



Image Source: http://growabrain.typepad.com/photos/uncategorized/chris_landreth_1.jpg

Documentary Filmmaking 101 (MOOC)

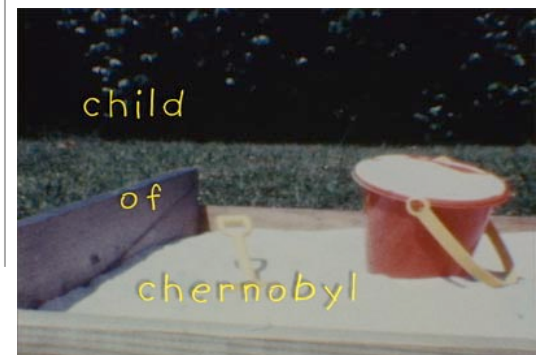
Week 1 - Introduction

Course Description: Documentary Filmmaking 101

- This course will teach learners how to make a short documentary film production. By the end of the course, they will have gained knowledge of all the phases of filmmaking, beginning with **Development, Pre-Production, Production, Post-Production** and finally **Distribution** and **Exhibition**.
- This course will introduce students to creating a **proposal for a project idea, pitching it** and **planning all aspects** of the production. Students will understand the importance of **scheduling, budgeting, location scouting, storyboarding, shot listing** and more. Students will learn **basic camera operation and sound recording** in order to capture their documentaries. Students will then learn the basics of film editing as they **picture and sound edit their own documentaries**. Upon completion, **students will exhibit their work** in a 'final screening' online, through a youtube channel of the cohort.
- Please refer to Course Outline



Eva Ziemsen - Professor
Shaimaa Otify - Academic Consultant
Garry Wong - LMS Designer



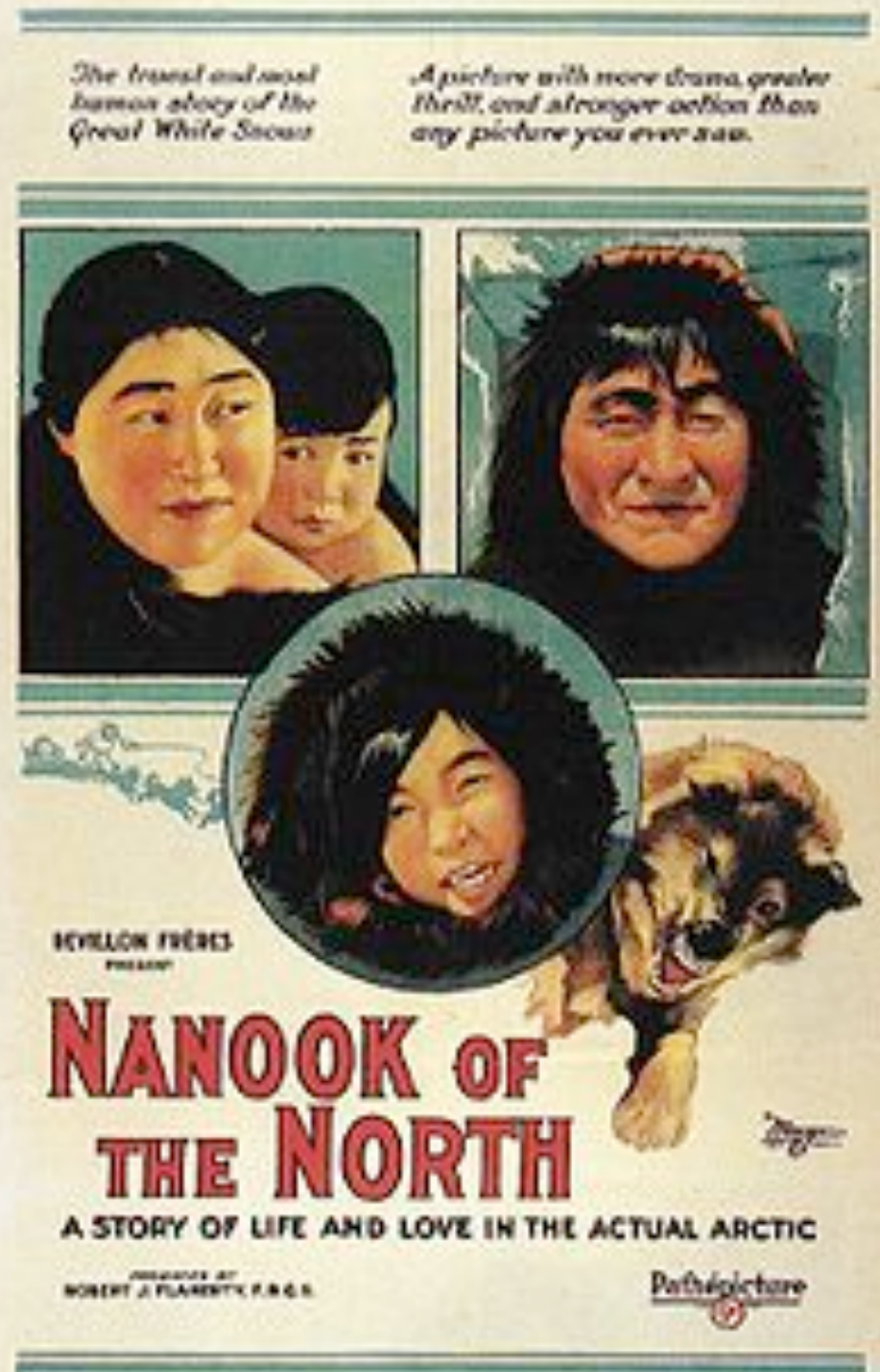
What is a documentary film?

