2006

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THERE HAS BEEN AN EXPLOSION IN THE PRODUCTION OF FILMS BY Deaf filmmakers as evidenced by the increase in the number of Deaf film festivals worldwide (i.e., UK Deaf Focus Film Festival, Swedish Deaf Film Festival, Festival Clin D'Oeil, Deaf Maine Film Festival, Florida Deaf Film Festival, California Deaf Film Festival, Chicago Institute for Moving Image Festival, and the Deaf Rochester Film Festival). The 2005 Deaf Rochester Film Festival (DRFF '05) showcased three days of films of different lengths and genres (such as documentaries, children films, narratives, animations, and silent films) including an evening of student-made films.

Professors and filmmakers, Facundo Montenegro (2006) and Dr. Jane Norman (2005) have both asked the question "What is Deaf Cinema?" In this paper, we look at a number of films screened at DRFF '05 and produced by contemporary Deaf student filmmakers for some answers. In particular, we note how the filmmakers utilized the medium of film to communicate: the use of themes, discourse format, and visual aesthetics.

In 1910, George Veditz, the 7th president of the National Association of the Deaf, stated that Deaf people "...are facing not a theory but a condition for they are first, last, and all the time the people of the eye" (p. 30). Recognizing the use of film as a medium for preserving sign language and Deaf history, the NAD undertook the Deaf Motion Picture project from 1910 to 1920 in which they recorded speeches, stories, translated poetry and a brief scene from a performance. In Veditz's infamous filmed speech, "The Preservation of Sign Language," we cherish these words "as long as we have deaf people on earth, we will have signs and as long as we have our films, we can

preserve our beautiful sign language in its original purity." As the industrialization and modernization of America began to spread in the 1920s, the Dark Ages began to drive Deaf culture and American Sign Language underground as the onslaught of oralism reached American soil and took root. Perhaps this can explain why so few Deaf-made films have been found to exist from the 1920s until recently.

In the late twentieth century, American Sign Language was legitimatized by linguists and Deaf culture became an authentic area of anthropological/ethnographical study. During this period, there was the advent of videotaping versus filming, and a demand for a multitude of educational videotapes, particularly related to ASL instruction and Deaf Cultural behaviors. While the talents were often Deaf, the filmmakers, producers and target audiences were usually members of the dominant culture. With the affordability of camcorders and home-based computer editing software, we are now seeing an increase in films by Deaf people about ourselves and our language.

While Schuchman (1988), Norton (1994), Klobas (1988), Bateman-Cannon (see this volume) and others have looked at how dominant-culture, hearing filmmakers have represented deaf characters in film, our questions are related to the creation of films by Deaf people. Instead of focusing on how the "others" view and represent "us," we will shift our gaze back to our Deaf cinematic roots—to Deaf people behind and in front of the lens.

DEFINING DEAF CINEMA

Alfred North Whitehead (1943) has stated that "art is the imposing of a pattern on experience, and our aesthetic enjoyment is recognition of the pattern." What are the cinematic patterns that Deaf filmmakers use to express the world of the people of the eye? What themes and motifs do Deaf filmmakers employ? What stories do Deaf filmmakers tell and how do they tell them? What particular aesthetic techniques and patterns do Deaf filmmakers use that are instinctively recognized by Deaf audiences?

An examination of other underrepresented groups and how they represent themselves via the medium of film is helpful. Black, Women, Gay/Lesbian, and Third World Cinema have begun to flourish, and a number of films made by disabled filmmakers is now emerging. Black Cinema is instructive for exploring the emergence and evolution of Deaf Cinema as African Americans were one of the first groups of underrepresented peoples to initiate their own means of filmmaking. Examining themes/symbols, discourse and visual aesthetics in these various genres inform us and train our eye for recognizing and exploring features of Deaf Cinema.

In searching for an established definition of what Deaf Cinema is, we

have looked at commentaries and musings by leaders in the field. Dr. Norman has discussed cultural authenticity being a central element of identifying what can be constituted as Deaf Cinema and what can not (Norman, 2005). To further define cultural authenticity, we have looked to the Deaf View/Image Art (De'VIA) movement, which provides us with clues about how deaf people use art to express the Deaf experience visually. The De'VIA manifesto, which was created in 1989 by a group of Deaf visual artists, stated that Deaf artists in the De'VIA genre use "formal art elements with the intention of expressing innate cultural or physical Deaf experience. These experiences may include Deaf metaphors, Deaf perspectives, and Deaf insight" (Miller, 1989).

Using a selection of films from DRFF '05, we will demonstrate how the De'VIA definition can apply to these films and the framework of thematic/symbolic, discourse and visual aesthetics analysis. DRFF '05 took place March 18–20, 2005 at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), a college of RIT. Over 45 films from around the world were screened as well as two panel discussions and Dr. Jane Norman's keynote address, "Visualizing Deaf Cinema." Films considered for the festival had to be about the Deaf experience and/or utilize strong visual aesthetics. A hearing filmmaker's work could be accepted if it satisfied both of the above criteria. A Deaf filmmaker's work could be accepted if it satisfied only one of the above criteria since it was theorized that being a "person of the eye" affects and informs ones gaze and artistic expression regardless if the subject matter reflects the Deaf experience.

While many of the documentaries, short films, and feature films have characteristics that need to be examined to guide in the sound development of a definition of Deaf Cinema, the focus here is on Deaf student produced shorts. We felt this focus was justified as our goal is to increase the visibility of emerging Deaf filmmakers. The works by Deaf student filmmakers, we felt, tended to be more experimental and non-traditional in nature which resulted in a heightened use of visual aesthetics when compared to the more traditional documentaries and narrative shorts.

