

MISE-EN-SCÈNE

Literally translated, this term means: „Putting on the stage.“ It is a term originally used in the world of theatre to designate those kinds of plans made for blocking out

Actor's movement on stage

The placement of the scenery & props

And the arrangement of the lighting

... on the stage for a theatrical production.

THE SAME TERM, when applied to CINEMA, describes the theatre-like arrangement of actors, scenery, props, & lighting in front of the camera, within the frame of the film.

It has to do with a fixed arrangement within a fixed space, in front of a camera which does not move. (The actors of course move, but within the limits of fixed area).

MISE-EN-SCENE cinema is like a filmed stage-play (even though it may not take place on a stage).

NOTE: MISE-EN-SCENE RARELY PRODUCES KINESTHESIA!

MISE-EN-FRAME

AS WE HAVE ALREADY OBSERVED, in MISE-EN-SCENE films, the action on the screen happens all in relation to a stage-like space, that is, a predetermined, fixed area where the activities we watch are theatrically blocked out and bound in the unchanging frontiers of a stage set... with the space of the stage never as important as the action going on UPON it.

In MISE-EN-FRAME FILM, however, the motion we view has a fundamental relationship to the space of the frame itself – to the top, the bottom, the sides and/or corners of the picture screen – where the action is in fact played TO the limitations of the frame rather than to the fixed format of a stage area place within the frame.

IN MISE-EN-FRAME film, then, the frame itself becomes a governing influence over the action in ways that never happen in stage-bound scenes, for the action is not simply held inside the frame, nor does the frame merely follow the movement, but rather, the action happens TO the frame, so that the edges of the picture become charged with screen energy by virtue of their prominent role in catching pieces of the action, or in sheltering from view the next move in the progress of some force, or by introducing by sleight of frame some new element onto the screen; in giving birth to forms that loom large past the lens to make their way, diminishing, into the world of the screen, or in being on the receiving end of forms that start out small in the distance and grow huge as they approach the

lens, sometimes blotting out all from view; or in fielding from top to bottom, or from either side, or from any of its four corners the exits and entrances of persons and things whose comings and goings obviously defy the fixed restrictions of the stage, but are in perfect harmony with the newer medium of the screen – the screen as a confined but unbounded area of pure space.

NOTE THE DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN: 1) MISE-EN-FRAME and 2) MISE-EN-SHOT.

MISE-EN-SHOT

Mise-en-shot is a TERM often used instead of the TERM Mise-en-frame, since SHOT means at the same time ONE SINGLE FILM IMAGE projected on the screen (e.g. medium shot, long shot, close-up shot, etc.), as well as the length of a film strip exposed during an uninterrupted period of shooting (hence: a long take is a shot of very long duration accomplished by the synchronization of the camera movement and mise-en-scene).

IN HIS LATER THEORETICAL WRITING, EISENSTEIN USED THE TERM MISE-EN-SHOT IN RELATION TO MONTAGE. HIS DEFINITION OF MISE-EN-SHOT HAS TWO ASPECTS:

1. PUTTING TOGETHER (I.E. EDITING) VARIOUS SHOTS – WHICH SOMETIMES CONSIST OF ONLY ONE FRAME – INTO A TEMPORAL CINEMATIC STRUCTURE THAT IS THE SEQUENCE.
2. ARRANGING THE OBJECTS AND MOVEMENT OF CHARACTERS WITHIN EACH SEPARATE SHOT, AND RELATING OF THESE MOVEMENTS AMONG THEMSELVES (I.E. TRANSITION OF MOVEMENT FROM ONE SHOT TO ANOTHER).

OBVIOUSLY, THIS SECOND IMPLICATION OF MISE-EN-SHOT IS IDENTICAL TO VERTOV'S THEORY OF INTERVALS.

THEREFORE, I PROPOSE THAT WE FORGET THE FIRST ASPECT OF EISENSTEIN'S DEFINITION OF MISE-EN-SHOT, SINCE IT IS COVERED BY THE TERM MONTAGE, AND THAT WE ACCEPT THIS TERM AS A VARIATION OF THE THEORY OF INTERVALS. IN FACT, THIS TERM COMBINES THE TWO ASPECTS OF MONTAGE: JUXTAPOSITION OF VARIOUS SHOTS COMPOSITIONS AND CONTINUATION AND/OR DISCONTINUATION OF THE MOVEMENT OCCURRING AT THE POINT OF TRANSITION FROM ONE ANOTHER.

NOTE: The best explanation of this term is given in the book *Lessons With Eisenstein* by Vladimir Nyzhny (New York: Hill Wang, 1969).

In a broader sense, MISE-EN-SHOT can be used as a term which implies cinematic value of the film images in general, including MISE-EN-FRAME, MISE-EN-SCENE, MONTAGE, and especially DYNAMIC COMPOSITION OF THE SHOT. As we sometimes speak of a great mise-en-scene in theater, meaning successful DIRECTION ON THE STAGE, we can speak of a great MISE-EN-SHOT in film, meaning BRILLIANT STRUCTURE OF A SEQUENCE.