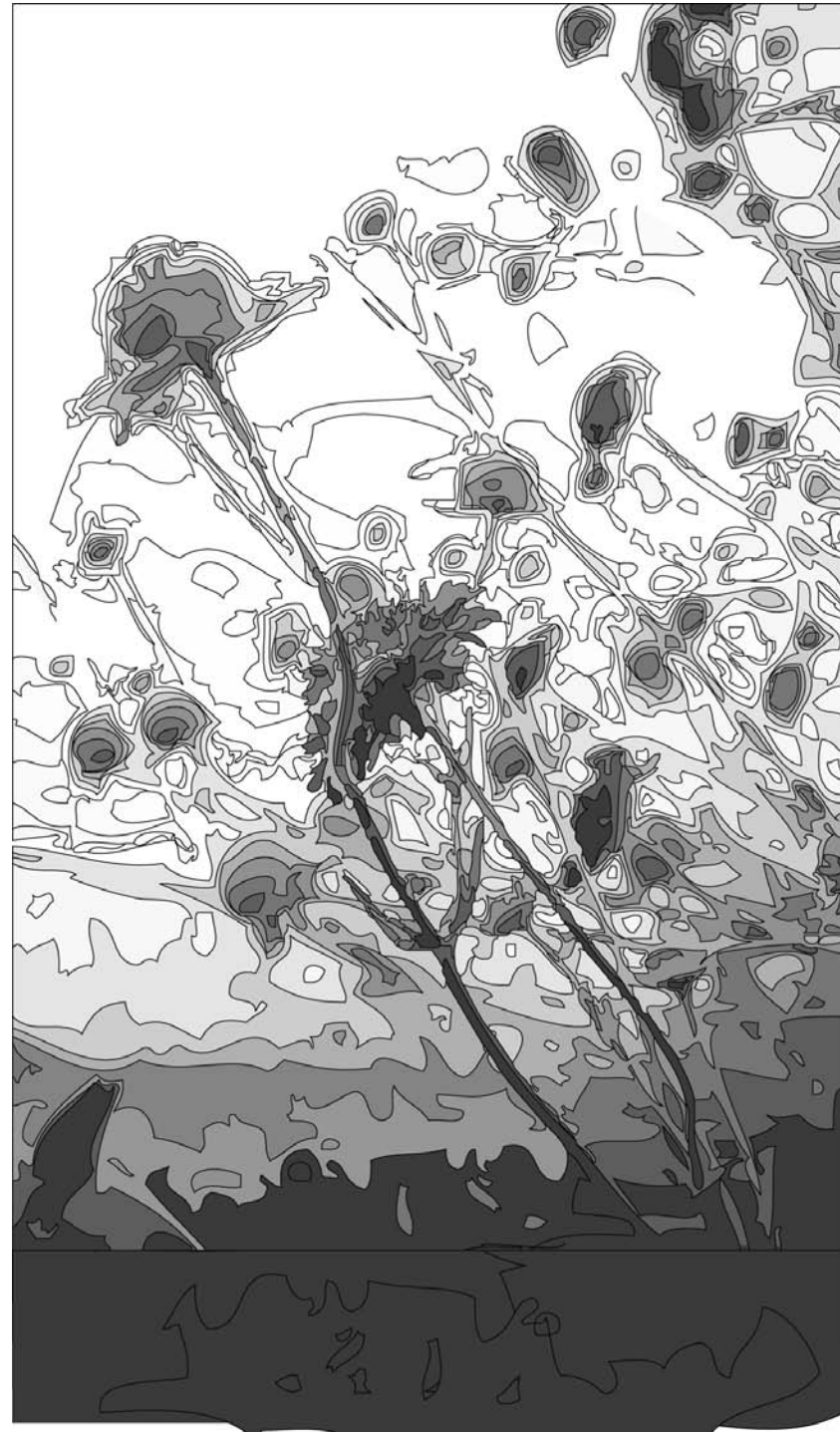e ties are the cultural markings and traces of who the subject is and where they're from that defines their person or character in more emotionally symbolic and hence, poetic terms. These poetic terms are the stuff stories are made of. They fuel the expressive potential in a narrative and spark the imagination and emotional wandering needed to navigate a storytelling experience. These devices deal with meaningful information that provides color and insight into one, how the character lives and two, how the place is lived in.

Beyond physicality

Gaston Bachelard's, author of "The Poetics of Space," defines space not in architectural terms but in how it is lived in or interacted with. According to Bachelard, "it is not a question of describing houses, or enumerating their picturesque features and analyzing for which reasons they are comfortable." Space to Bachelard transcends the architecture and physics that make it structure and instead focuses on how space enables human consciousness to daydream, something he refers to as reverie. While there is no doubt that architects can engineer spaces with deliberate intentions for how they are occupied, what Bachelard calls "phenomenology of dwelling," focuses on how we respond to spaces on deeper instinctual and spiritual levels. It is again, the poetic at play. Eschewing science for a more philosophical approach Bachelard allows us to approach space in a more intimate way. We are encouraged to look beyond physicality and literal interpretation. Just as Bachelard asks us to consider space as dwelling instead of mere physical occupation, we as storytellers invoke narrative and cinematic language to engage our audiences, not just provide them data.

*There must be a subconscious at work that makes a connection **beyond the surface of physicality** and proximity to a higher level of cultural and social ties.*

Reverie and emotional attachment

Such is Bachelard's commitment to the intimacy of place that he refers to experiencing space as something that unearths memories and inspires daydreaming, again "reverie." In essence, Bachelard is asking us to to identify with these places on a subconscious level by drawing on our own life's experiences and using our imagination to inspire new ones. As photographers, filmmakers and composers aren't we asking the same thing of our audience? If so, are we doing enough to garner this response? The strongest emotional attachment we can make to something is one that stems from our own memories and life experiences. As artist's trying to make a connection with our audiences this can be a critical factor in our success.

My own contention is that this is the most critical concern in creating a memorable experience. While an audience might not be able to recall a particular word or passage in retrospect, the author's responsibility lies in their being able to attach an emotion or feeling to what that word or passage implies. While the moment of storytelling has passed and the audience has left their seats, the voice and impact of a film's scenery can for example, live on as large and hopeful. If it is bestowed with those qualities in our remembrance of it, then we as an audience have taken something of the tonality or message with us as a direct result of the filmmaker's intent.

Numerous examples can then be made of how place and it's temporal physicality are connected to how place can have an almost psychologically concrete presence in our memory. They are not limited to what is discussed in this section or even in this thesis. This thesis does however, recognize that bringing together elements of visual and aural media in creating a strong sense of place allows filmmakers, photographers, composers and other artist's to make strong connections with their audiences.

The sections that follow will challenge these notions with discussions and case studies on the language, form and narrative issues surrounding them.

*While an audience might not be able to recall a particular word or passage in retrospect, the author's responsibility lies in their **being able to attach an emotion or feeling** to what that word or passage implies.*

tell a story...

context and history

What is narrative?

While Merriam-Webster calls narrative, "the representation in art of an event or story," I like to break it down a bit further. Narrative is the use of a particular artform or medium to convey events in a story. It can have one or more characters, a setting, and a plot or storyline (which can have subplots). The plot weaves together a series of events that lead to a conflict or climax and that conflict reaches a resolution or outcome. In more direct terms it ultimately arrives at an end, a conclusion. While it has a beginning, a middle, and an end, a plot don't necessarily need to happen in that order.

Simply stated, narrative strives to tell a story. It weaves us through events or points of information to an outcome that delivers the author's message or point of view. For the purposes of this discourse we won't get into a discussion on narratology, narrative modalities and the history of narrative.

As the author, our goal is to guide the audience along a path to that intended message or in terms of dynamic media, an experience. As the audience, we're tasked with gathering and discerning clues or signs that will keep us on a path toward a plot resolution—a conclusion of the narrative journey—that lends the whole experience meaning. How effectively the audience accomplishes these goals depends partly on how well the author engages them in the telling of the story—regardless of the medium. Dynamic media has the power to lend the audience more control over the navigation of a story, and possibly its outcome. In the end however, if it is truly a narrative the common denominator remains the same, a story or purposeful series of events must be conveyed to the audience.

The digital landscape and new media storytelling

When new media is discussed it's probably fair to say that most people think of interactive media. While interactive and web-based media are certainly a mainstay of what we call this new media, I almost prefer to say that we should be thinking about hybrid forms as a combination of media that can be controlled interactively when desired. Hybrid media in a very simple sense encompasses visual, aural and motion (moving) media that can either be combined and arranged in a linear sense or controlled non-linearly through interactive devices.

While the element of interaction allows the user more control it also introduces the possibility of enjoying a more immersive experiential process. This might involve controlling the path and pace through the content and sometimes even the final outcome of the experience. That can be a positive experience. The downside is that many new media designers tend to think of these experiences in terms of how large and complex they can be. It's important to approach new media not just from the technology side. It's important to balance deep levels of content with easy-to-use navigation. Focusing entirely on lush and clever interfaces without providing clear paths and objectives can leave an audience disengaged from the storyline.

Finally, interaction is a means of navigating content. Content in a new media sense is meant to convey a story or message over a period of time. Given the complexity that combining media might bring, it's doubly as important to make sure that each unit of content contribute to that overall message or story. While it's easier, in some cases, to engage an audience by combining multiple mediums you can just as easily distract them from the intended story by poorly combining or pacing audio and visual content. Images that are combined without real purpose or that don't serve to build or reinforce key messages can become detractors.

Sound works the same way. Sounds can enhance or alter the mood of a scene lending credibility and emotion to a narrative. Now imagine a sound or piece of music that incorrectly changes the dramatic rhythm intended by the author. Even worse, consider a badly chosen audio accompaniment that changes how the author wants the audience to perceive a character's persona or actions. These kinds of new media mistakes are not the result of being able to digitally combine mediums. They can be the result of poor execution within their respective disciplines and forms or simply the author not being solidly versed in the language of communications. Some artists excel within an individual medium while others excel across them. Since new media requires you to consider not just the individual mediums but their combination as well; photography, film and sound are discussed as contextual issues when creating a sense of place.

moon and half dome. ansel adams

it is difficult to walk away from this photograph
and not feel a sense of scale, of grandeur.

Place through photography

Photography is a good place to start because it is a visual medium and it allows us to start with a single image. It's hard to imagine a photographer whose works embodies a sense of place more in a single image than that of Ansel Adams. Perhaps best known most for his portrayal of the western American landscape, his images of the Sierra Nevada have been described as majestic, spiritual and even haunting. For many I think, there is an almost indescribable feeling of beauty, awe and Americanism that is provoked in his photography. His work in Yosemite national park in particular conveys a scale and grandeur that is unparalleled because of how it brings the scale of its mountains together with a solemnnity and light. It's almost as if you're in front of a window, not a photograph, because you can nearly feel the coolness of the shadows that run down the vast mountainsides. You simply can't help but feel small in front of one of those photographs.

An example of how he achieved this almost limitless sense of space is the mural photography he was commissioned to take for the Department of the interior in the early 1940s. In order to increase the scale of the western landscape, Adams dropped the horizon in these photographs so that the massive hallway murals opened up into larger more magnificent skies that effectively made the images appear more expansive. This change in the representation of space effectively marked a change in Adams' photography from a more formal fine art compositional style to the more heroic and grand portrayal that I've described so far. Earlier in his career Adams discovered that tonality also played a part in conveying a sense of drama and grandeur. By dramatically darkening the skies in his pictures, he discovered that he could make the mountains seem as epically proportioned in his photographs as they felt in real life.

face of half dome. ansel adams

tetons and snake river
sunrise, death valley
dogwood blossoms

I traveled to Yosemite with my family a year ago and was astounded by the sheer magnitude those mountains. They are pure majesty to behold — every bit as breathtaking as Adams made them out to be in his photographs. I felt a moment of humble enlightenment after returning home and discovering that only a scant few of my own images were reminiscent in scale.

In retrospect, my own experience of Yosemite was wondrous and almost child-like. The resulting sense of what this place was for me and the experience I had was vastly different from that of Ansel Adams. It wasn't the spiritual journey that historians and contemporaries of the photographer describe him embarking on over decades in efforts to portray those landscapes. In the documentary film, " Ansel Adams: A documentary film ," the narrator describes Adams as saying "Gradually, my photographs began to mean something in themselves; they became records of experiences as well as of places." Those few words drive matter-of-factly at what is so important about creating the elusive sense of place in any medium. It is a complete record of the experience and the place — the two should be treated as inseparable. In other cases place may come to mean not just the landscape but also a record of its inhabitants and the traces of culture that they carry.

how do you capture the light?
and what will you say with the shadows it casts...

aspens

dark and foreboding,
clean, hopeful,
stark, cold,

how do you choose?

and yes, we choose.

the moment we release the shutter, we choose...
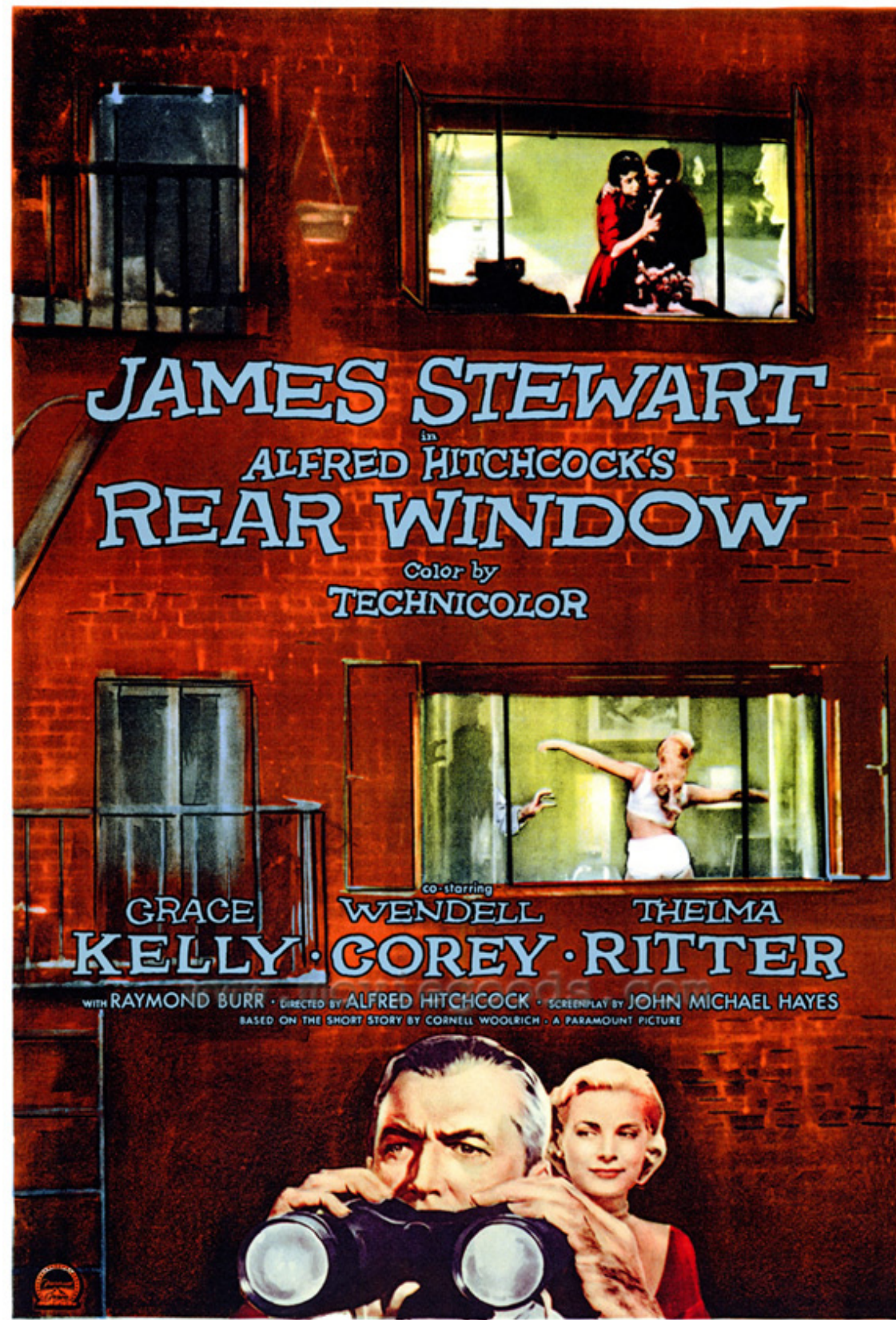
the set and the view from
the main characters "rear window"

Place through film

Alfred Hitchcock is regarded as a master of form and one of the most complete filmmakers of our time because of his ability to control so many facets of the film-making process. It's important to note that while dynamic media has challenged the parameters and conventions within which film has historically existed, it's expressive potential still draws from basic principles of visual language that filmmakers like Hitchcock have helped to solidify. Interactive content delivery, dynamic pathing of storylines in multimedia devices, and increased accessibility of non-linear video editing tools certainly provide us with options today that were not available to filmmakers like Hitchcock. The benefits of working in the age of new media give us the opportunity to make our work richer and more dynamic—and possibly more engaging than was previously possible. As I've mentioned before however, this is contingent on our ability to tell the story—especially if we want to convey a strong sense of place.