- "Documentary films constitute a broad category of nonfictional motion pictures intended to document some aspect of reality..." (wikipedia)

John Grierson - coined term 'documentary'

"Grierson's principles of documentary were that cinema's potential for observing life could be exploited in a new art form; that the "original" actor and "original" scene are better guides than their fiction counterparts to interpreting the modern world; and that materials "thus taken from the raw" can be more real than the acted article.

"In this regard, Grierson's definition of documentary as "creative treatment of actuality" has gained some acceptance, with this position at variance with Soviet film-maker Dziga Vertov's provocation to present "life as it is" (that is, life filmed surreptitiously) and "life caught unawares" (life provoked or surprised by the camera)." (Wikipedia)



Genres of Documentary

- *Observational* documentaries
- *Expository* documentaries
- *Participatory* documentaries
- *Reflexive* documentaries
- *Performative* documentaries
- *Poetic Documentaries*
- Sources:
Blog: <http://girishshambu.blogspot.ca/2006/12/six-types-of-documentary.html>
Introduction to Documentary (2001) and *Representing Reality* (1991) by Bill Nichols

Observational Documentaries

- “Documentaries attempt to simply and spontaneously observe lived life with a minimum of intervention.”
- Eg. American Family - TV Documentary (aired on 1973), 12 episodes (edited down from 300 hours), about the ‘daily lives and concerns of the working class Wilkins family’
- Source:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/An_American_Family
<http://girishshambu.blogspot.ca/2006/12/six-types-of-documentary.html>



Image source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Loud_Family_1973.JPG

Expository Documentaries

- “Documentaries speak directly to the viewer, often in the form of an authoritative commentary employing voiceover or titles, proposing a strong argument and point of view.”
- Present day example: Planet Earth Series

