

The Synoptique Style Gallery

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The *Synoptique Style Gallery* springs from film lovers talking about film and realizing that whether they were arguing about films they loved, films they hated or films that just seemed unavoidably “important” most of their talk was about film style. But we (yes, this writer was among these talkers) also realized that the same aspects of film style were not equally important to each of us. We also began to suspect that our ideas of what style meant varied wildly. How to peg the concept down?

At first the task seemed daunting: as the conversation spread wider and more people became involved more films began to be cited, more differences seemed to creep in, and the talk tended to become more abstract and hypothetical.

This gallery became a way to capture this expanding conversation without closing it off or narrowing it down. It became a way to collect concrete examples from actual films that individuals were willing to stand behind and point to and say, “Yes, this is a moment of film style.” It became a way of helping us to see and to hear what the conversation is about and to give us hints of what still manages (somehow) to slip through the cracks. More importantly, it became a way to expand the conversation into new territory.

The Gallery you see is composed of people’s responses to a prompt : we asked people to identify and describe a moment of film style. That moment could be anything and was. A raised eyebrow, a sequence, a motif recurring throughout the film, all of these and more were potential style moments. Everyone approached the question differently and talk about what should be

in the gallery quickly produced a variety of alternate prompts:

1. Free associate on film style: what example keeps coming back to you? Do you have an acid test moment you compare all other style moments to?
2. Do you have a favorite film moment? Would you call it “stylish”?
3. What was the first moment where you remember watching a film and thought of its “stylishness”?
4. If you were a teacher and someone asked you to explain film style, what example would you use to do so? But The Gallery is not finished and the conversation about style has barely begun. We want more examples of films style, more descriptions of what makes them valuable, more arguments about why style matters and how. We want this so we can begin to see films better. This gallery is full of moments chosen for one of the best possible reasons: they moved us emotionally, mentally, aesthetically, etc. Let’s speak about style in these moments and see what sense we can make of them.

Editor’s Note (2021): This article originally linked to a style gallery that is no longer available.