Hitchcock's "Rear Window" is a brilliant cinematic example of creating and develop-ing a sense of place. The film takes place entirely on a large set that centers around the shared courtyard of a few low-rise buildings in a working-class neighborhood of New York City. The main character, confined to a wheelchair after a car accident, passes the time by looking out his courtyard window and observing the lives of his neighbors. Eventually, he becomes obsessed with the sudden disappearance of a woman living across the courtyard. To set the tone of the film Hitchcock brilliantly opens the first scene with a heatwave that eventually forces the cast of neighbors to their windows, fire escapes and courtyard grounds. This device allows for a great exposition of diverse and colorful characters while creating an air of tension.
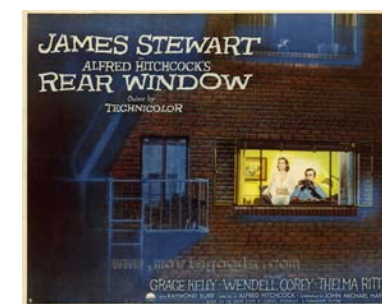
The discomfort caused by the heat also exacerbates a sense of inescapability that Hitchcock builds from the film being shot almost entirely from the main character's confined point of view. Hitchcock continues to build on that mood by infusing the main character's voyeuristic spectator role with obsessive behavior that further sepa-rates him from the rest of the inhabitants of the courtyard.

Hitchcock's purposeful attention to detail filtered all the way down to the characters and their occupations. It is worth noting that the main character's occupation as a photojournalist was to see, look, and capture life's happening's through a lens. It is no coincidence then, that the main character finds himself in a wheelchair after get-ting dangerously close in the act of pursuing his subject.
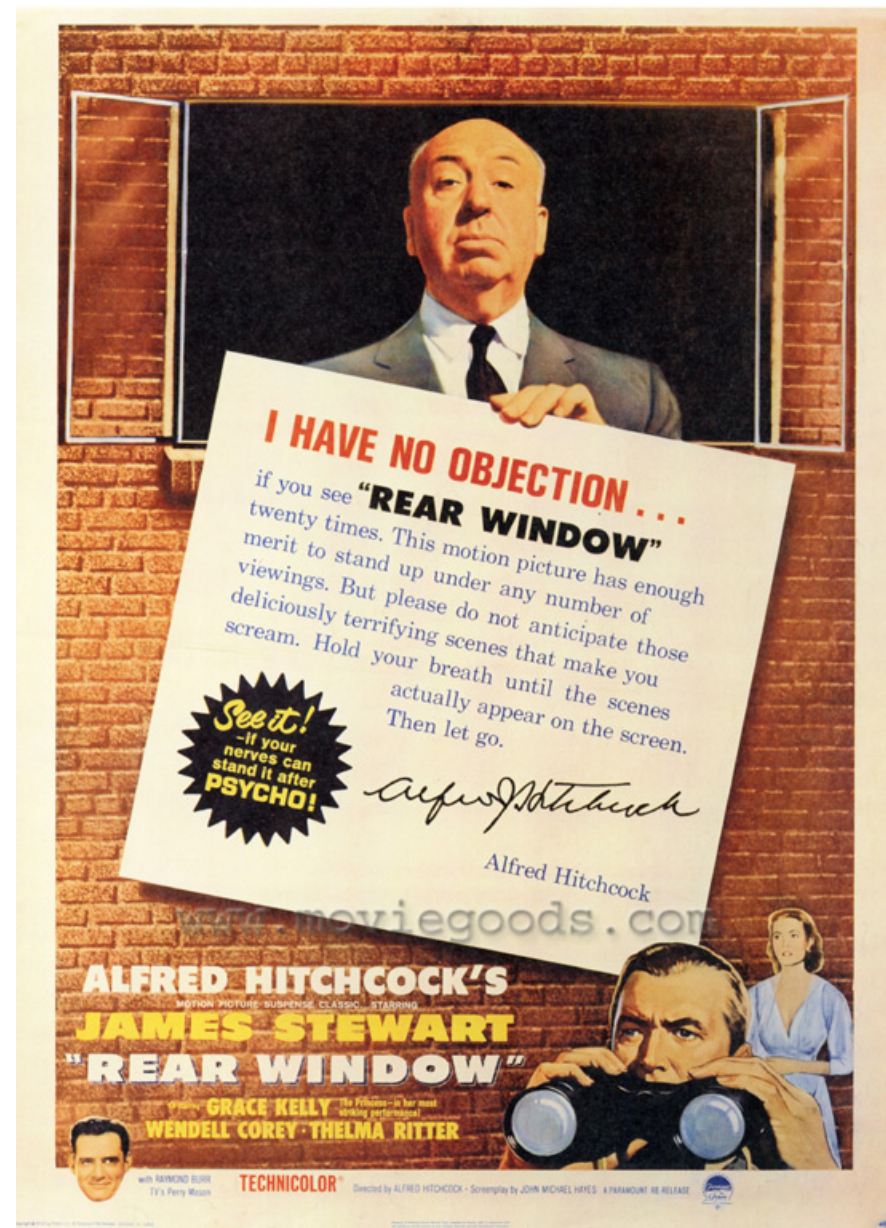
Hitchcock meanwhile builds a metaphor out of the main character's immobilization and expands it to his inability to take on a new photographic assignment and join the rest of the world. He is again confined to his wheelchair forced to watch life go on without him. The final layer to the metaphor encapsulates the main character's love interest. The other character, an attractive and healthy woman, wants him to settle down, get married and give up his adventurous life of travel and photography. At this point Hitchcock has succeeded in creating a great tension around tying the main character's passive spectator role directly to his relationship with the courtyard, his occupation and finally his love life. Well before the end of the film it's clear that the sense of place Hitchcock strives to create is inextricably linked not just to the character's physical surroundings but also to the inhabitants of the courtyard. The confined physical sense of place is tied to the similar state of the character's occupational and romantic places in life and how they're marked by his inability to participate in or control them. What is striking about the sequence of events and how these storylines are exposed is how skillfully Hitchcock weaves them together so transparently while creating such a tangible sense for how they are connected.

This "transparency" of what goes noticed and unnoticed in a film marks how well the different elements that go into a it are blended to create a complete experience. After creating the microcosm of the courtyard through the physical construction of the film's set, Hitchcock made a similar construction through sound. The film weaves together sounds, voices, music, environmental noises and even the subplot of a composer painstakingly writing, rewriting and finally debuting the finished composition of a song to go along with the continual thickening and resolution of the main plot. An array of sounds like traffic, radio broadcasts, live piano, and pop music are juxtaposed and used alongside voyeuristically revealed bytes of conversation as aural cues to life happening and changing inside the courtyard. They identify the courtyard as a place nestled inside a bustling city and as a complex society with a culturally diverse list of characters

one of several programs used for creating sounds, scapes, compositions

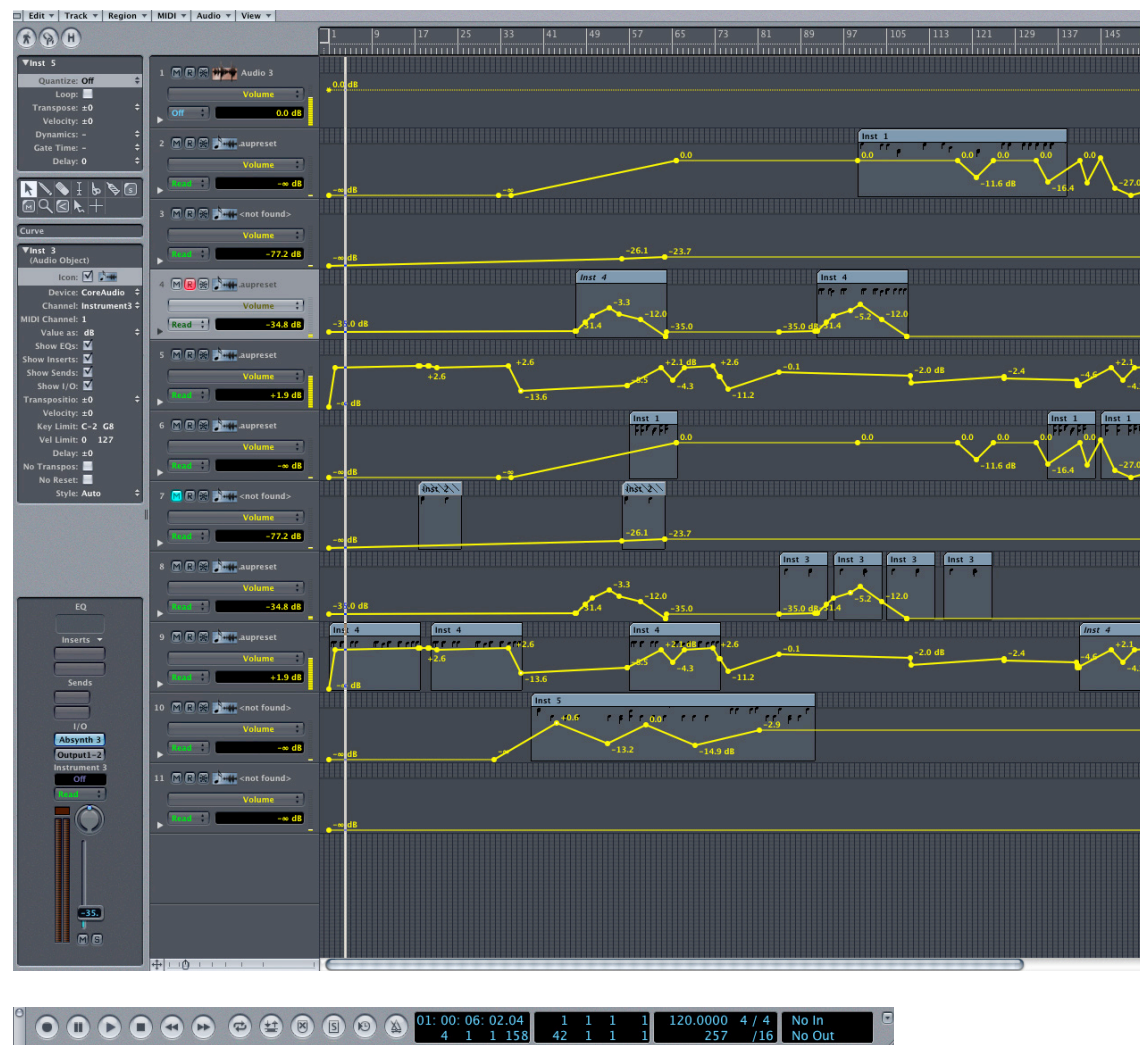panning, volume, filtering, arrangement can be controlled

Place and sound

Photography and moving images are certainly potent methods of conveying a sense of place but what about sound? Are there literal or poetic ways to represent a place, a situation or even culture through sound?

To address these issues I'll refer to the works of John Cage. Cage had an innate ability to compose works of great complexity with the most non-conventional means of musical instrumentation. His further ability to lead a group of performers in playing those lengthy pieces with such great success is also impressive. What becomes equally noteworthy about some of Cage's work is how he improvised a system of musical notation for these unwieldy and complex collaborations to happen. That's what makes Cage's "4'33" one of the most curious examples of place and sound.

While many artists will describe a sense of place as something coming from within themselves or their characters and surroundings, 4'33 develops an idea of place from the stage and its audience. In 4'33 Cage has "composed" a piece with several movements that interpret silence over a period of four minutes and thirty three seconds. He seems to contend that there is no such thing as absolute silence. Having composed "silence" in this piece what he's really doing is turning the interpretation of sound over to the audience and their environment at a particular place and time. The traditional notes and musical pace are replaced by the ambient sounds that become more and more prevalent throughout the silence of the piece. The breathing and coughing of the audience in their seats, the low hum of any running equipment in the room, and other such normally ambient noises take on a different meaning when they move to the forefront of the audience's attention throughout the performance. You could even say that tension, visible in the faces and gestures of some of the audience takes on its own sound and begins to personify this issue of place.

The "performance" I happened witness was one by the BBC Symphony Orchestra recorded at the Barbicon Centre in London—a large concert hall filled to capacity. What was interesting to notice was the audience's commitment to the piece, coughing and fidgeting almost exclusively during the breaks in between movements. Waiting for the orchestra to flip the pages of their notes to "release" these noises seemed to further magnify the silence intended by Cage in this performance giving the concert hall a real presence beyond its obvious physicality.
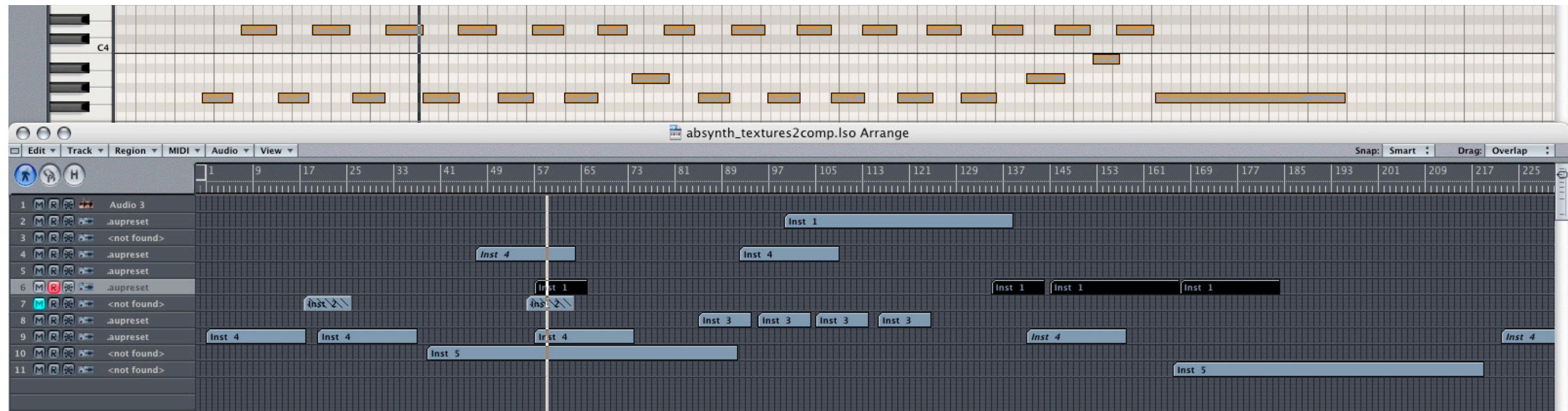
Taking a different approach entirely, the work of the musique Concréte movement strives to take sounds already present in the subject's environment and turn them into more deliberately arranged music. The term, musique concréte, comes from the idea of taking already present "concrete" sounds and then manipulating them, or abstracting them, into music. In more traditional music, the composition begins as abstraction, like notes on a staff, which then materialize into sound and then music. As a result of this departure from traditional methods, the vocabulary of sound in musique concréte pieces carries an expressive potential that draws organically from the real world and how it's inhabitants interact with it. While the nature of this type of music can be impressionistic and electronic-sounding, it does elicit an experience of the place the sounds are taken from that audiences can then identify with.