• <http://girishshambu.blogspot.ca/2006/12/six-types-of-documentary.html>

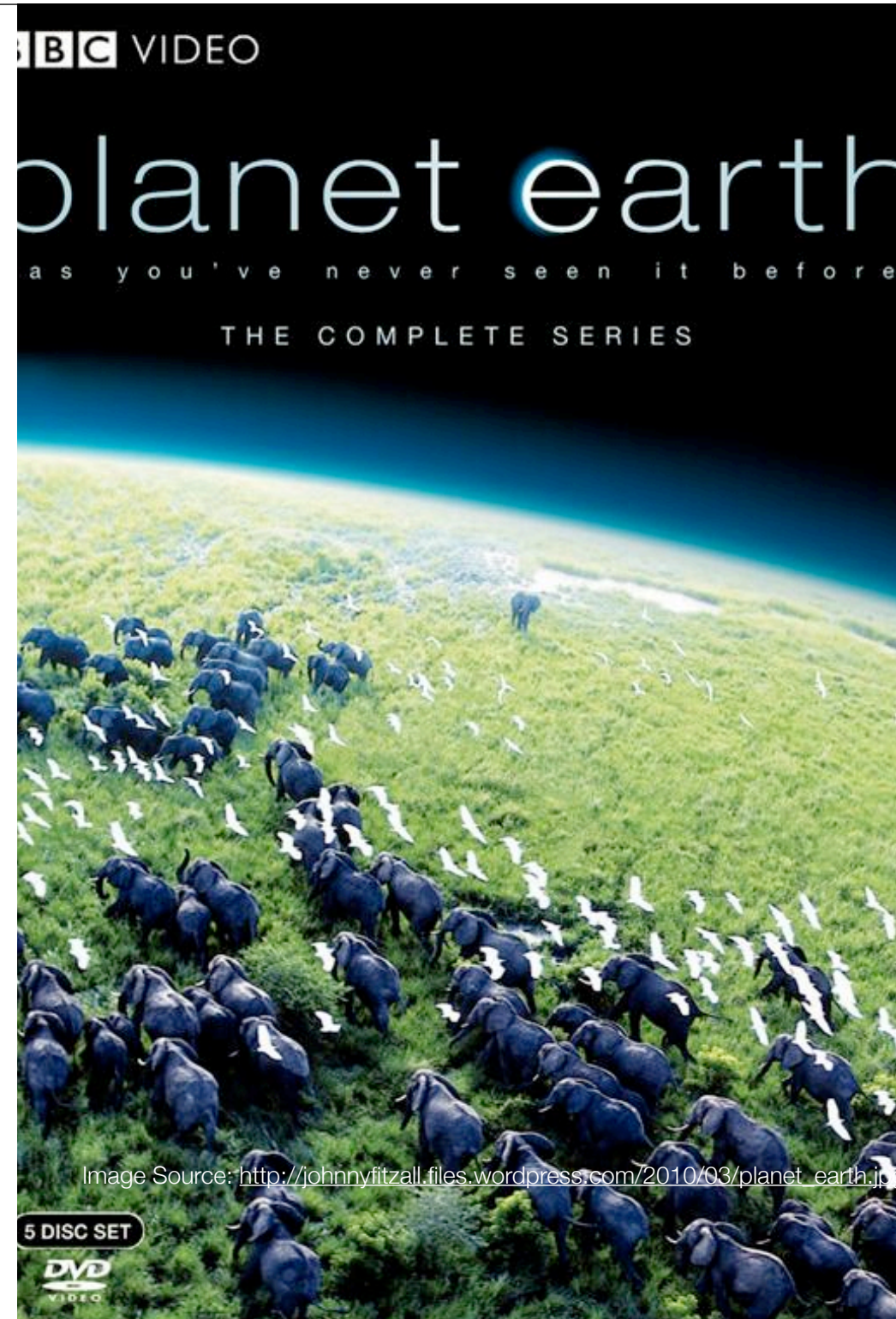
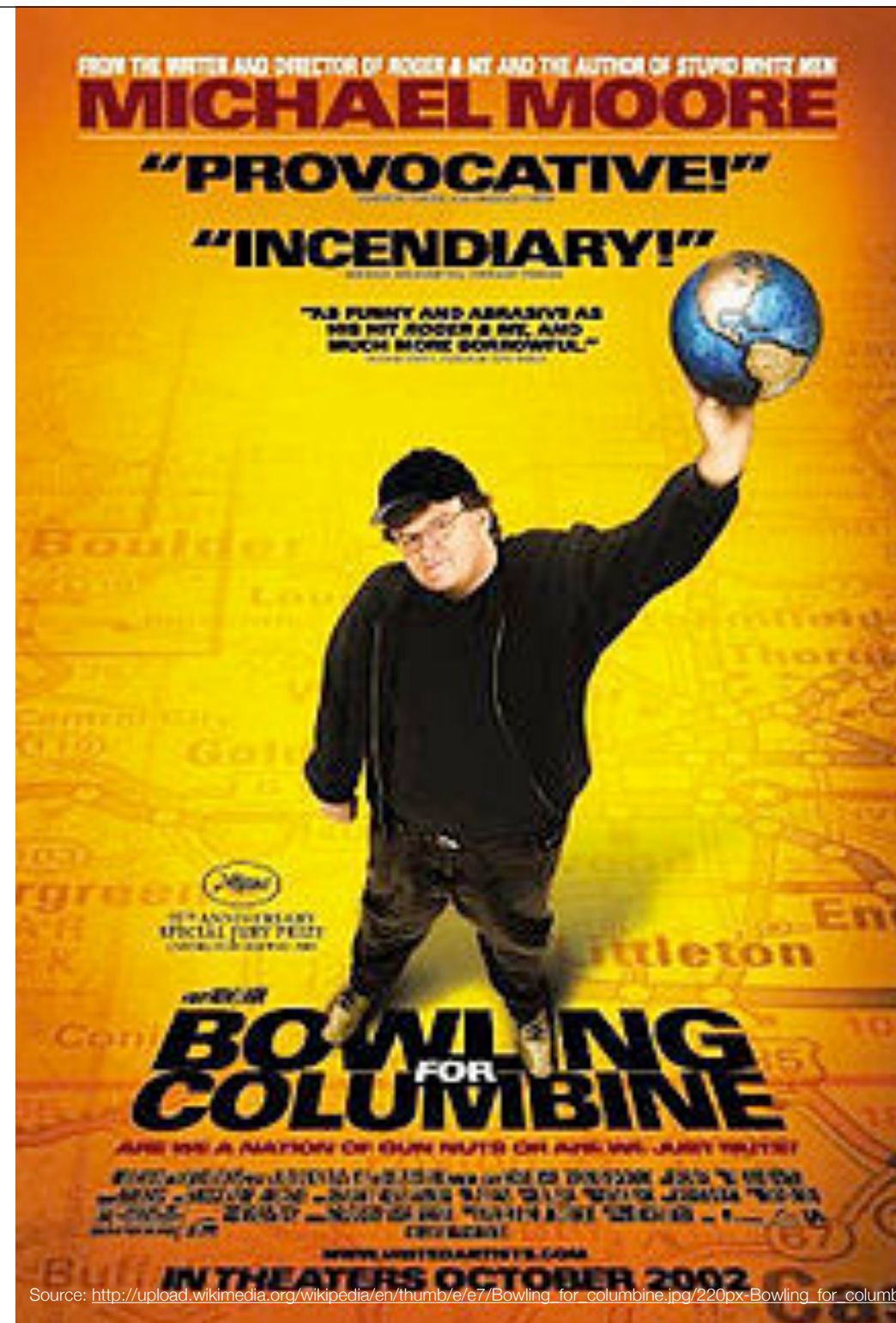


