

A review of *MISE-EN-SCENE Film Style and Interpretation* by John Gibbs
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Mise-en-scene, from the French, began in the theatre. The translation is “to put on stage.” On the filmmaking side it is “the contents of the frame and the way they are organized.” These contents include decoration, wardrobe, lighting and the actors. This also defines the organization of what resides in the frame; the relationship of actors to the camera, the decoration as well as other actors. It is this organization that ends up being the view of the audience. This term includes what the audience can see as well as the way in which they are invited to see it.

The book does a good job of providing an interesting and easy to follow overlay of what *mise-en-scene* encompasses. It breaks down all the elements that can be used in the space of the visual frame. These elements include: Lighting, costume, color, props, décor, action & performance, space, position of the camera and framing. The interaction of these elements, allow the filmmaker untold options of telling their story through careful manipulation.

A particular scene from the Alfred Hitchcock film, *Rebecca* is analyzed for it’s lighting scheme. The scene is a party with several people dancing and talking in a drunken state. The partygoers are all lit evenly across the board. As the scene progresses, the main female character begins to address a character that is seated with his back to the viewer. This character is in silhouette and could be seen as an audience member viewing the occasion. The iconic shape of the man in shadow is one we all know when we see it.

The book takes many scenes from various classic films and examines the small elements that add to the depth and understanding of what is happening. Scenes from films such as: *The Searchers*, *Touch of Evil*, *Imitation of Life* and many more are analyzed focusing on various aspects of the *mise-en-scene*.

It’s easy to watch a film and get lost in it, due to the story or production design or the leading character. This book will have you examining other components of the films you view. Hopefully, giving you a greater understanding of why you feel the way you feel while watching the film or how you feel after you’ve watched it.

If you would like to delve deeper into cinema and read this book please contact the Center for Teaching & Learning.