The film, "My Cinema for the Ears, The musique concréte of Francois Dhomont and Paul Lansky," chronicles the process of these two well known composers of the genre, revealing the unique esthetic and process with which music like this is created. In one scene it follows Dhomont as he explores the Canadian countryside. He sets off searching for the sounds of birds, a barking dog and the rolling water of a small stream. Tape recorder in-hand, Dhomont is selective in his recording of these sounds, intending them to be manipulated later on by computer in his studio. In some cases he manipulates the sounds until they appear like something else entirely and they fit into his interpretation of Vivaldi's "Spring" movement of "The Four Seasons." In true musique concréte fashion he creates a symphony out of the various manipulations from these recorded nature sounds. The result is a melodic flow back and forth between their literal representations and more poetic abstractions that provide the audience with an experience of nature at the height of spring.

This piece in the movie is keenly juxtaposed to a composition by Paul Lansky called, "idle chatter junior" which immediately takes us to an indoor space filled with frenetically joined fragments of chatter and conversation. Rather than exposing the audience to actual recognizable lengths of cocktail party pleasantries, Lansky instead edits and layers spoken words to recreate the space. The result is a place that buzzes with excitement as these spoken words are reassembled to create a music and rhythm of their own.

As in Dhomont's interpretation of "Spring," Lansky's approach to capturing and recomposing the raw data found in this particular space vividly recreates a sense for the audience of what the place feels like—with the addition of a key quality also present in the works of Ansel Adams and Alfred Hitchcock: a point of view.

In all of these examples the artist's point of view and perspective on the material is not lost on the audience. The artists' intent to deliver a tonality and mood is deliberate and well-crafted. It is safe to say that all the examples discussed succeed in engaging the audience and drawing some sort of emotional response in doing so. It should also be noted that while one artist sought to create a sense of scale and heroism in a photograph, another chose to proceed with entirely different intentions. Compared to film, Hitchcock created a complex system of interwoven narratives and layered metaphors to communicate his message. Ultimately both composers communicated something effectively while conveying a very strong sense for the place that was the subject of their work.

photography

l'accordeoniste, rue mouffetard

down to the factory. robert doisneau

how you capture place and its people is one thing.
how close you bring them is another. will your audience confront your audience directly?

or will they peer in if given a window?

Language and vocabulary

Photography is an expressive medium. It gives us the ability to look at the world around us and bring it back for our audience in the form of an image. Like any expressive medium, there is a language associated with photography that enables us to take the expressive potential of that image and use it to communicate our exact purpose in taking that photograph.

Photographers like Ansel Adams and Steve McCurry had real purpose when looking through the lens to bring their subjects back to their audiences but taking a photograph sometimes happens quickly. The impulse to capture an event the moment it's happening instead of documenting its afternmath will have an impact on the tone and sense of urgency in a photograph, possibly embedding it with a needed sense of motion. Consider the desire, alternatively, to capture something temporal in a portrait like the setting of the sun at just the right time and place. Is there really a difference between shooting the sun over the mountaintops during the middle of the day or waiting until dusk? Will the audience care any differently if there is a clear sky or a dark set of clouds framing the perimeter of a sharp peak? These are just some of the kinds of very deliberate decisions that a photographer has to make. Most will tell you that the audience will not only care differently but more specifically, they'll feel differently too. How we look at a photograph depends on the kinds of decisions the photographer has made in making it. They'll see what the photographer wants them to see and maybe something more.

Capturing a sense of place is no random occurrence. There are of course, the "happy accidents" that come from being in the right place at the right time, but the act of photographics place is more often a deliberate one. It's hard not to look at photographs like those of the French photographer, Robert Doisneau, and wonder how he was able to capture so many whimsical and magical moments in mid-century working class parisian society. In the case of Doisneau, immersing himself in the lives and culture of his subjects probably afforded him many of the opportunities caught on film. His framing of the subjects and subsequent treatment of the photographs had much to do with how an audience perceives them. The black and white medium in his work seems to underlie the youth and playfulness of some of his subjects with an implied sense of simplicity that legitimizes the less material means with which they appeared to live. Though different interpretations of any given photograph can emerge, including my own previous thoughts on " down to the factory ," the mere fact that I looked into the photograph and took away a glimpse of the lives and culture of the people in it gave me a sense of place. I gained a sense for the people in it by seeing economic, historical, and cultural markings in their lives and surroundings — just as the artist wanted me to see them.
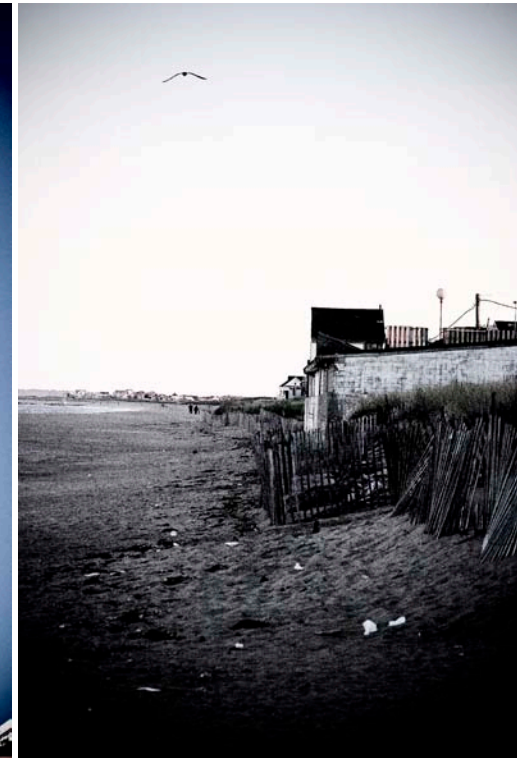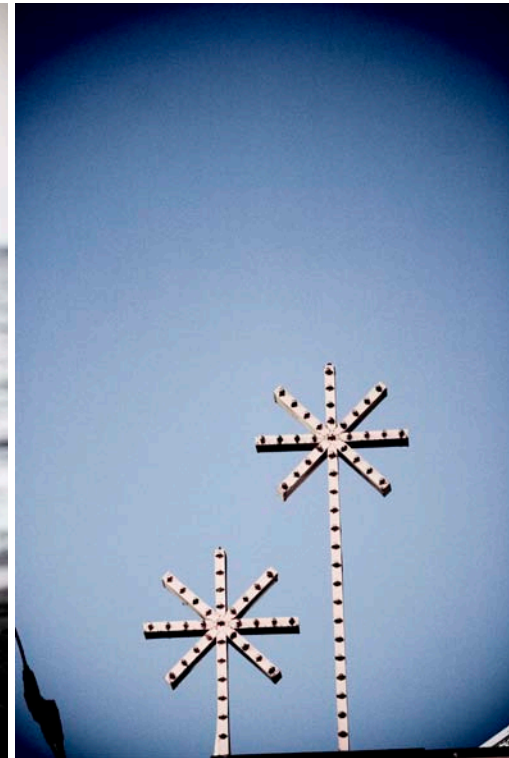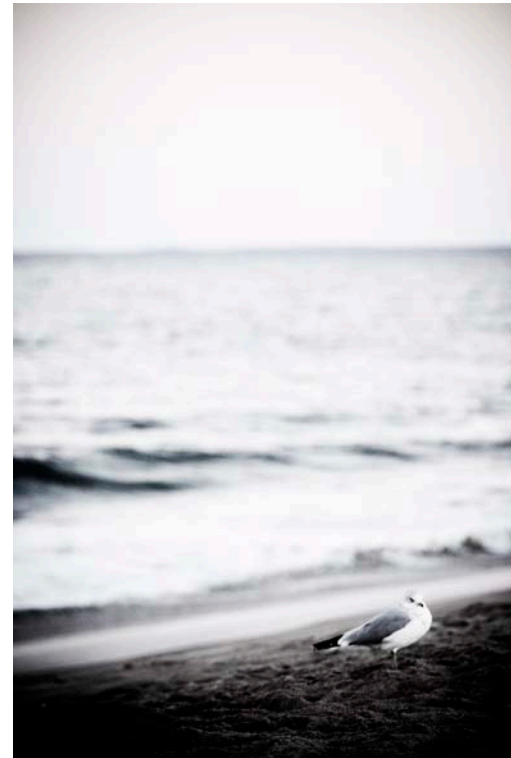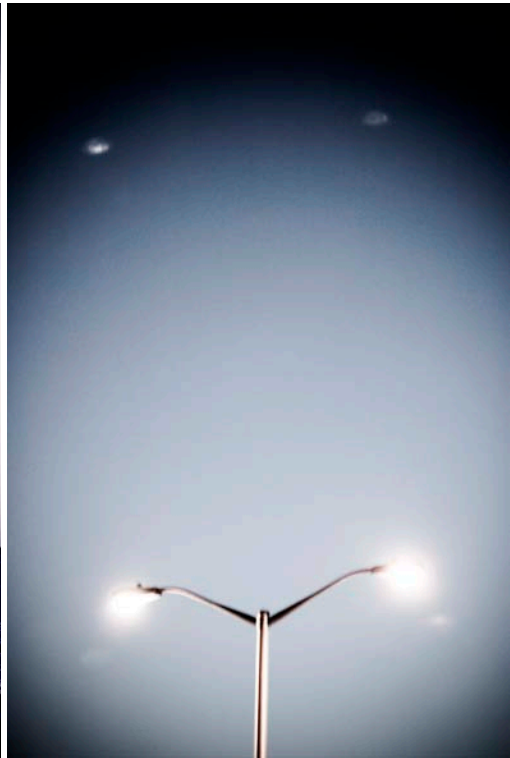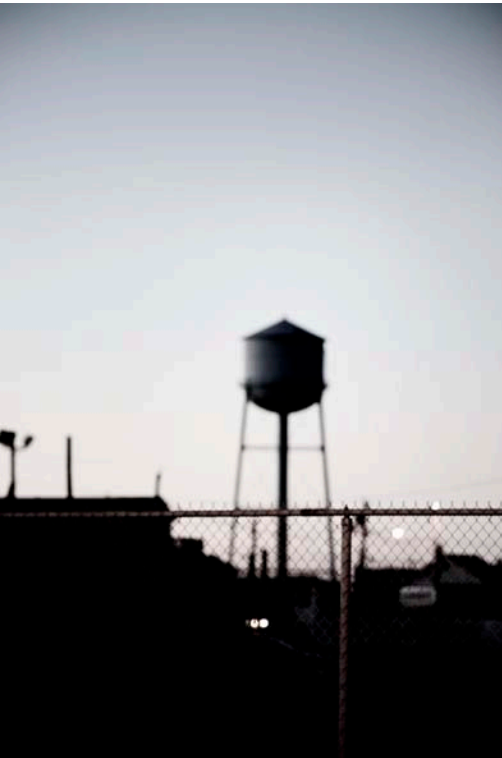
capturing place through available light
independent studies

you choose the light. you choose the angles. you choose the color. you choose the grit, the dirt, the detail. you choose pretty or you don't.

The taking and the making of a photograph

creating a sense of place can be affected in both parts of the photographic process: the taking and the manipulating of the image.

The camera and the darkroom
There is a widespread belief that the best way to make a better picture is with your camera. In other words, taking a bad photograph severely limits your options regardless of how talented you might be in the darkroom or with Adobe Photoshop. In my opinion, making a good photograph or one that executes on the artist's creative intent, requires a balance between doing both. When I discovered that Ansel Adams darkened his clouds and used red filters on his lenses I decided that the digital darkroom could afford me the same guilt-free opportunities.

Color, temperature and contrast
Color is a key element of photography that can quickly and effectively set the tonal quality of an image. The removal of the color spectrum in a picture down to the available shades of gray (black to white) can charge a photograph with cold and stark qualities. It can also make the photograph look simple and clean because there is no color to detract from the content of what has been framed for the viewer.

This type of directness can be very helpful when portraying something as simple as the clean curves and lines of a sailboat or even the facial expressions of a child photographed amidst the dramatic detail of a repressed and war-torn village. Capturing color in the photograph, like in the blues of a morning sky, can then signal hope and promise. By using a soothing palette of blues instead of the grays in a cloudy sky, the photographer can also make profound statements about the subject and their emotional condition.

The added benefit to using color is that it makes an implication of temperature. While color is affected greatly by the temperature values of light on the Kelvin scale, in layman's terms it serves to add an emotional "degree" of emotion to the hues found in the color of a photograph. Thinking back to Hitchcock's "Rear Window," the audience is given a sense of the oppressive heat in the opening scene not just through color but by the actions of the characters. Wiping sweat slowly from a forehead and sleeping on a fire escape are devices used in the film to exaggerate the effect of the heat but if the film had been shot in black and white those devices would have taken on a more literal meaning.

Color and temperature can also serve a more subtle purpose. Warmer temperatures in a photograph offer the possibility of implying warmer emotions. The use of a bright sunny sky can imply happiness while photographing an image with an even warmer sky can imply passion or romance. The possible uses here are numerous and diverse. This convention is not exclusive to photography or even visual language.

This same warming or cooling effect is true for film, also a visual medium, but it's also true for sound. A warm tone or line versus a colder and more shrill tone can have similar effects in how the material is interpreted.

The result in any of these cases is simple. The use of color can tangibly enhance the emotional substance, tone or mood of the photograph to enrich our sense of the subject. It can also add dimension to the subject's relationship with its surroundings and other characters.

Contrast is another quality that will enhance the degree of an emotion or mood in a photograph. Technically it reduces highlight areas and increases the darkness of shadows while adding a visible grain or grit to the image. This can make the appearance of your image seem darker, more mysterious, or even raw while having the same effect on its tonality and mood. In journalistic imagery in particular, high amounts of contrast seem to add dramatic effect to an image and as importantly, the stories that accompany them.

Depth of field, composition and "photoshopping"
I've separated the discussion between color, temperature and contrast from depth of field and composition because the latter deal more with placement and locational perspective. The concept of distance in a photograph can have a variety of implications on the interpretations of a photograph. Distance between objects or people in a photograph can imply an emotional distance between them as well. The degree of that distance can then articulate a level of intimacy, tension or even discord.