Image Source: http://johnnyfitzall.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/planet_earth.jp

Participatory Documentaries

- “Participatory documentaries believe that it is impossible for the act of filmmaking to *not* influence or alter the events being filmed.”
- “Not only is the filmmaker part of the film, we also get a sense of how situations in the film are affected or altered by her presence.”
- Michael Moore participates heavily in his documentaries, often provoking other subjects he wishes to expose. He is a central subject in his own films.

• <http://girishshambu.blogspot.ca/2006/12/six-types-of-documentary.html>



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/e/e7/Bowling_for_columbine.jpg/220px-Bowling_for_columb

Reflexive Documentaries

- “Reflexive documentaries don’t see themselves as a transparent window on the world; instead they draw attention to their own constructedness, and the fact that they are representations. How does the world get represented by documentary films? This question is central to this sub-genre of films. They prompt us to “question the authenticity of documentary in general.”
- Man with a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov) showcases the filmmakers and experiments with film techniques in a self-reflexive way.

• <http://girishshambu.blogspot.ca/2006/12/six-types-of-documentary.html>



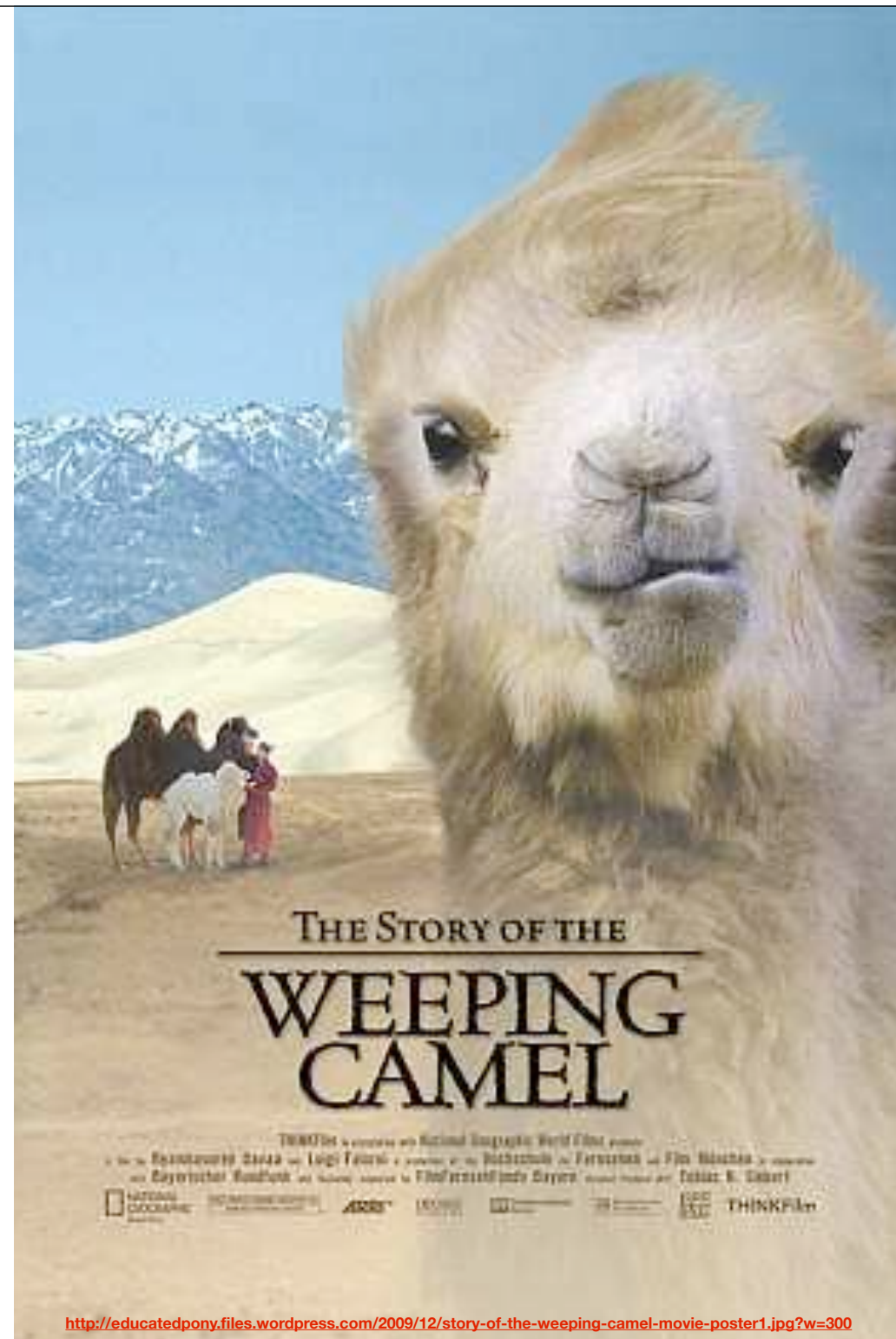
Performative Documentaries

- “*Performative* documentaries stress subjective experience and emotional response to the world. They are strongly personal, unconventional, perhaps poetic and/or experimental, and might include hypothetical enactments of events designed to make us experience what it might be like for us to possess a certain specific perspective on the world that is not our own...”

• <http://girishshambu.blogspot.ca/2006/12/six-types-of-documentary.html>

- [The Story of the Weeping Camel](#) (2003) is sometimes categorized as a docudrama, which is about a nomadic family trying to save the life of a camel calf after it was rejected from its mother.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Story_of_the_Weeping_Camel



<http://educatedpony.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/story-of-the-weeping-camel-movie-poster1.jpg?w=300>

Poetic Documentaries

- “*Poetic* documentaries, which first appeared in the 1920’s, were a sort of reaction against both the content and the rapidly crystallizing grammar of the early fiction film. The poetic mode moved away from continuity editing and instead organized images of the material world by means of associations and patterns, both in terms of time and space. The films were fragmentary, impressionistic, lyrical.”

