

WORKING IN A SERIES

Montage – as a means of developing ideas

The activity of progressing an idea through several stages is inherent to the practice of the majority of artists, with themes explored in different ways across a body of work or more gradually teased out through the course of a career. A more conscious use of stages or series can potentially lead to a greater understanding of a subject area, and enable clearer identification of how properties work together in achieving overall expression.

An interesting example of where this occurs in practice is montage; where several layers of thought are brought together in one place. Ideas are not so much relayed in series or sequences but gathered. The act of working out relationships and the consequence of their interaction then falls to the viewer becoming part of their experience of the work.

If we are to find examples of how an artist might develop ideas through a series of stages, then we need look no further than film. Film by its very nature explores sequential changes in the relationship between values. The filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein explored montage in films such as *Battleship Potemkin* and *October*. He established principals of practice; where the montage of properties could be used in different ways to achieve different expression. His structures explain how the juxtaposition and interaction of different images can give rise to new ideas that are not innate to the images themselves, but emerge from their interaction and add new meaning to the work as a whole.

Eisenstein's approach can be used in the development of ideas simply by the applying his methods across a range of pieces rather than gathered within one film. For example:

Metric Montage – one shot literally cut into the next shot to elicit the most basal and emotional reaction from the audience.

Equivalent in the plastic arts – look at the juxtaposition of properties – this approach usually applies to the use of contrasting imagery. Begin by simply placing one thing in relation to another and examine the consequence of their interaction. Explore how meaning can change when properties are placed side by side, on top of, background/foreground, one large one small etc

Rhythmic Montage – cutting based on time, changing speed to induce more complex meanings.

Equivalent in the plastic arts – examine the progression of an experience within one piece or across works by altering the proportions of one value over another. This essentially deals with composition but not in the conventional sense of achieving an overall design, what you are looking for is a sense of activity and momentum that reinforces the intended expression of your work.

Tonal Montage – responding to the emotional meaning of the shots

Equivalent in the plastic arts – respond to the emotional meaning of the subject, consider how particular relationships between values (Metric) and the sense of activity generated through composition (Rhythmic) can reinforce the intended expression of the work.

Overtonal/associational Montage – all of the above, to achieve a more distorted, discordant, experimental final work.

Equivalent in the plastic arts - as above used purposefully to abstract or confuse meaning.

CORE CHARACTERISTICS:

Working in a Series: Working out ideas through a series of stages is inherent to the process of thinking. This approach in drawing simply makes it a more conscious activity. There are ways in which working in a series can be made more effective

Identify key properties in your ideas: Too many contrasting or competing ideas and meaning will be lost. Remember, a series combines the information so each work does not necessarily need as much information as it might have if viewed singularly.

Establish the connecting factors: It may be interesting to explore the juxtaposition of images to evoke narrative but connects are always there you simply need to identify them. Even before content this could be determined by: materials used, the way they are used, similarity of form, similarity of surface etc.

Ask yourself the question ‘what is it you are exploring through your work?’: what are you trying to find out? This may be the reason for certain properties coming together