Depth of field can also help to personify the degree of the relationship quality between multiple subjects or the setting in a picture. A shallow depth of field is one where one object is in focus and the detail in another isn't, gradually blurring away the farther it gets from the first object. Looking at the examples on the opposite page, image A shows a subject in the foreground captured in vivid detail against a blurred background that results in it being called out from its surroundings. Since the separation is gradual and soft the implication is still one of belonging and participation.

The next picture features the background, changing our focus of what's important in the artist's message from the sole individual to a broader sense of this place. Using a depth of field to create separation in a photograph can then imply something of the relationship between a subject and place and how one affects the other. This is a practical way of looking at the sense of place captured in the image.

there is an intangible quality
to how something looks and feels and sounds
encoding a sense of place is about dealing
with those intangible qualities and
the questions that arise.

The way that an image is composed to portray these relationships can be manifested in a variety of ways. The photographer might decide to leave more material in the photograph effectively surrounding his main subject with a story. The size and placement of the subject in this relationship is key and draws on the power of suggestion. A person shot in front of a background where that person fills most of the photograph sends a different message than a person shot in front of a background where they figure small in comparison to everything else. While these differences in composition and scale can issue a message of control in a situation, they can also imply a difference in importance between elements that contribute to the implied sense of place in a photograph.

Software like Adobe Photoshop allows us to experiment with these different devices more than ever before to change the tonality and impact of an image. While technically it opens up creative possibilities the results might not look like genuine or convincing. The same holds true for modifying video footage or filtering a sound for effect. While special effects might make a scene in a movie more explosive it might make the plot itself less believable. I mention it now because in a single exposure the same holds true, overexaggeration and "photoshopping" can take away from the artistic integrity of an image and in the end dissolve credibility in an artist's intent to create a believable sense of place.

Photography and narrative

I've partly defined narrative as something that contains a beginning, a middle, and an end. It conveys a story. While photography puts artistic means at our disposal, one image is hard-pressed to contain a beginning, a middle and an end. It can convey meaning, detail and evidence of a story but in itself it is not a narrative. Literally or abstractly, enough cannot be extracted from a photograph to tell the entirety of a story and therefore a narrative.

A photograph can certainly have narrative qualities when put together with other photographs, as long as the capture of these moments in time leads us down the path of a story. We can then be effectively taken through a series of events from the picturetaker's perspective. Photography can do that if the audience is given a clear picture of what transpired from one picture to the next and come to a meaningful conclusion at the sum of those events.

Casestudy

Project: Sequences in parallax I and II
Course: Elements of media, 2rd yr 1st semester

Purpose and construct

The purpose of this project was to use yards of tape pulled from a vhs cassette to create a five frame sequence of images that brought a chosen issue to life. I chose to try to make a statement on the convergence of technology, its subversive commercial agenda and how its effects on society result in a struggle for individuality—in an age of lost identity.

I started by taking photographs of the strands of vhs film in various arrangements and compositions that progressed from clean rows and curves to chaotic knots and piles of indiscernible black shiny material. The shots of clean strands of black tape were meant to symbolize the lack of identity the strands, or people, suffered in society because of their almost identical appearance. The tangling and crumpling of the tape for other shots was intended to personify chaos and drama that comes from technology overwhelming society. For dramatic effect ,and I chose to add tension to the photographs through motion and lighting. I proceeded to aim fans and bright halogen lights at the tape while taking some of the photographs. The resulting images showed strands of tape moving and flying chaotically in different directions to juxtapose my other sequences of creased, bent and misshapen strands and knots. We were then asked to create additional sequences that would be presented in relationship to one other in a grid, allowing for possible storylines and messages to unfold.

The second part of the assignment was to perform the same exercise with imagery of our own choosing, giving us the option to tell a less abstract story. I chose to keep my topic the same and then set out to take pictures of the city I live in Lowell, Massachusetts, a culturally diversen industrial suburb north of Boston, experiencing an economic rebirth. A city in transition,it offers a cultural and economic dichotomy that provided a perfect setting for a new sequence of images to complement the original "tape sequences."

My photographic journey would take me over fences, into alleys, and from street to street chronicling the economic demise of the city and its struggle to reinvent itself. I took some of my pictures in the early evening to create the darker mood of the economic struggle. This light and the raw material I saw in every direction allowed me to blend the lights of the city with ominously lit industrial windows and the elements of urban decay that are so pervasive in the city center. I also searched out commercial elements like neon signs and "found" typography to create a visual alternative to the shots of architectural decay. The result was a grid of sequences that made a powerful statement on the city's past, present and the aftermath of a passing industry.
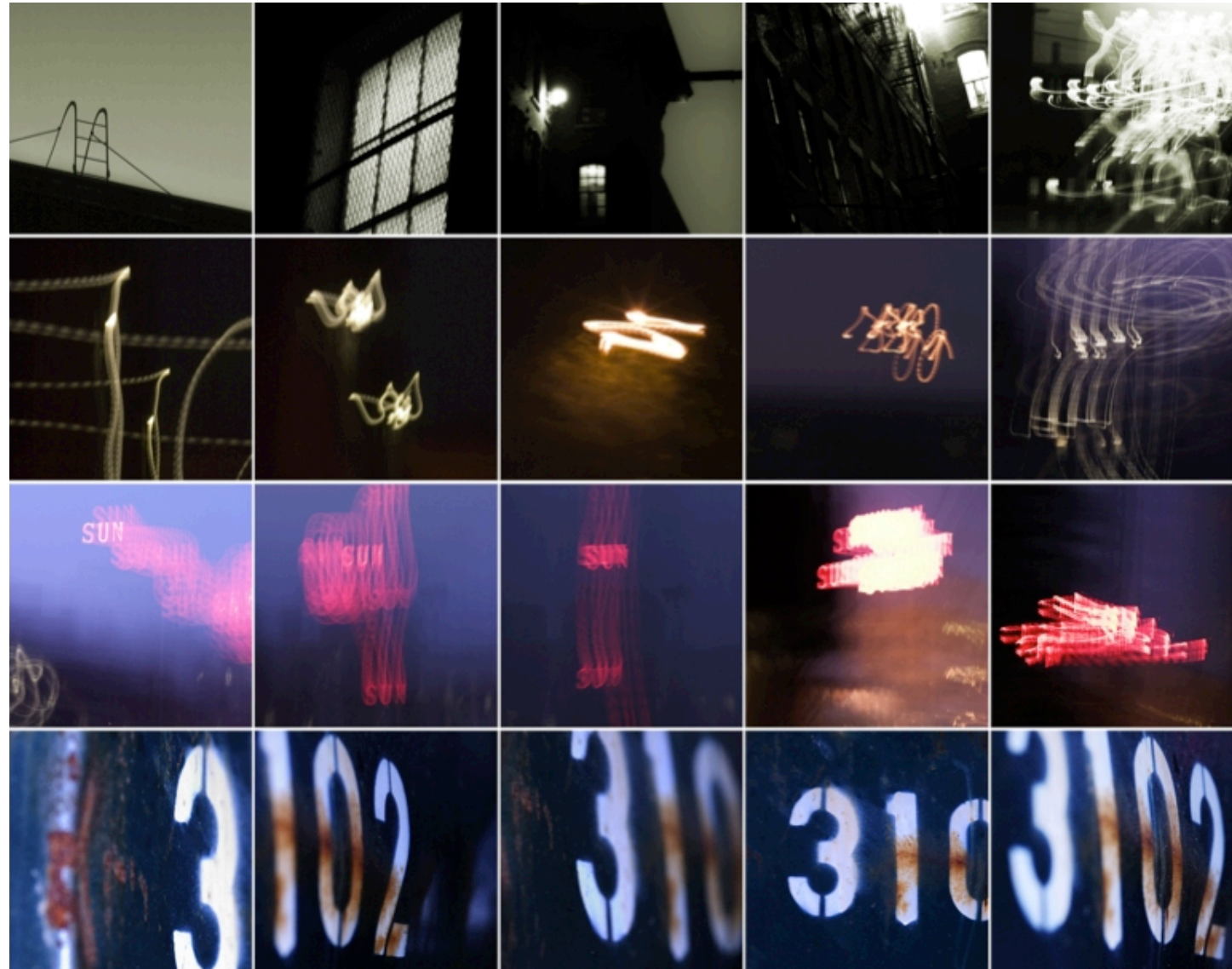
color, warmth, contrast, cropping, depth of field,
those are your tone of voice. they transcend what you say into how you say it.
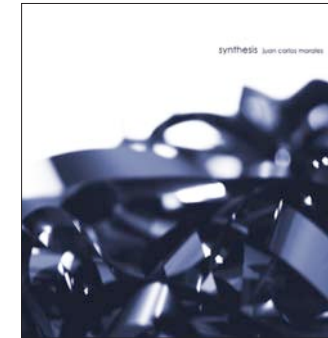
Reflection

My first thought when starting the tape sequences was that using the vhs tape was going to be a limiting factor on my creativity, that it really wasn't possible to make any kind of statement with the unwieldy non-descript pieces of black material. What I soon realized is that while having a photogenic or visually appealing subject is helpful, it's a luxury that you can take for granted. The beauty and power, the actual presence, in a subject can often times be found in how the subject is portrayed not its appearance. Black vhs tape is about as unappealing a subject as you can find, but as an artist you have to take on the challenge of portraying it and somehow illustrating a point of view from that material.

You have to approach telling the story in almost the same way that you'd approach it with a human subject. You can bend the tape, move it, arrange it and make it appear to come to life in almost the same way you can have a human subject smile, frown, fold their arms, sit, or stand. You can have it do any number of things that personify an emotion, mood or character quality. As a photographer I can use camera angles, depth of field, and color to bring out a defining facial feature in a person. In much the same way, I chose to frame cracks and creases in the various strands of tape for effect.

Going through this exercise first provided a good foundation for how I would approach the second stage of the project. While the city's diverse features provided plenty of material for me to shoot I quickly learned that it was the framing of those images that made their details even more dramatic. I could compose my shots and create a distinction in importance by the angle and visual relationships I created between objects. By shooting some of my subjects during the day and some at night, I contemplated mood in my sequences. I also explored the effect of capturing some of my subjects cleanly against others that were represented more abstractly. The intended statements of tension in the city's struggle to shake off the economic strife it struggled under were portrayed clearly in some sequences. In others, my message was delivered less deliberately, inciting debate in my class over how the images should interpreted. There were different interpretations on what the images meant while other members of my class didn't pick up on the overall message.
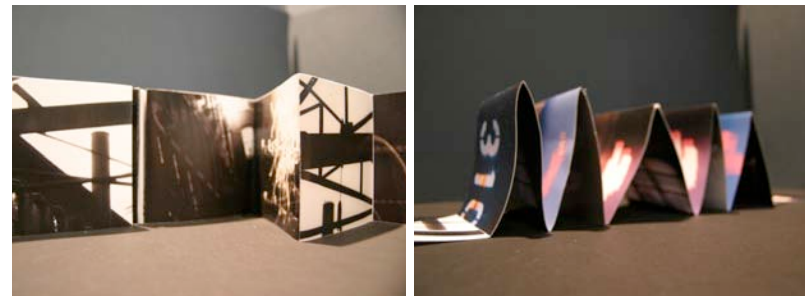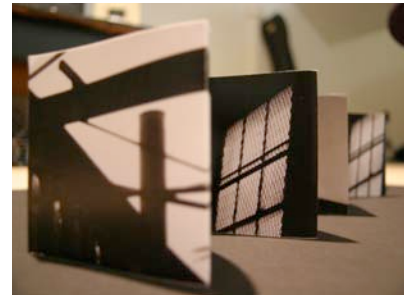
sequencing the images, the message
double-sided accordion folds allow
resequencing on the fly

The message I chose to communicate was much to ask of a pile of tape, the more illustrative photographs were given almost as much responsibility in delivering the weight of my messages. I was still asking the audience to interpret the images the way I intended and not simply as a collection of pictures that I took of old buildings, neon signs and spraypainted dumpsters.