• <http://girishshambu.blogspot.ca/2006/12/six-types-of-documentary.html>

- Sans Soleil (1983) by Chris Marker, “is a meditation on the nature of human memory, showing the inability to recall the context and nuances of memory and how, as a result, the perception of personal and global histories are affected. Stretching the genre of documentary, this experimental essay-film is a composition of thoughts, images and scenes,...Sans Soleil is often labeled as a documentary, travelogue, or essay-film.”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sans_Soleil



Image Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/c/ca/Sans_Soleil.jpg/220px-Sans_Soleil.jpg

How is DOC different?

Documentary film is distinct from other forms of filmmaking, such as dramatic/narrative filmmaking, because it essentially based on 'true' stories. While not all documentaries all entirely objective, (or truthful), the understanding from an audience is usually that they will see something that is based in the real.

Not all documentaries have talking heads and b-roll. While this is a typical approach to documentary, some of the best documentaries do not rely on this format at all.

What is a hybrid film?

Documentaries can be in many mixed forms and genres. For example, you make an animated documentary, a mockumentary (which poses as a documentary, but is in fact fiction), docu-drama is a combination of documentary and dramatic genres.



Image Source: http://growabrain.typepad.com/photos/uncategorized/chris_landreth_1.jpg

Watch the film, RYAN by Chris Landreth (2004, Oscar Nominated, This is an 3D animated documentary, using real interviews, weaves together a profound portrait of one of Canada's late and most famous animators. This film is ideal to watch as an emerging documentary filmmaker, because it is highly personal, it embraces the concept of film form should equal content.

Forum question: Discuss the film RYAN

- After watching the video RYAN, please describe the ELEMENTS of the film.

Elements include:

The SUBJECTS who were they, what were their roles? Name all subjects (main and supporting)

The UNFOLDING story what was happening?

The VISUAL TREATMENT, describe why this kind of 3D animation was the perfect medium to convey this documentary?

What was the THEME of the documentary? (The moral of the message)?

What DEVICES were used? (Stock footage, 'mock sequences')