

**About Marika
 Kovacs-Houlihan**

- Childhood fixation on storytelling
- Theatre background
- Coordinator of ASL Studies Program
- Clinical Assistant Professor
- Teach specialized classes such as ASL Literature

ASL Cinesthetic

What We Will Learn

Written language has a claim in literature. Yet, American Sign Language (ASL) has made its own claim in literature: ASL Poetry and Storytelling. One innovative way to look at ASL literature metaphorically is through film, "ASL Cinematic." The evolution of ASL literature and the technology of film making are creating a new perspective on ASL literature. We must first understand the elements of ASL literature and the works of cinema along with its lexicon. Subsequently, we will understand how ASL literature's prose is

created through the eye of the camera. The workshop will include analysis and critique of ASL's visual vernacular and cinematic elements. The goal is to provide a new "cinesthetic", a combination of aesthetic and cinematic experience, of ASL literature!



Workshop Agenda

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Esthetic Experience

Sense of beauty, love of beauty, and pure emotion and sensation.



Definition of Literature

The story is in the writing but it can be told in ASL !



Definition of **literature** in general is the writings in which expression and form, in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest are characteristic or essential features such as poetry, novels, history, biographies and essays. (dictionary.com)

However, **American Sign Language** also has a rich literacy tradition, even though it is not based on writings. ASL is a visual language, so the art of literature is deeply rooted in the Deaf Community and its Culture. The folklore, history of Deaf people, and cultural values, are

expressed and preserved through ASL.

ASL Formulaic Elements

- Folklores
- A to Z Stories
- Numerical Stories
- Classifiers Stories
- Percussion Stories
- Deaf Humor
- Drama
- Poetry

Your Notes

"Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree."

- Ezra Pound

Feel free to scribble!

Cultural Harmony

Both oral and written literature require cultural harmony between the teller, the narrative, and the audience (Bahan, 1991 quotes Edwards and Sienkiewicz (1990). The teller and the audience must a share a com-

mon cultural understanding of the literary work and its social context in order for it to be successful. Without shared values, meanings and norms, the literature would not be understood. Literature has

been a very important source for generations of children to acquire language, knowledge, values, morals, and experience of the world around them.





Components of ASL Literacy (K. Christie and D. Wilkins)

Being literate in ASL defines the ability to use the language proficiently and it has three distinct components of literacy. They are functional, cultural, and critical literacy.

Functional literacy uses basic ASL lan-

guage skills to communicate effectively in the Deaf World.

Cultural literacy refers to values, heritage, and shared experiences to understand and interpret the ASL literary works in our lives as Deaf people.

Critical literacy is the use of literature as a means of empowerment and awareness of the Deaf World in relation to other worlds.

A great example of using ASL literacy's three components is the famous Deaf humor: "The Deaf Tree" or also known as "Timber".

"The crown of literature is poetry." ~ William Somerset Maugham

Take A Double Look: English Poetry vs. ASL Poetry

English Poetry	ASL Poetry
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rhyme• Rhythm• Meter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rhyme• Rhythm• Meter
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Linear• 2D Visual• Frozen to text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Linear• 2D Visual• Frozen to text

English Poetry has rhyme, rhythm and meter. Rhyme is a repetition of similar sounds in two or more words. Rhythm is a strong, regular, repeated pattern of movement or sound. Meter is the rhythm of a piece of poetry, determined by the number and length of feet in a line. The English poetry is linear, two dimensional, and always frozen to text.

According to Clayton Valli (1993), ASL Poetry also has rhyme, rhythm, and meter. Rhyme in ASL is often shown by the use of certain handshapes, movements, and locations. Rhythm in ASL uses a number of repeated counts in signs, movement patterns, or contexts. ASL meter is shown through a hold and movement stress.

HOWEVER, ASL is not linear, two dimensional, and certainly not frozen to text. There is something more to ASL and what is it?



Basic Cinematic Techniques

Now, let's take a look at the cinematic techniques.

Techniques and methods are employed by filmmakers to communicate meaning, entertain, and to produce a particular emotional or psychological response from the audience. The methods include choice of camera an-

gles, shots, and edits that greatly influence the meaning of a film.

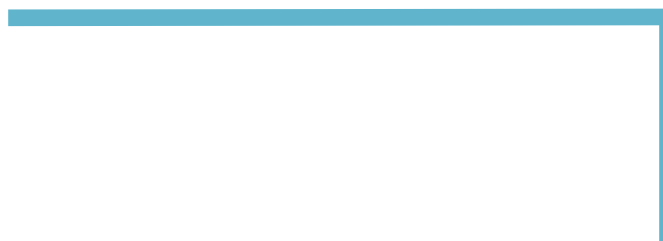
Camera angles and movements refer to exact positions, specifically the angle, height, and movement of the camera on the subject. Framing the shot is a single and uninterrupted piece of film determining the size of the subject being

filmed, used to elicit more emotions. The editing is hugely important in how the film is being put together. Editing does not only mean to cut and control the amount of time but to raise tension or realism such as rapidly edited shots conveying fast-paced action (Soriano, 2011).

Camera....Shot....Edit

- Angle
- Panning
- Tracking
- Point of View (POV)
- Distance
- Length shot
- Speed shot
- Dialogue editing
- Parallel
- Reaction cuts
- Cutaways
- Montage

Your Notes



ASL Techniques

- Roleshifting/Surrogate
- Eye Gaze
- Classifiers/Movement Roots
- Hold and Movement Stresses
- Spatial Constructions
- Non-manual Markers



Putting Two Together

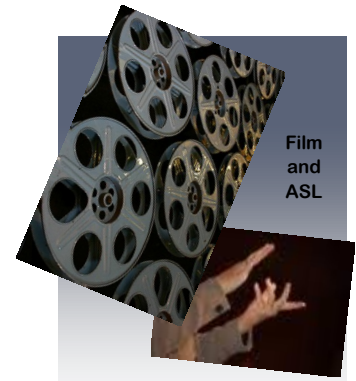
ASL cinematic techniques are a brilliant way to create a story or poetry using the ability to visualize just like in the film. The art of ASL story/poem and cinematic share astoundingly similar features.

A great storyteller will enable the audience to visualize his/her story in our heads by sensing the environment, mood, and intensity—

Just like how a movie editor would have made their film.

Many well-known ASL Storyteller such as Patrick Graybill, Austin Andrews, Peter Cook, and Manny Hernandez showed what Stokoe had identified decades ago: “Each signer is placed very much as a camera: the field of vision and angle of view are directed but variable” (Bauman, 2006).

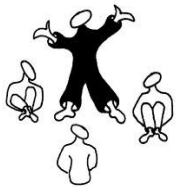
Now in 21st century, the film technology has enabled the ASL storyteller intertwined with art of cinematic. The perfect example of a beauty and artistic works of both worlds is the “Vital Signs” by Mosdeux Pictures: Chad Taylor and Wayne Betts



“Just like watching the camera eye in motion”

~ Bernard Bragg

Your Notes



Contact me for future workshops!

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