The final aspect of the project was the creation of a double-sided accordion book that I created for the audience to move from one image to the other. I took the sequences of images and printed them into a small accordion book that allows the "user" to move through the series by folding together and unfolding the panels. Due to the unstitched nature of the piece the sequence of images could be arranged and rearranged in a variety of ways. Some images were also intentionally repeated and horizontally flopped next to each other to create the effect of a transition or key-frame before the next image. The ability to change the sequence on the fly allowed the user to create their own juxtapositions, essentially keyframing new sequences in an analog fashion that was reminiscent of a multimedia slideshow. This rounded out the project and made it more experiential. I started thinking about the process of sequencing — how it could help me document people and places as well as explore other narrative frameworks.
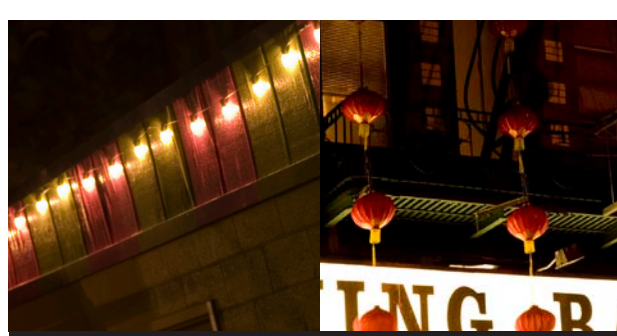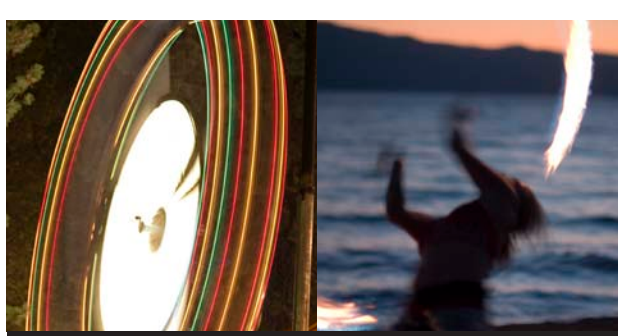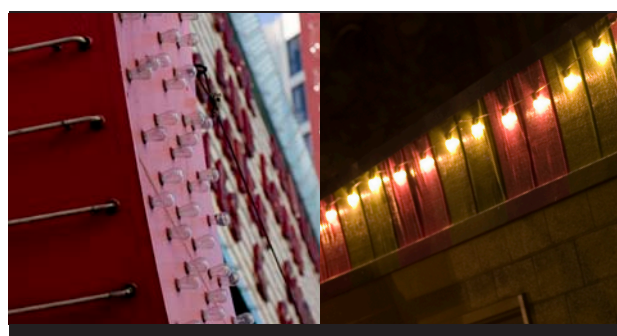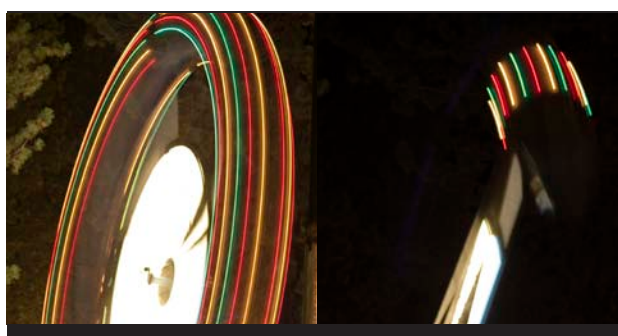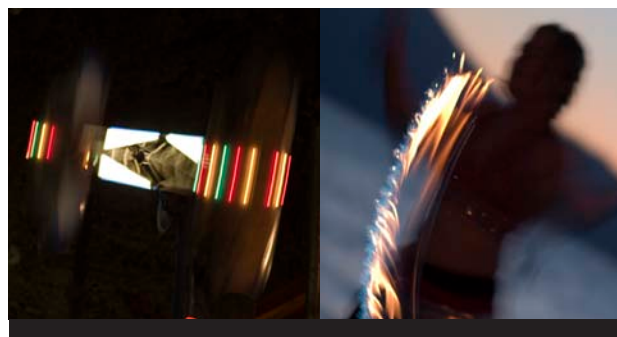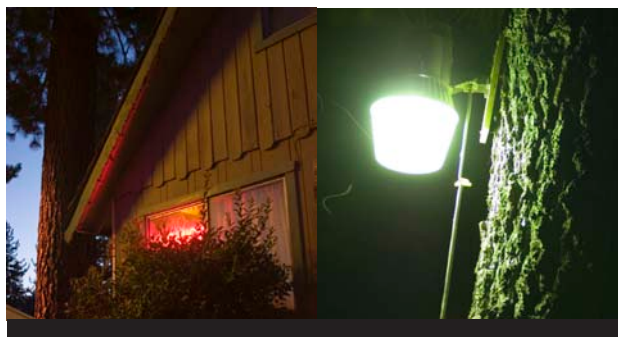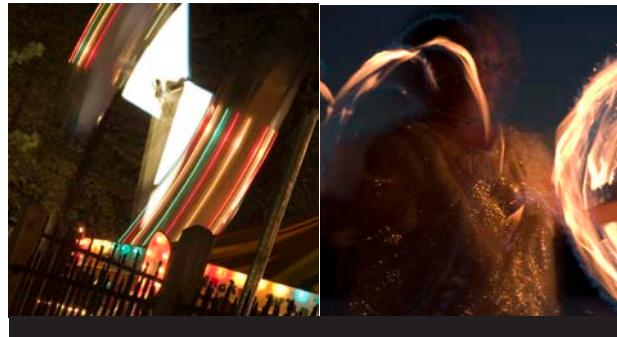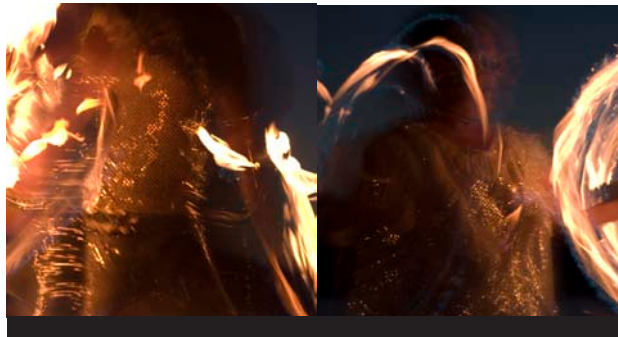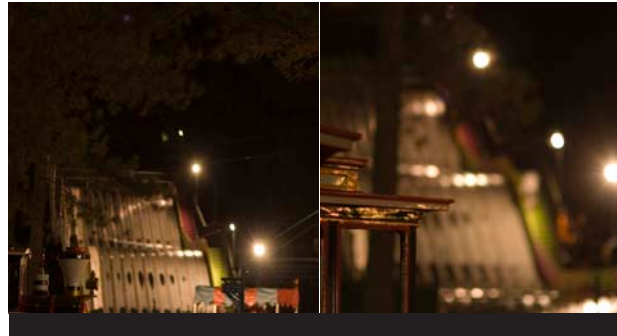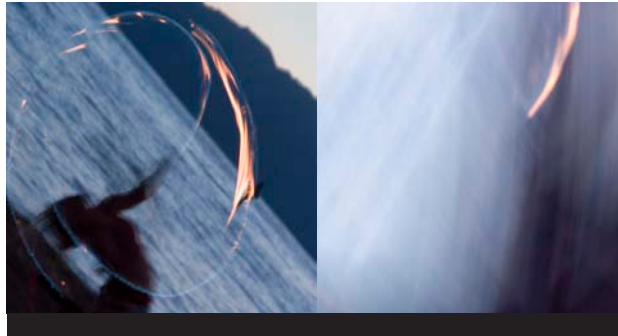
Stereoscope gallery

As I continued to explore sound and the relationships between image sequences I looked for ways that I could explore those relationships outside the use of a computer. I wanted my classmates to be able to handle the images physically, to be able to hold something tangible and then play. That's where the stereoscope comes in. I found one at an antique shop that even came with some old cards. In an analog and physical way it became a viewer for my images that allows the viewer to swap out the printed cards of photo pairs and instantly see the overlapped optical effect.

The pairs were organized into what I considered to be meaningful sequences that gave impressions of the places I had been. The pairing effect could be called storyful in some cases but in most they serve as short impressionistic journeys through my own perspective of what I felt when I experienced them. The optical illusion of the overlapping when viewed through a stereoscope gives the viewer an adjustable way of layering the photo textures which makes the experience tactile and curious. The juxtapositions in content were chosen to reflect the dichotomy in culture and physicality that existed for me in these places. Other juxtapositions and sequences were intended to expose the audience to certain intangible qualities of my remembrance of those places.

These qualities ranged from the simple shapes in architecture and everyday objects to simple impressions of how light (natural and man-made) seems to be so different on the west coast than on the east coast.
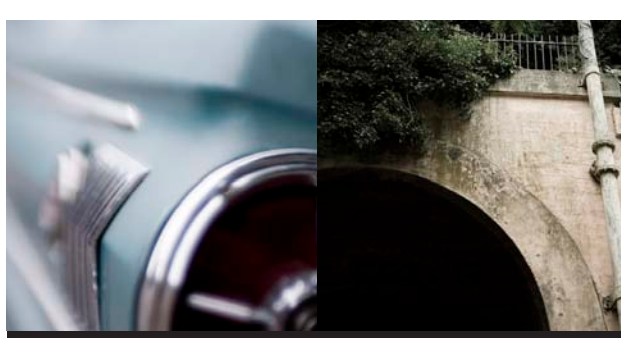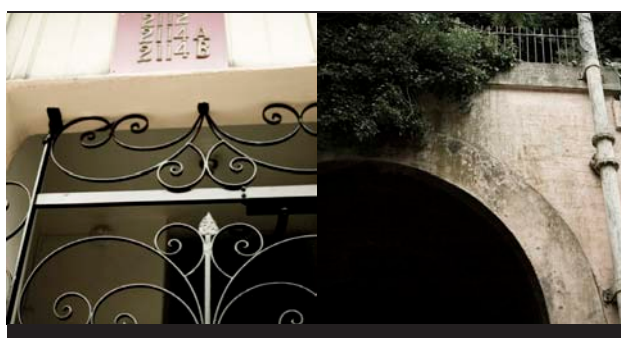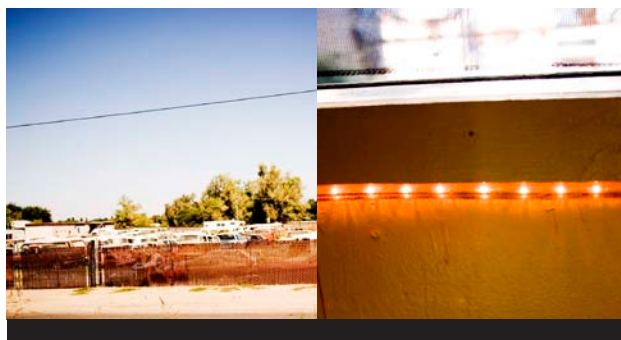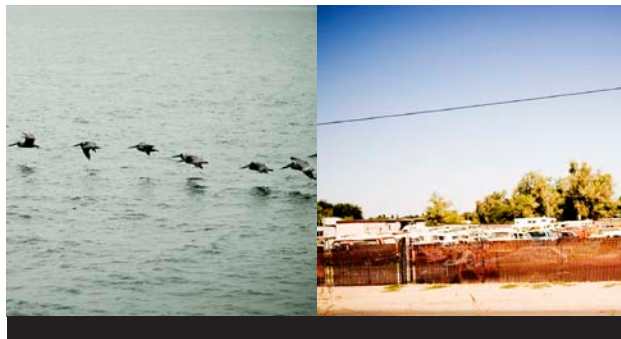
apart from seeing the images on paper,
the reward in this project lies in seeing the audience
enjoy and play with the images i've taken.
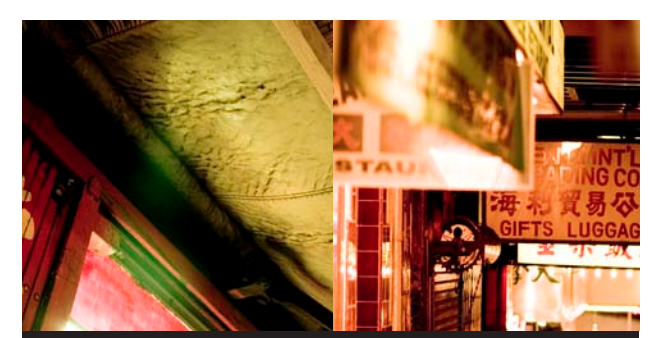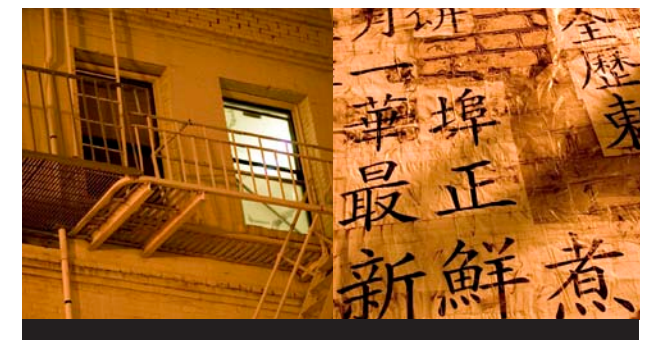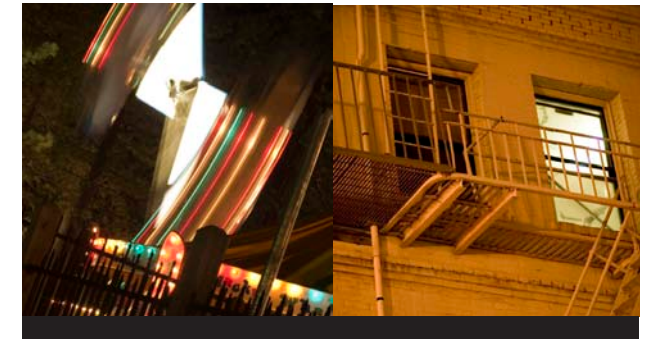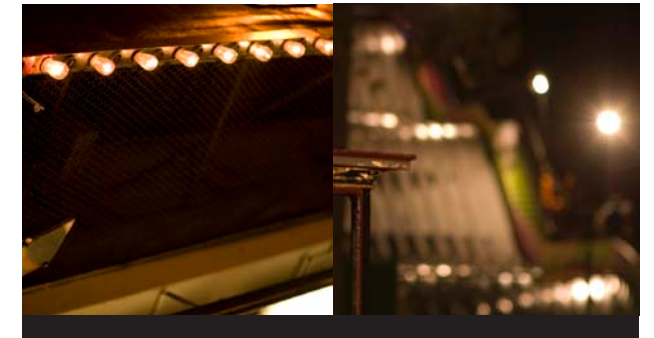
it is also rewarding to hear them comment on the
social and cultural texturing i've tried to capture in my work.
i prefer to bring back the feeling, not the postcard.
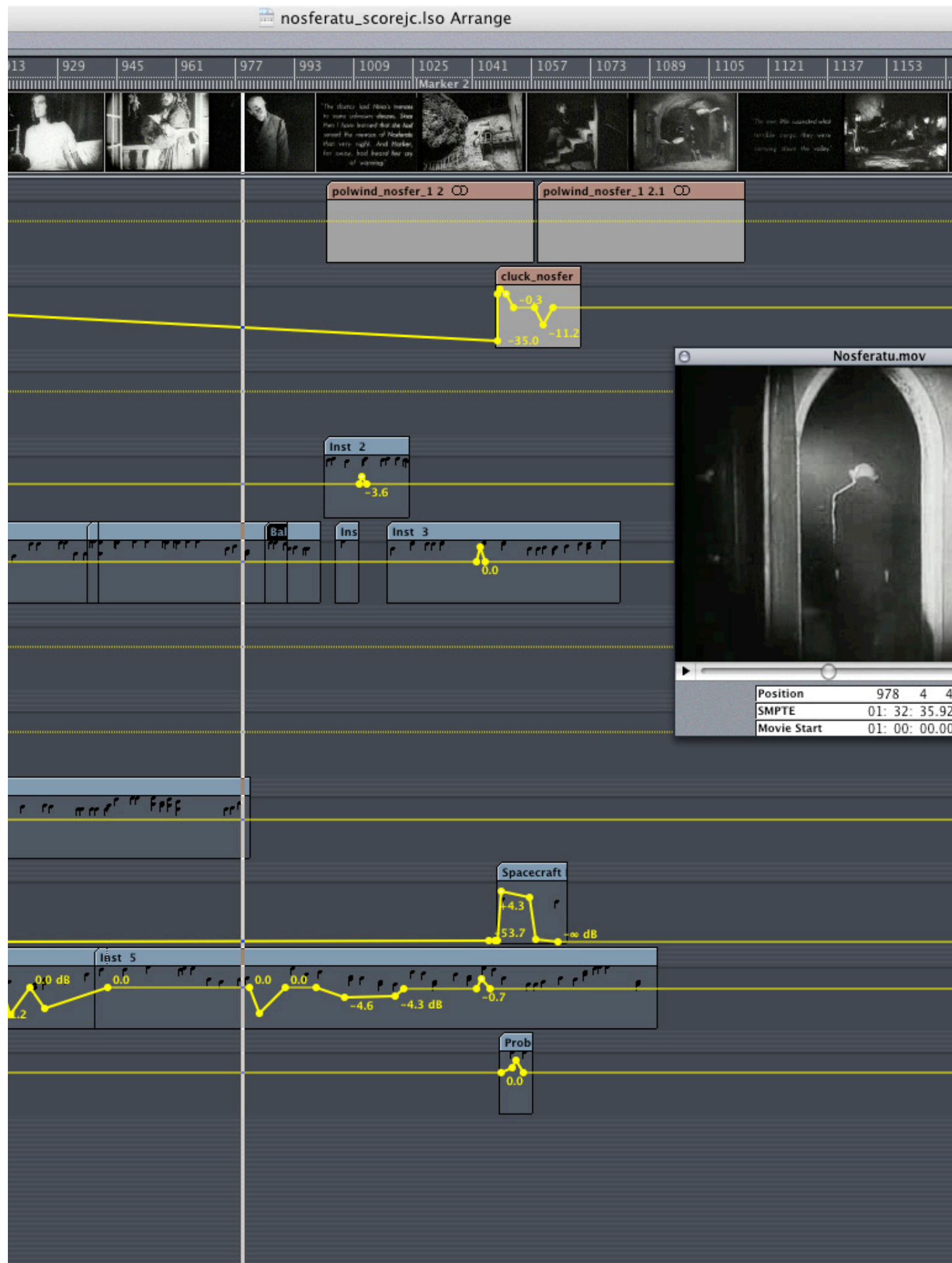
enhancing visual media with sound

Cinematic qualities of sound

Sound designers and composers have the power to inspire a wide range of emotions that can bring a great multi-dimensionality to visual media. Sound and musical composition provide layers of rhythm to visual media, particularly film, that enable storytellers to pace the delivery of content to the audience while building emotions over a period of time. Sound can also serve as a transitional device that allows for the film to carry or change the tonality of a storyline from one scene to the next. Oftentimes this allows the filmmaker to make the jump to another scene or change in plot without having to visualize them in a literal fashion. Sound then becomes a palette that the filmmaker draws from to paint a fuller picture of what's happening on screen and of emerging subplots as well. It then becomes a useful tool for foreshadowing events that the artist does not wish to fully materialize at that moment in time.

