
Soviet Montage Theory by Lev Kuleshov

“Language is much closer to film than painting is” (Sergei Eisenstein). There were very few men and women in filmmaking who were focused on to make difference in filmmaking during the Russian Revolution of 1917. Young people of that time wanted to create a revolutionary style theme, form, and style. Most Russian films made before the revolution were somber, slow-paced, melodramas that featured bravura performances by dominant stars. The young filmmakers in Russia were influenced by the American style of cinema with continuity editing and extrovert, athletic performances in westerns and comedies. The Russian filmmakers pushed themselves to the limit in the process of creating a new and different set of filmmaking tools.

The first leader of the revolution was Vladimir Lenin and he created the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in October 1917. Narkompros, founded in 1918, controlled the Soviet film industry. Narkompros created the first State Film School in 1919. A year later Lev Kuleshov joined the State Film School and formed workshops. Kuleshov tried to systemize principles of editing based on emerging Hollywood style. Kuleshov's experimented on how important editing is and he developed the central idea to the Montage theory and style. The main aspect of the Soviet Montage style was in the area of editing. Cuts should stimulate the spectator. In opposition to continuity editing Montage cutting often made overlapping or elliptical temporal relations.

Kuleshov's workshops are legendary. They were known as the Kuleshov Group, Pudovkin was one of his students; Eisenstein studied under him for three months, but was influenced” by Kuleshov for a lifetime; sometimes as a rival; later as a dear friend. The Legendary Alfred Hitchcock, decades apart and in America called it “pure cinema,” when the montage gives rise to meanings that exist nowhere to the eye, but only in the mind. This mixed play between montage, perception, and meaning has come to be known as the “Kuleshov Effect.”

Sergei Eisenstein at the age of 26, made his first feature film Strike, the first major film of the Montage movement. It was released in 1925. He had been inspired to go into film making after watching Griffith's Intolerance. Sergei Eisenstein's general notion of Montage was the collision of elements: shots should not be viewed as linked, but rather as conflicting with one another. The audience can create a new concept in her or his mind realizing the conflict between elements. Continuity editing was revolutionary in its own time, but early Soviet filmmakers, including Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Eisenstein, brought editing into another level, more creative and psychological level, first with the "Kuleshov Effect" and then with Eisenstein's Montage Theory, or as he called it, "montage of attractions."

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In conclusion that Eisenstein's montage theory and his films paved the way in the books of history of cinema. He was the Soviet filmmaking pioneer that helped usher in the modern age of movie making and film editing. The Soviet Montage has revolutionized the way films have been made, allowing filmmakers to explore the psychological effects of different arrangements and durations of shots, instead of being tethered to mere chronology.

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