

Presence and Absence: The Use of Photographs in Paris, Texas

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Abstract : The subject of this paper is the photography in the 1983 film Paris, Texas, directed by Wim Wenders. Wenders is well known as a film director as well as a photographer. We have found that photography is shown as a photographic element in many of his films. Some of these photographs serve as details within the films, while others play important roles that are relevant to the story. This paper aims to consider photographs in film as a specific type of text, which is the output of both still photography and the film itself. In the film Paris, Texas, three sets of important photographs appear whose symbolic meanings are as dialectical as their text types. The relationship between the existence of these photos and the storyline is both dependent and isolated. The film's images fly by and progress into other images, while the photos in the film serve a unique narrative function by stopping the continuously flowing images thus provide the viewer a space for imagination and contemplation. They are more than just artistic forms; they also contained multiple meanings. The photographs in Paris, Texas play the role of both presence and absence according to their shifting meanings. There are references to their presence: photographs exist between film time and narrative time, so in terms of the interaction between the characters in the film, photographs are a common symbol of the beginning and end of the characters' journeys. In terms of the audience, the film's photographs are a link in the viewing frame structure, through which the creative motivation of the film director can be explored. Photographs also point to the absence of certain objects: the scenes in the photos represent an imaginary map of emotion. The town of Paris, Texas is therefore isolated from the physical presence of the photograph, and is far more abstract than the reality in the film. This paper embraces the ambiguous nature of photography and demonstrates its presence and absence in film with regard to the meaning of text. However, it is worth reflecting that the temporary nature of the interpretation of the film's photographs is far greater than any other type of photographic text: the characteristics of the text cause the interpretation results to change along with the variations in the interpretation process, which makes their meaning a dynamic process. The photographs' presence or absence in the context of Paris, Texas also demonstrates the presence and absence of the creator, time, the truth, and the imagination. The film becomes more complete as a result of the revelation of the photographs, while the intertextual connection between these two forms simultaneously provides multiple possibilities for the interpretation of the photographs in the film.

Keywords : film, Paris, Texas, photography, Wim Wenders

Conference Title : ICAH 2015 : International Conference on Arts and Humanities

Conference Location : Singapore, Singapore

Conference Dates : March 29-30, 2015