This use of sound results in a greater depth in the emotional and dramatic tone of the film or new media piece. In different fashion, sound and music can also be used more literally to reinforce what's happening visually. Most of us can probably remember a romantic film that was accompanied by soft piano melodies or a suspense-thriller that evoked a sense of foreboding with a series of long and deep bowstrokes that seemed to hold a higher-octave shrill note at the climax of the film. It is exactly this type of richness in storytelling that evokes the imagination. This results in a more lasting experience for the user that enables the audience to establish a stronger attachment to the sense of place which is being conveyed.

A word on the language of sound

Like photography, sound provides the artist with the expressive potential to become a storyteller. The pitch of a sound, the warmth it contains, its pace and rhythm over a length of time—these are mirror-qualities to how a photographer or filmmaker exploits the visual medium to add meaning, symbolism and mood to their own work.

This evocative medium opens a trove of subliminal reactions in our brains and in our hearts that lends meaning to the visual which is difficult to quantify but easy to qualify. Sometimes the best scores in a movie are the ones that work behind the scenes. In essence, you don't notice them as independent musical compositions or soundbytes but almost as an added layer to what is happening visually. In the end however, they evoke a particular feeling in a scene or throughout the film. It is something that becomes organic in the storytelling process and it involves two actions: one is the act of persuasion by the composer, the second is the audience embracing the impulse to comply with the persuasion and then respond. That response, the act of engaging as an audience, is what legitimizes the sometimes intangible concepts that make up a sense of place.

Sound and narrative

Like the photograph, sound has narrative qualities in that it can lend meaning and symbolism to an event but additionally, it can enhance plot over time. Sound however, is best served as a complementary medium to visual communication when it comes to storytelling.

Visualization and Scoring examples

On the DVD accompanying this document you'll find three projects that attempted to explore the ideas of visualizing a composed sound composition and then conversely, scoring sound to match the visual two pieces of visual content. The following is a brief description of each:

"Nosferatu"

Taking a clip of footage from the classic black and white film, "Nosferatu" the accompanying score creates a continuous bed of sound that attempts to materialize the suspense and drama of this silent film. The experimental form of this project was twofold. The first objective was to create a continuous rhythm that served as a background layer for the story. The second objective was to compose transitional sounds into the piece that reflected events and changes in the plot. The segment provided is several minutes long.

"Lady in the Water"

The objective in this project was to take the movie trailer (a deliberately short form piece) for M. Night Shymalan's film Lady in the Water and compose an original "soundtrack" for it. This trailer is a shorter piece that featured a montage of scenes that required my sound composition and editing to be deliberate and precise. Given the juxtaposition of the different tonalities in the scene previews that were montaged, I needed to employ sounds that could be interpreted in step with the changing visual content. On top of doing all this, the general tone had to remain consistent with the filmmaker's intentions. When listening to the piece please note the way the sound and visuals work together to convey a tone of place that changes from calm and banal to mysterious and magical.
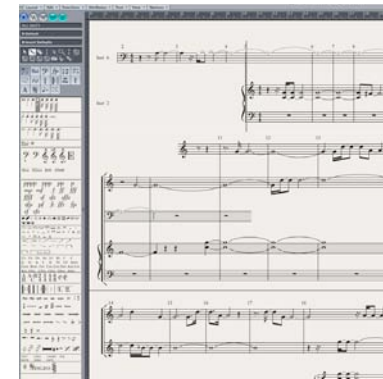
"Sound vision"

This is an abstract visualization of an ambient sound composition. The sound composition contains long drawn out spaces of musical drones and tones that are separated by dramatic changes in pitch, pace and aural textures. The visualization implies the changes in the composition material along with an abstract interpretation of the change in mood and tonality. The underlying intent with this piece was to transport the audience to an emotional change in place.

Casestudy

Project: Place through Sound

Course: Elements of media, 2rd yr 1st semester

Purpose and construct

The purpose of this project was to use sound to create a representation of a place. The assignment was wide open. Choose a place and create a sense of it for our audience. It was up to us to use any sounds we wanted. We could either create or record them. Since sound has exhaustive creative possibilities I decided to start simple and picked my home. It being my home, I could attach a sense of comfort and belonging to the sounds that make up the live environment by sampling anything from the sound of my children playing to the beeping of appliances.

I chose to focus on a simple concept. The motif would be to center in on the everyday commonality of the sounds that make up my home and the people that inhabit it. Rather than focus on the physicality or the location, my home experience would best defined by the sense of warmth and character that the sounds and final composition were intended to portray. As an example, the imperfections of the hissing and clacking of the old radiators combined with footsteps on creaky floorboards were sampled to create a sense of old versus new. Sounds like my children talking and appliances buzzing implied a sense of the home being lived in and active.

One of the most interesting parts of the process was working through the questions that these metaphors raised and whether my own execution of each actually achieved its desired purpose. Was my approach too subjective or abstract—or was my approach too conventional? I strove to reach a balance in how each sound was edited, treated and then sequenced. What I mean by this is that I chose to give some sounds a more textural role in the final piece while highlighting other sounds to play a more literal role in the depiction of this place. Some sounds would end up occupying the foreground while others remained in the background — lending a sense of symbolism and importance to those more "telling" sounds in the foreground. By "telling" I mean sounds or occurences that introduce characters in story or point to specific places like the kitchen — the epicenter of the home.

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The Process

I started by listening to my house. I went from room to room and looked around and listened to floorboards creaking, windows rattling, the heat hissing, kettles boiling, refrigerators opening, tivos blipping, and voices speaking. After selecting and digitizing my sounds, I decided to create a more melodic composition that would make the sounds more interesting and immersive than just replaying a series of noises. It seemed natural to stitch the sounds together into a type of song, almost in the way that music and sounds are used in a movie to give a scene warmth or drama. This would represent the soundtrack of my daily life at home.

It became apparent that the sounds needed to "composed" together. They needed to have structure and a sense of purpose in how they were arranged. The juxtaposition in some cases and blending in others of the sounds would provide tonality, warmth and emotion to the piece.

The other challenging compositional aspect was creating a rhythm in the piece that would create the underlying idea that the house functioned like a clock with a symphony of moving pieces. Technically this involved taking some of the sounds and "cutting" them so that they made musical units that I could sequence and layer on top of one another throughout the piece. Questions arose here also: would these sequences and their effect be industrial, light, dark, or would they be suggestive of a subplot in the narrative? In the end this rhythmic sequencing took on the continuous "ticking" quality of clockwork. I also infused it with a bit of whimsy by incorporating fun elements like a cat's meow and the sound of clunky household appliances.

Reflection

The issues that proved to be most challenging were not the technical issues of recording and editing, though they were new processes to me. Issues of representation and interpretation cropped up the most. While they sometimes led to answers they sometimes led to more questions. How would I choose to personify a condition or quality like a happy home? Would I play light music and accompany it with wine glasses clinking and people laughing? Would I instead use a long soothing rhythm overlaid by the sound of my wife and I reading a bedtime story to our daughters? I could have pursued different directions in my composition but I stuck to the original essence of the story. In doing that however, I had to consider whether I wanted to layer in a subplot or storyline to allude to events in my family's personal life or just leave that element out altogether. Having tackled that, production questions would follow. I was faced with the task of how to edit the sounds into loops that I could use as sequences. Should I fade them in and out of one another in an ambient fashion or take a more staccato approach? Like in so much of my other work I tackled the question of whether or not I wanted to be straightforward and literal in materializing my content or if I should take more abstract and emotional routes in representing my subjects.

I chose not to script the audio and embed superfluous subplots into my piece and decided to record the various sounds as they occurred. I wanted it to be genuine but also wanted to create edited loops from the recorded sounds that could be arranged into a layered composition that was both rhythmic and expressive. By keeping the "plot" simple I could contrast the major sound occurrences with a mechanical rhythm to imply a richness in the environment. The result was a sense of activity and motion that was reflective of my busy home atmosphere.

Experimenting with these sounds I realized that I could give them different qualities depending on how I treated them. Representation then took on a whole new meaning. I could make an ordinary sound appear to be tense and frenetic or smooth and rhythmic by editing it and rearranging it into a new sequence. By experimenting with tonality, pitch, reverberation, and filtering the "voice" of the sound with delays and sound effects I could add a dimension of space to the composition.

The result was that I could actively change the tone and mood of this piece if I wanted to. I played three pieces during the final presentation. The first was a whimsical sequence of sound layers that featured a typical morning at my house with footsteps on creaky floors, radiators clanging and hissing, the tivo blipping, water pouring and one of my daughters speaking. The second piece used some of the same sounds and the addition of a garbage truck. I arranged, edited and filtered the sounds to have a more cavernous and dark feel that was the complete opposite of the first. And finally, the third was a bit of piano impromptu layered over a soft rhythmic sequence of previously used sounds to give a more dreamlike impression.

All three pieces alluded to very different feelings using the same sounds. There was however, a vast difference in treatment and representation, ultimately changing the tone and direction of each. If I were to do the project again today I would probably do it the same way but I would take what I learned to add depth to the story. The first composition provided a general sense for the household but spoke very little about the qualities of each character — some of which were not even explored as individuals. To tell a more in-depth story I would develop each character with more detail specific to them and only them. The subsequent editing of each character's story within the larger story would also help to engage the audience more. By committing to each character's development I would be able to give the audience more to attach themselves to emotionally. In the end, I gained valuable insights into the narrative process by editing and arranging the content of this particular story. It would set the stage for not only much of the sound work I would start on in subsequent sound projects as well as set a ground layer for much of the thinking I'd take on in my photography and visual sequences as well.

It became clear to me that whether the medium is made up of sounds, photographs, or frames in a motion piece, the editing and arranging of these elements was still just a matter of telling the story, but with a different vocabulary. The langue of storytelling was still the same, I was either combining or splicing moments of one or another type of data in sequences that would bring my audience through stages in time and come to rest in a conclusion. I would discover that while each medium provides the possibility for a high level of expression, layering and sequencing multiple media provides greater rewards as each medium complements the other.
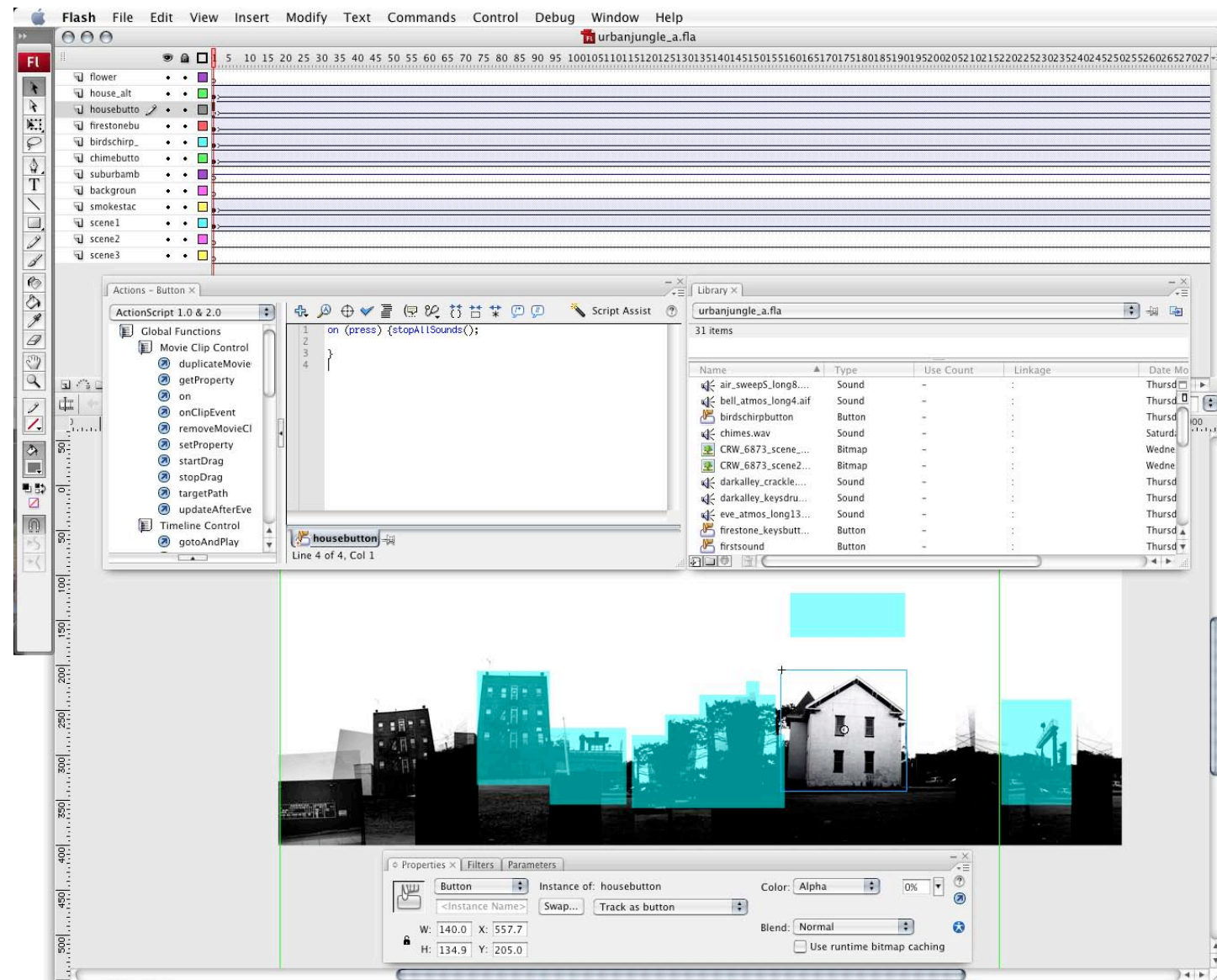
areas of the panning landscape were designated as hotspots to trigger sounds from the outside and the inside

visual and aural clues that materialize a sense for what this place and its inhabitants are

