

# Time is the Surface of the Cinema

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**Abstract:** In modern society, film and television technology has developed rapidly and as a result, it has created a very special power by displaying stories. Visual media has stimulated people to explore their inner worlds as well as prompting the viewer to raise questions and be curious about the future. The peculiar nature of cinema, in turn, reveals the peculiarity of the human soul. It can be summarised in the quote: “cinema was the instrument which humanity had to have in order to increase its mastery over the real world” (Tarkovsky, 1986, 82). Cinema has influenced the entire human evolution process, setting it on a technical and logical path. This paper interprets the film is the art of creating images within moving time and space, via the medium of pictures and sounds on screen.

**Keywords:** Surface; Screen; Cinema; Time; Space; Images Movement

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## 1. Surfaces of time within the film

To demonstrate the absence of time in a movie, each frame stops and becomes a static image. It is not like space art (tangible arts such as painting, sculpture, and architecture), but instead it shows the spatial form of things in a static format. Bruno (2014: 75) states that the surface of the screen is the locus for the intersection of diverse visual configurations and also where the mediatic refashioning of visual fabric takes place. Therefore, the visual representation of time in cinema is demonstrated through the change of space. The way the elements transform within the environment most directly shows the visual effect of time. One of the main questions that arise is that time is the surface of the film, and that film is images of time and movement. Film contains space, light and shadow but how is time representation visually, and in what kind of images and movements?

The screen is the way the continuity of time and motion are reconstructed using a series and sequence of static images. The relationship between a single picture and a projection is not dissimilar to the relationship between several points and a curve in geometry. It is this essential relationship that creates a continuous evolution (i.e. movement, time). Each second of a movie is usually made up of 24 frames, and each frame is a “still” picture. These stills depict time and space, light and shadow. Each frame of picture is then accelerated by time, creating an orderly high-speed movement-through time and space-resulting in the cinema visual we see on screen. The most direct way for the film to be displayed on the screen is by showing the duration of the film itself. Time in a film can be divided into two types.

The first in the screen duration and we can access this directly through the screen. The duration is the primary way we conceptualise time in a film. For instance, in a 90-minute movie, it is clear that it will last 90 minutes as this is the stated length of the film. The second way time is measured is through plot duration. Bruno’s (2014: 74) surface analysis showed that the images have changed over time and are now manifested increasingly as surface. In film, time is expressed as the past, present, and future through the change of different spaces and by the surface of light and shadow. All the external changes which occur in the material form in the film depict the movement of time, and because of this

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time effect, on screen we can see the changes in the environment and the changes in human actions. All of these are surfaces of time within the film.

## **2. The surface of the film provides the time of their direct image**

Our standard perception of time is also fixed and determined by interest and as a result the idea that “I visualize my past existence so that I can activate my future”. As humans we do tend to think about time through motion. From our fixed viewpoint, time is the way we represent the changes around us. Our conventional belief of time leads us to think of it as a “now” or a “present” connecting many moments of movement and forming a perceptual whole. As a result, we tend to spatialise time, and think of it—within the film surface—as a line connecting many actions.

The surface of the film provides the time of their direct image. When watching a movie, the viewers’ eyes are distracted by the flow of time on this surface. The flow of time can be anything, from 1 minute to 90 minutes or more. As time passes, our consciousness experiences the movement of the images which are linked together by sound and lines. The presentation of time on the cinema screen is, in essence, a kind of “flow”. This flow creates a visual effect for the audience, and in the flow itself is constitutes its own whole in the film. The “flow” can be described as the interplay between time and audience consciousness.

The flow of time which connects the images of each frame interacts with the pause of images and come together to constitute the motion of images. The audience’s stream of consciousness is attracted and moved along by the motion of the image, having the result of liberating conscious activity with the characteristics of the film. Sesonske’s (2010) time in film analysis purports that our conception of time is a continuous, linear, and one-direction flow. The surface of time in film reflects this continuity and direction. Although the surface of time is uniform, it is also abstract, invisible, and unpredictable. It is located within the machinery, and because the pictures can be connected to each other, there is movement.

One of the more important methods to demonstrate time is the camera. The shot used can capture time through movement, as well as via multi-angle and multi-camera positioning, presenting the movement of visual images at different times. Time is of the utmost importance in image motion. One common misunderstanding is the idea of time as the connection of movement. If this were the case, time has become a unified linear movement.

The question then is whether time is actually linear in film. Frames in each group may well be in order, but the progression of time throughout the film does not necessarily follow linear movement. Time can lead shots to cross, overlap, and fold. Time is the surface of the film, showing the viewer many forms of movement and life, and differing and changing trajectories. Whilst time creates movement, movement does not produce time. Time is not presented as a series of points or lines but instead is presented spatially. It is in this way that time in the movie is discoverable and observable by the viewer. Post-editing, therefore, is the rebuilding of time.

To reference Amato (2013: 27), we embroider these new surfaces with the means, ways, and conventions of perception; It is shaped, coloured, fused, and layered with our images and connections, our associations and representations. In post-editing, it can be said that re-editing of the timeline will then reshape the film’s surface. We can adjust the surface of time using our perception and how we edit it, reorganising and layering the connections between the images.

## **3. Cinema is a rhythmic whole of images and sounds**

On the surface of the film, time also shows the change of space, the change of light and shadow, and the change of characters’ actions. As Amato (2013: 26) said we arrange, mix, cut, pattern and order them. This allows the viewer to feel the surface of time directly via the screen. But time in film is temporal, which means it can only be “alive” while on the screen. It is not eternal and just like real things, and as demonstrated by Tarkovsky (1986: 58), time can vanish quickly without a trace in our material world. It sits within the subjective, spiritual category.

Merleau-Ponty emphasises that cinema is a rhythmic whole of images and sounds that should be understood as a whole, rather than in isolation from the constituent elements of the film. Thus, Merleau-Ponty defines cinema as an object of perception and tries to clarify its nature and meaning, arguing that a film is not the superposition and sum of many images, but a “temporal form”. This “temporal form” first of all confirms that the fundamental nature of cinema is an extension of time.

Similarly, Gilles Louis Rene Deleuze and Alain Badiou consider time to be the fundamental of cinema. Film is first

and foremost a temporal persistence and presentation of images, and through perception it turns time into a visible shape, creating an experience of time and an emotion of time that is different from everyday experience, different from the aural experience of musical time, which “allows time to be seen and heard”.

The persistence of time is present in the rhythm of movement of the image, “the meaning of a single image depends on the images that have preceded it in the film, and the succession between them creates a new reality that is not the sum of the many elements used”.

Merleau-Ponty’s judgement on the succession and movement of images follows Henri Bergson’s basic idea of the artificiality of movement and flux in cinema, but with a greater emphasis on the new cinematic rhythm and overall new quality generated by the movement of the film.

The time in cinema is different from the experience of time in the real world, but the time in motion after the combination of images, a time synchronised with the cinema audience’s viewing time but condensing the temporal experience of the plot time and the audience’s past life, a multidimensional aggregation of what Deleuze calls real and potential time crystals.

Once the image is created, it becomes a “new reality”, free from human control, and at the same time has a value that is independent of humans and symbiotic with the world, following a logic that is no longer the logic of ideas and emotions previously presupposed by humans, but what Andrei Tarkovsky calls the “logic” of cinema itself. The film itself has what Andrei Tarkovsky calls “its own time and rhythm”.

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