combined media: photo, film and sound

The combined aesthetic of hybrid media
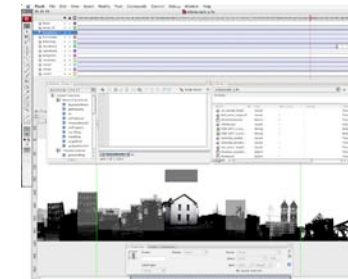
One of the arguments this thesis makes is that photography, film and sound are respectively powerful mediums of expression that lend themselves ably to narrative. Film is the natural coupling and juxtaposing of both mediums with and against one another to provide a complete sto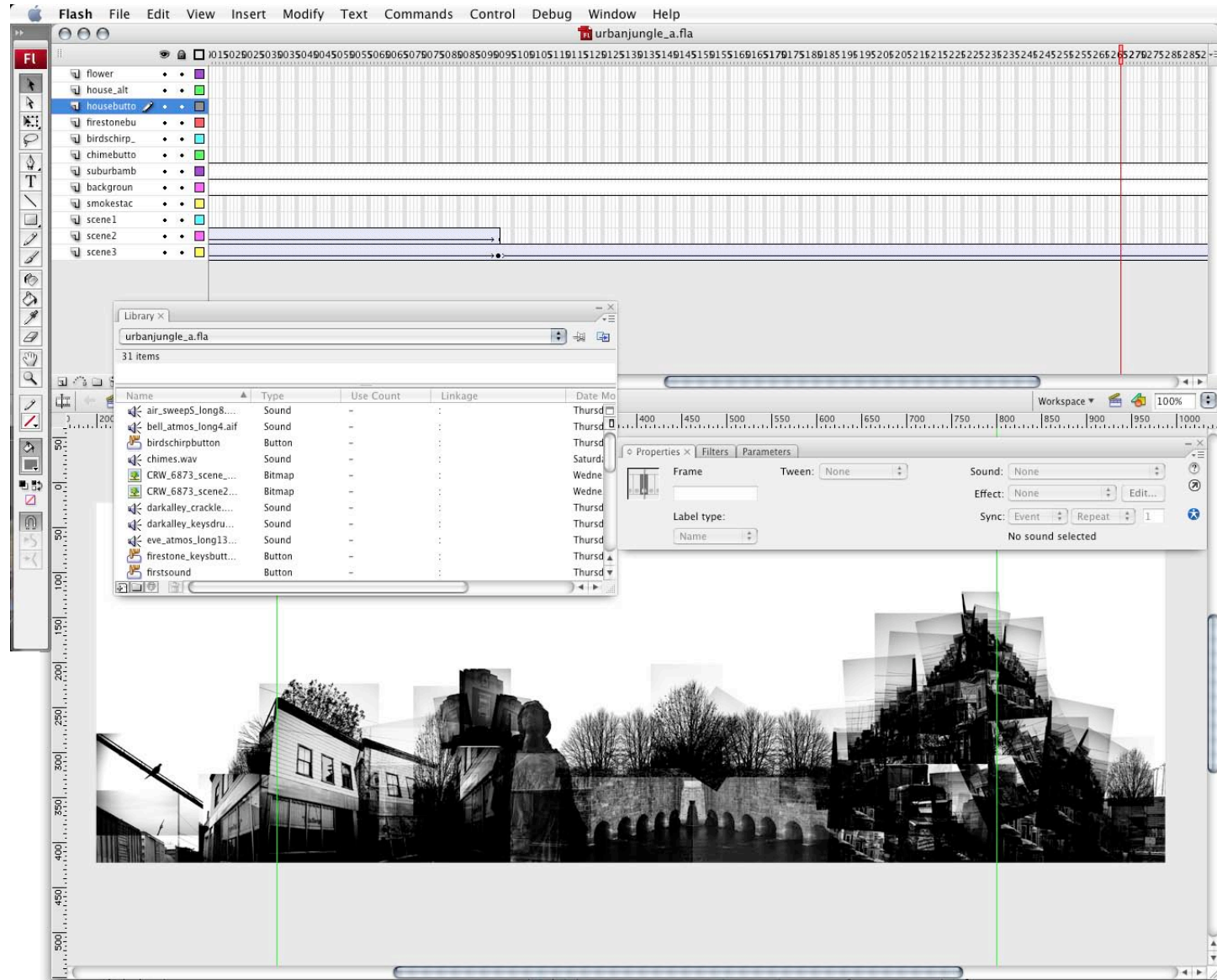rytelling experience. The fluid combination of narrative elements offers almost unlimited opportunities for conveyance and therefore, a good platform for creation and sense of place.

Great care must be taken in combining these mediums. There are delicate nuances in the seconds between frames and the subtle parts of an image and how it is framed. Color and tone might be considered technical qualities of a picture or frame but they must be executed with purpose and artistry. The artist must be deliberate in scoring the cadence of a few notes and how they can change at a moment's notice.

Now consider taking these nuances of communications language and applying them to the larger context of interactive media. So far we've talked about linear progressions in narrative. Today's new media landscape puts the ability to match variable sequences in imagery and sound to user-selected choices. Those choices and the non-linear pathing that results in a new media narrative can then lead to multiple outcomes that are user-driven and highly impactful. The age of new media has also brought with it great opportunities for collaboration in creating new media content as well as using it. Multimedia experiences can become more complex and more immersive as multiple users are asked to work together to create a collective experience. The experience of using a multi-media device can be more immersive due to the greater availability of technology. As technology makes the handling of formerly cumbersome video and sound files easier and more efficient, greater flexibility and creative freedom is granted to the new media artist in creating these experiences.

I make that statement with two distinctions, bandwidth and software advances have allowed us greater flexibility for compressing formerly unwieldy large volume data in the form of vector content and highly compressed video and sound. Secondly, the ability to match users to content through meaningful database silos has led to smarter and more customized ways of connecting to diverse audiences. While the web and e-commerce have found ways to connect users to content that matches their demographics and spending habits, new media has too. Reduction in file sizes granted by better compression schemes has allowed new media designers to get more out of current bandwith restrictions. The effect is that new media programs can be better integrated with user-data to draw on deeper sets of media assets that satisfy broader audiences. The days of "one outcome fits all" multimedia experiences have passed as new media authors can customize sound and video content with better prescreening and categorizing of user types. This allows more specific matching of content to those user types and their "in program" choices. That provides more relevant and therefore, more memorable, experiences which add dimension to the nature of the visual and aural content.

What I've learned about combining media
Simply because interactive media gives us the ability to move narratives and storylines to non-linear structures doesn't make them more successful. The following issues became apparent to me when exploring these concepts of dynamic pathing: first, cutting up a narrative and giving the user too many choices can be confusing as well as distracting; secondly, giving the user options in how a storyline develops means that extra care should be given to make sure that the integrity of the narrative is preserved. Any plot variations or alternative pathing should still take the user/audience down an well-presented story path that conveys the narrative and any narrative alternatives clearly.

as culturally diverse places are layered in their social complexities and physical markings the sounds of this place are diverse and layered

the user has the ability to easily control the stop, play, repeat and layering of these sounds

Casestudy

Project: The perspective films project

Course: Major Studio I, 1st yr 1st semester
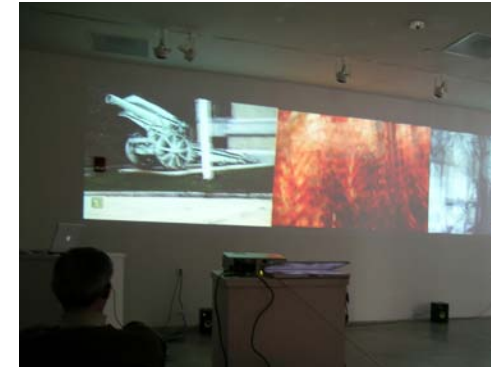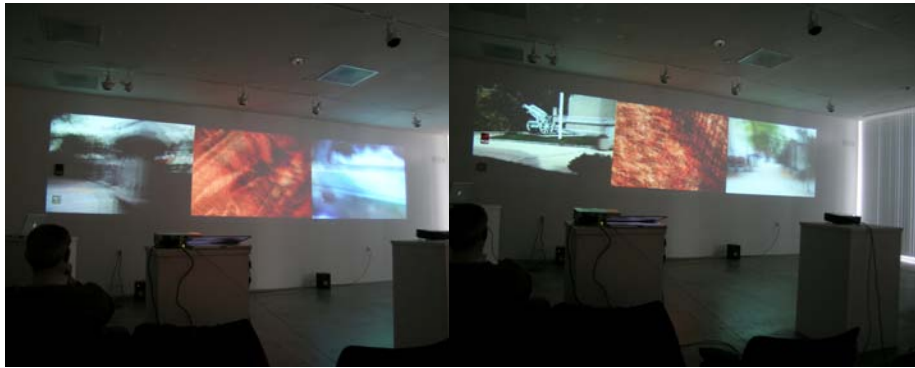
juxtapositions in time and how the characters viewed and interacted with the same landmarks

Purpose and construct

The purpose of this project was to tell a story from three different character perspectives that happened to share the same setting, or place if you will, but not the same outcomes. One of the unique qualities of the project was that it was told and meant to be absorbed from a first-person perspective, with the viewer becoming the character as they experienced the films. By watching the film very literally through each character's eyes and hence, perspective, I wanted the viewer to experience the landscape of the films and their intertwining narratives a bit more personally. I also wanted to create a sense for this shared place where all the stories took place but be able to convey the very different way in which each character interacted with it.

Given this intertwining of place and characters, the final presentation would best be served by a juxtaposition of the three films against one another. In the final screening of the project I projected them all at at the same time on a large white wall in a row of three. The result was that each character's story unfolded through their experience of the same place, a street I chose in Lowell, Massachusetts that featured a school, a halfway house, two churches, a veteran's memorial and a small bridge. I chose the street partly because it offered several landmarks that would lend themselves visually to the footage captured. More importantly though, the differences between the landmarks themselves made for great material in the eyes of the characters I would choose to interact with them.

Since the landmarks serve very different purposes to different people I chose a young schoolboy, a retired war veteran and a man with a chemical-dependency as my cast of characters. Each film journaled the eye and body movements, distractions and emotional pauses, as I saw them, of the individual characters as they moved down the street. The goal was to recreate each journey—however long it took— from the physical and emotional perspective of each character's point of view.

The Process

The most compelling aspect of these experimental narrative forms was the manner in which they were expressed. The "first perspective" approach was made up of two processes, capture and editing. The capture process entailed shooting each piece in a very purposeful and physical way so that the end product looked like the viewer was actually seeing what the character saw. If the character's eyes moved in long sweeping motions like those of a child, both close to the ground and from a perspective "looking up" then I did my best to position, angle and move the camera to reflect these movements. One of the characters I chose to portray was a homeless man with a drug addiction struggling through a state of dependency and withdrawal. That meant enacting/reenacting the movements of the character as he stumbled mentally and physically along the street. In the end it took several tries to emulate the movement and progress of the character down a length of the street as he continually stopped to reflect on his life in the face of the street's landmarks.

I then developed and shot the sequences for the other two characters: a child on his way home from school and the other, a war veteran trying to sort out the jig-sawed memories from his life. It was an enlightening experience from various perspectives, not the least of which was finding the self-confidence to stagger and fall down a street several times until finally falling into character. To aptly portray the experience of time and place from the homeless person's eyes, I had to enact the character's movements literally to make the perspective seem genuine. The child and war veteran were a bit less physical in that sense but they were certainly no less subtle in the public display that followed.

I had to approach each landmark thoughtfully and be cognizant of each object on the street and how each character would notice and/or interact with it physically or emotionally. Each landmark held a different value or lack of value for each character and had to be treated as such. Where one character might walk by a particular spot and give it only a passing glance, the other might identify with it on an emotional and even spiritual level. I had to address these issues on the spot. The more I worked on filming the footage the more I realized that complex issues were at play and to make it successful I'd have to take into account everything from small production details to larger questions of mood and tone. It would involve everything from composing clean shots to building and maintaining a rhythm between the pieces so they didn't turn into a meaningless clutter.

Reflection

The questions this project posed and the issues it tackled began laying the ground-work for some of the explorations I would enjoy later on. I found myself absorbed in executing short and momentary capture and in the making of moments. I realized that in telling three stories I needed to let the films tell a larger story about the significance of where they took place and let the way each character interacted with this same place drive the narrative process, making it simpler.

Rhythm and harmony in a narrative can come from each note working with the next, allowing the storyteller to make his message more communicable. One of the narrative devices that I used was timing multiple points in the films to coincide with each other to illustrate how the juxtaposed characters have a different relationship with the landmarks they collectively come in contact. While two or more characters are at the very same place at the very same time, the emotional matter that they're providing for the audience to attach themselves to is very different. In the case of the war memorial, the war veteran finds himself remembering actual events that have shaped his life's memories. The child on the other hand, approaches the memorial excitedly because it provides a place for him to pretend he is a soldier on a mission in a far away land. The progression of the characters down this long street lined with emotional points of interest almost makes the street itself a character. That provides a tangibility to the character's surroundings and how they are effected by them. As a narrative device, the depiction of place in these films acts not just as the physical location in which they take place but also materialize what we know about the character's and the internal and external factors that shape their lives.

Casestudy

Project: Caras, the totemic system

Course: Thesis project I, 3rd yr 1st semester
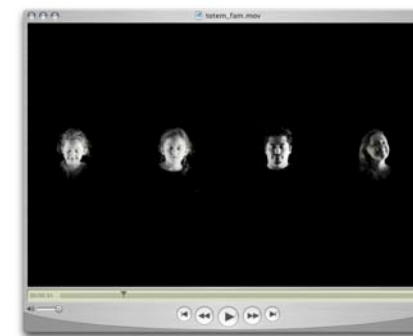
Purpose and construct

"Caras" is the spanish word for faces. I chose this name because the range of emotions that can be expressed in a person's face is almost limitless. The purpose of this project was to combine a range of these facial expressions with sound, either ambient or composed, that is somehow telling of a person's background, personality, culture, or vocation. The goal is to begin to learn something about them that begins to piece together elements of who they are beyond a name. The project at hand takes the user through the facial expressions of the members of my family, specifically my wife, my two daughters and myself.

The "totem" element of the project is the arranging of the four characters into a totemic lineup that makes up a row or column of caras/faces. When appropriate the actual arrangement uses spacial relationships to make a visual statement on that person('s') relationship or lack thereof with the rest of the totem. The images reveal only the face and part of the upperbody and are shot on a clean field of black to minimize distraction from the characters and their gesturing.

The historical significance of totems and totem poles varies greatly worldwide. The use of totem poles to represent the lineage and historical events that mark the various cultures that have used them is what sparked my interest in the concept. Totem poles have often been used to memorialize the passing of life and mark the burial ground for cultural figures of great importance. Other totems have been carved to symbolize events and the legends that have shaped people and places throughout the ages. These totems simply celebrate people and the stories between them. The faces are not carved in wood but rather shaped by small gestures.

When the user approaches the totem they find that the faces are sleeping, at rest, while an ambient sound is playing as the background mood element. The user approaches a member of the totem initiating an "awakened" visual sequence of facial gestures. At the same time a sound layer is also triggered which is specifically chosen to personify the person the facial gestures fading from one to the next..

The nature of these sound layers is meant to be suggestive of a personal trait or emotional quality that defines the character. Giving the sound an intimate quality is critical to how the audience responds to these caras. The intent is to draw interest below the surface level. The goal in combining these two elements is to suggest a connection between the tonality of the sounds playing and the emotions implied by the character's gesturing. The interesting question here is which element—the visuals or the sounds—plays a greater role in creating a perspective or point of view of the cara the audience is then faced with. Perhaps the greater question is whether or not this combined media makes for a more impactful experience. In this case the intent is for the audience to get a deeper sense for each character's persona and how that might impact their collective life as a family.

For now the totems are made up of black and white photographs of the faces set on black. While this does provide a clean and uncluttered setting for the audience to focus on the change in facial expressions color and real-life background settings might work as well. The goal is for the audience to gain insightful character impressions that will enhance the unfolding of narrative. Any implications made are articulated by character gestures and their accompanying sounds as the user interacts with the totems. The esthetic should remain clean so as not to detract from any gesturing or interaction between characters.

the second cara reacts to the first,
awakening to acknowledge
the final gesture made by the first cara.

The combination of media is intended to make the process an engaging personal experience that draws on expression and doesn't become just another multimedia slideshow. In a slideshow there is a linear progression from one item to the next. In this totemic system the user chooses which "cara" sequence is initiated causing a range of possibilities in how an embedded message or even story unfolds. In an interactive totem the sequence of caras selected by the user can for example, determine the proceeding series of sounds and character gestures. As the designer, the ensuing formula of user choices could be used to path the user through the experience to arrive at predetermined variable outcomes. These variable outcomes can be scripted to deliver different emotional experiences and messages. In the prototype I developed to explore these caras, high level of interactions were not explored. A single linear stream of each cara's sounds and gestures was prompted by the user's selection of each character and could with the opportunity to repeat the sequence as desired.

The totemic system allows for a character's gesturing to be programmed in response to a point in another cara sequence. As it plays a particular visual and aural gesture along with that of another cara, the interaction can then suggest emotion and relationships between the characters. The fact that these types of expressions imply emotion allows them to change from literal to poetic devices throughout the course of the experience. This platform lends itself to conveying a point of view rather than simply presenting information.

Reflection

What originally drew me to the idea of combining mixed media elements in these totem sequences was the desire to put people together in an intimate context that provides emotional insights on the group and their relationships. In a practical sense, what better way is there to communicate that someone likes to sing than to actually hear them singing? Going a step further, hearing them miss a high note completely or improvise when they forget the words lends a genuine and intimate substance to the information being conveyed. That kind of information is more poignant and direct than being told that the person likes to sing and then being asked to believe that it's true. It also has a quality of bringing the audience more into the moment by inviting them to identify with the characters on a more personal level. What is exciting about the totems is the potential it has to tell more complex stories. A more scripted approach could take better advantage of user interaction and make it an even more vital component to how the content is delivered. A deeper and more dynamic set of content could also be delivered that triggers different sets of gestures and sound by the order in which each cara is interacted with. That means that instead of one set of imagery and sound content being accessible per cara, the system can be expanded so that multiple interactions take place.

For instance, if the totem contains four people and the one farthest to the right is somewhat visually removed from the other three, that statement of isolation or separation can be augmented by other person(s) waking up and responding to that cara's gestures and soundbytes with a display of one or more telling gestures of their own. To tell a larger story, mulitple totems can be combined to provide a cross-section of backgrounds and stories.

Imagine for example, if the power and content that could be conveyed in a totem of social workers and prison inmates whose identities are revealed only over time? The possibilities for discovery become broader as you consider the different ways the system can be manipulated and expanded to accommodate more complex non-linear narratives.

At the same time the system can be kept simple and poignant. Perhaps providing a discourse between only two caras that ends up providing a back and forth-style timeline of gestures and sound bytes rewards the user/audience for their interaction with a continually unfolding narrative. The key is to keep the framework scalable and easy to navigate. That allows the author to craft their content and messages to match the levels of storytelling and interactivity required to engage the audience to move toward the final resolution in the narrative.

Casestudy

Project: El pistolon / Shooter, and narrative sequencing

Course: Thesis project I, 3rd yr 2nd semester
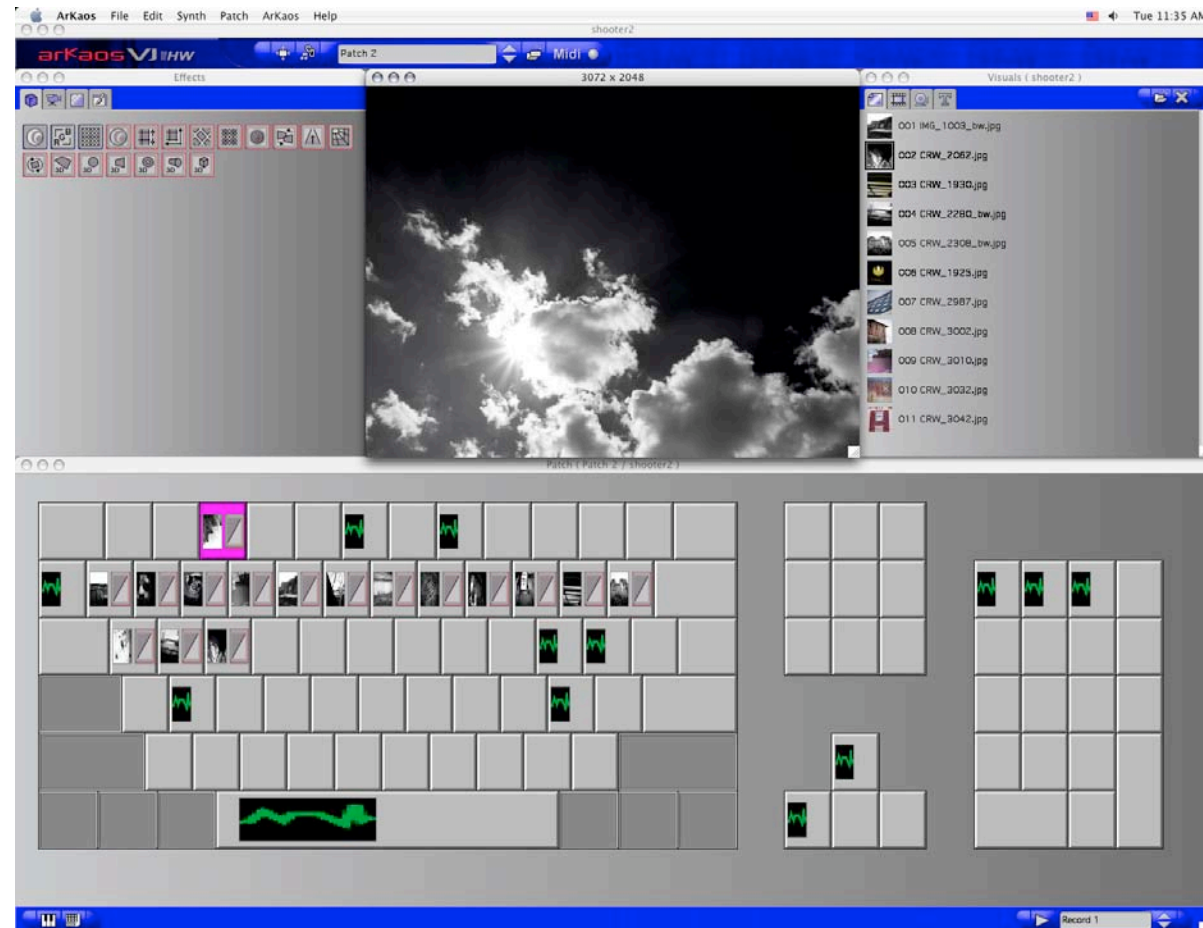
programming footage and sequenced images to a
keyboard or midi device allows for non-sequential playback
of the narrative and the possibilities of alternate endings.

Purpose and construct

The purpose of this case study was to explore how photography and sound could be used to create a limited sequence of images that tell a story. The story itself is then segmented into parts that can be triggered and resequenced by the user at a keyboard or midi device. This triggering of alternative paths in the plot allows the user to explore the narrative from the perspectives of the different characters. In the end the narrative becomes potentially more immersive and provides a more dynamic storytelling experience.

The first step in the process was to build a reference movie of the narrative. The purpose for the reference movie was to tell the story uncut and expose the user to the basic plot of the narrative. This gives the user a beginning perspective from which to explore the content and points of view. To create the story photographs were taken to depict the series of events that occurs. During this picture taking various locations were selected for their ability to illustrate a very tangible sense of the character's cultural and economic station in life. The settings chosen reflect the blue-collar industrial backdrop of the story with an implied element of economic adversity that carries with it the grit and noise of starkly contrasted black and white imagery. Partly an exercise in conveying the character's less than hopeful sense of place, the imagery is at times dark, ominously lit and does nothing to conceal the urban plight of the industial setting the main character's are rooted in.

The basic plotline of the story is one of a man who seeks vengeance against another man that has wronged him but falls short of his convictions upon reaching the moment prior to taking the other man's life. The image sequences follow the man entering a building and confronting the victim and his own hesitations until the screen goes black and only a gunshot is heard. After the gunshot is heard a series of images flashes on screen that alludes to the second man's acts of suspicion and crime. It is only after the montage of images fades out that we see the second man opening his eyes in the realization that he is still alive. At that moment we realize that the pistolero (spanish word for "shooter") turned the gun on himself realizing that the crime he was going to commit was far greater than the one committed against him. The variable story sections give the user the ability to swap out one montage for another. The difference in the montages reflect the instant after the gunshot and the images that run through the minds of both men. The availability of variable sound accompaniments (essentially sound tracks) also provide more dramatic texturing to alter the feel of the piece as it is resequenced.
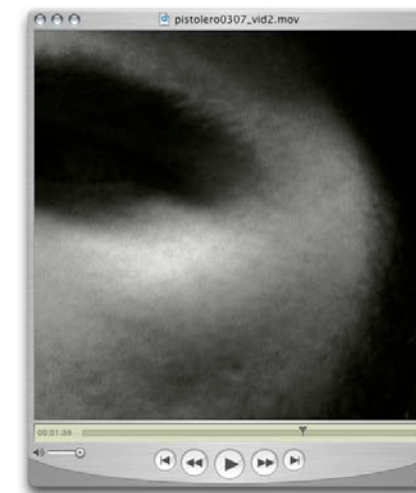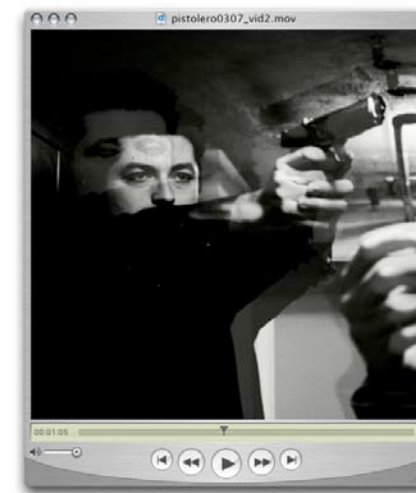
alternative montage sequences
act as user-initiated variable plot devices.
(you can change the middle and end)

changing the character perspective of the montage allows for the story to be told from different and sometimes opposing points of view.
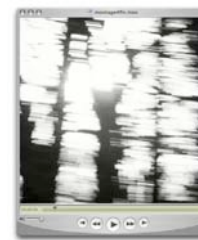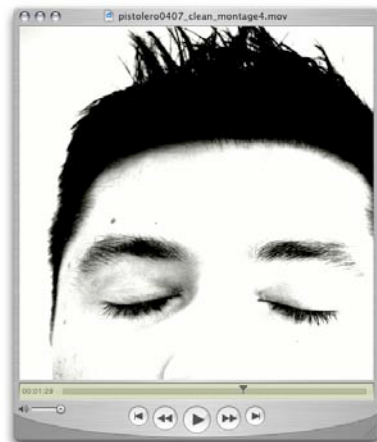
Reflection

As I worked through the various stages of the project one of the most difficult tasks was taking each picture with the intent of conveying a specific event in the story meaningfully and efficiently. Essentially, the most difficult challenge was telling a story with my photographs. Taking a photograph to show a particular event taking place between two characters at an exact moment in time — all in one frame — is not an easy task. After making several unsuccessful attempts at creating a mood but not the actions that made up the events in the story I turned to comic books and graphic novels to see how they did it. After flipping through a few pages of each it became clear to me that I needed to capture not just the scenery and the mood or behavior it might imply. I needed to plan and stage the actions deliberately so that a clear series of events could be followed from one frame to the next.

I then changed my process. I had begun the project by going out and shooting raw material that I could then craft into my story. I had also created a scratch soundtrack for my sounds to give the material I gathered the right mood and tonality. The result was underwhelming. While I had captured the mood and feel of the story and even given it added dimension with cinematic sounds and effects—no one could tell me what the story was about it. I had made lush sounds and pretty pictures but had not yet told a story. I then decided I needed to storyboard my story and use my hands again to sketch the frames of my movie. Without worrying about where I was going to shoot or how I began to sketch the characters and events in my story. The story then began to take shape. I created one sketch after another and diagrammed my complex narrative into a series of drawings that I could map sounds to and then apply the proper mood and place treatments.

It worked. I brought my sketches into class and my classmates got it. They saw the actions, the change in scenery, the change in event from one frame to the next. The other enlightening part of this process was what followed—the filtering and editing. Before even picking up the camera again I tossed more than half of my drawings and focused on the key scenes. I simplified and focused on reducing the number of shots to what was most necessary to get my point across. I was finally telling a story and now all I had to do was go out and shoot it. Having done that I picked up my camera, scouted new settings and began shooting.

if you were to ask me what these three years were like i'd tell you it was a journey.

conclusion

At this point, I can either repeat much of what has been said and into a glorious but redundant summary and then crown myself king of the run-on sentence...

OR

I can break it all down into three basic truths—giving me a glimmer of hope that you, the reader can walk away with something practical in mind...

1. Materialize character and space relationships

If a sense of place can be defined by the cultural and social markings a subject carries with them—then a character's build must be reflective of that. In very practical terms, below the surface details like a character's past or their emotional ties to their environment must be articulated with visual integrity. In cases where sound is called upon then the right sound can enhance the statements of mood and tonality we make about our subject—whether they are persons or physical places.

The right visual and aural details can sometimes provide the missing clues our audiences need to begin identifying at an emotional level with our subjects. There are two extremes, one is the level of detail a classic Russian novel employs to set up scenes and characters. The other is as intangible as a child playing on a dirty hillside with smokestacks billowing black smoke into the air all around him. Materializing these details and the factors that impact our subjects and their environments makes the intangible tangible. It makes them real to our viewers and listeners and makes the right connections between what happens and why on an engaging and emotional level.

2. Employ visual and cinematic language

As new media designers we have greater opportunities than ever before to go beyond the formal principles of design and visual communications. We are given the opportunity to expand our vocabularies to the broadening resources of tools for cinematic language that technology makes available today. While technology won't compensate for any lack of artistic or creative integrity it can help raise the bar on what we can achieve within the media forms that have existed for decades. Taking advantage of cinematic language also means taking advantage of the opportunities to combine various available mediums at the same time. These hybrid efforts provide more immersive experiences because they engage us in multiple media and on multiple levels.

3. Build an emotional attachment on ties triggered by self-identity

Back to poetics, we must recognize the importance of giving the audience something personal, as Bachelard says—something they can identify with in the recesses of their memory and subconscious, to create an attachment. While audiences might find pleasure in beauty, what they take with them are the feelings and impulses those qualities might trigger in their psyches. They create an emotional attachment to the reserves of passion, hope, dreams and fear we keep inside. If we are able to tap into those reserves then we have connected with our audience. We have then created a lasting impression because we we were able to internalize it emotionally and psychologically in our viewers and listeners.

Encoding a sense of place as designers of new media

As new media designers we not only have the ability to combine various forms of media into compelling forms of communication. We have the ability to create and draw upon rich user experiences to enhance our message through interactivity. We have the power to engage our users beyond the flash and gadgetry that technology provides. We can transcend the "coolness factor" in our new media material to make it more relevant to our users. We can integrate deeper databases of content more intelligently to make a closer match to user interests and needs from both pre-screening and observed user behavior. That allows us not only to entertain at a higher level but it also allows us to connect more quickly with our new media audiences and then keep them engaged for longer periods of time. That being said, we can also bridge the gap between "quantities" of user clickthrough and "quality" of user clickthrough. The goal we must keep in mind is to approach our audience with an effective presentation and delivery of content in ways that will engage, not just entertain. In that process, we need to complement our new media content creation with an active use of tried and true communications language techniques.

In the end, creating a sense of place is not a foreign concept to filmmakers, photographers and composers. In fact, they've been practicing it for decades. It is our opportunity as new media designers to take that mastery and integrate the knowledge that comes from it to bring our works to a more experiential level because that also, can leave a long-lasting impression.

if you asked where it brought me i'd tell you the beginning...