We begin by describing the films, their themes and motifs (Table 1). This is followed by an analysis of the discourse structure of a number of films; that is, the method used by Deaf filmmakers in constructing the beginnings and endings of their films. Lastly, we will highlight some of the reoccurring cinematic techniques which may describe a Deaf Visual aesthetic.

THE FILMS

Most of the student films shown at DRFF '05 told stories which happened

Title	Themes and Symbols	ASL Discourse	Deaf/Visual Aesthetics
Flying Fingers (7:30 min) Tracey Salaway USA; RIT SoFA	Animal symbolism, Hand and eye motifs, No mouths, Mother/daughter, Affirmation to resistance, Child = Cultural transmission, ASL vs. oralism, Dream scene	Twist Ending	· Computer Animation · Visual Rhythm · Bird's Eye View Shots · Journey Through the Eye Shot · Visual Foreshadowing
To Have/To Find (5:30 min) Susan Dupor USA; School of the Arts of Chicago	Animal symbolism, Hand motif and eye emphasis, Mother/daughter, Child = posterity, Resistance to affirmation, Isolation vs. belonging, Dream scene/ Foreshadowing	Unfinished work	· Black and white cell animation · Exploits ASL's iconicity · Gaze at hearing people as objects
AsramaKu (11:00 min) Leon Mian Sheng Lim Malaysia; RIT BFA	Deaf Collective Community, Deaf residential school, Children = posterity Rites of passage, Hand motif	Open/close	· Sepia · Semi-silent film · Intertitles · Bird's Eye View Shots · Framing POV/Look At Shots
Don't Mind? (11:00 min) Patti Durr and Elizabeth Dena Sorkin USA ; RIT	Deaf Collective Community, ASL as normal, Normalizing the Deaf Experience, Child (CODA) = posterity	Open/Close Twist	· Black and white film · Direct voyeur shot (direct visual address to audience)
Mr. V (3:00 min) Wayne Betts, Jr. USA; Gallaudet	Hand motif	Twist ending	· Black and white film · Visual rhythm · Exploits ASL iconicity
Paper Airplane (14:00 min) Adrean Mangiardi USA; RIT SoFA	Parental relationship, Eye motif for lipreading / visual, Hand motif to make sound, Avoidance of mouth or ears, Resistance		· Gaze at Deaf Self · Gaze at hearing people as objects · Visual representation of sound · Visual rhythm
Soulmate (2:00 min) Ryan Commerson and Wayne Betts, Jr. US; Gallaudet	Deaf Collective Community	Open/Close Twist	· Black and white film · Visual Rhythm · Visual Climax · Secret Voyeur shot (as foreshadowing)

Table 1. Summary of Analysis of Selected DRFF '05 Student Films

within a Deaf-World context. Rare were films which focused primarily on the borderlands between the Deaf and hearing communities and the place of conflict between these communities. While there were a variety of themes and motifs presented in the films, we focus here on identifying a limited number of themes and motifs which were common among the DRFF '05 student films we choose to sample.

Collective/Collaborative Community. One theme which stood out was that of the Deaf community being a collective community. That is, a small, close, tightknit community in which there is a strong sense of belonging. Four films communicated this theme: *Soulmate*, *Don't Mind?*, *AsramaKu*, and *To Have/To Find*.

Soulmate is a two-minute, short film made by Ryan Commerson and Wayne Betts Jr. for a visual poetry assignment in Facundo Montenegro's class at Gallaudet University. This black and white short deals with the trappings of past love and features only one line: "Now, it's my turn." The film follows a chase where a man frantically runs to escape a woman who keeps appearing either concretely or abstractly. The film communicates a haunting edge of consciousness and feeling of paranoia. In terms of thematic analysis, this is the small community experience taken to the extreme. While hearing audiences may identify with the subconscious feeling that one can never truly escape from the image of someone with whom they have had a relationship, it is a fact of life for Deaf people. Our social circles are so small that it is virtually impossible to avoid running into an ex-lover if he or she is also Deaf or has ties to the Deaf community.

Don't Mind? is a black and white twelve-minute short directed by Patty Durr and Elizabeth Dena Sorkin. The film was written by Durr and edited and filmed by Sorkin, an RIT film student. The film visually describes what happens when a Deaf woman asks an older Deaf man to babysit her daughter. The film ends when a different Deaf mother shows up at the man's door with another babysitting request. This illustrates that within the Deaf community no one is really a stranger, as well as that information is shared among members. Clearly, the second Deaf mother learned of the elderly Deaf man's willingness to babysit via the "Deaf grapevine." Reciprocity related to information and action is hinted at here. In addition, this film seeks to normalize the Deaf experience. It shows ASL as a natural way to communicate as evidenced by Deaf people in an everyday context.

AsramaKu was filmed in a Deaf school in Malaysia by Leon Mian Sheng Lim, a Deaf Malaysian attending RIT as an art major. The film, created in a sepia, silent-film style contains intertitles in both Malaysian and English. It tells the story of a middle-aged Deaf man's memory of his Deaf school expe-

rience, focusing on the process of becoming accepted, and ultimately, his sense of belonging. The images of the Deaf man at his reunion and in his flashbacks at his Deaf school, include those of sharing food with his classmates. In one scene, the filmmaker positions the camera directly above the new Deaf boy's lunch tray and we see other hands reaching out to take food from his tray. The use of hands as a meaningful motif in Deaf films emphasizes our cultural value of hands and illustrates a collective community. The use of food is another motif which reinforces the shared experience of nurturing, survival and growth. The filmmaker integrates these motifs while recording this rite of passage common at residential schools for Deaf children throughout the world.

Mother/Daughter, Children, Hands, Eyes, and Mouth Motif. In two of the films described below (as well as several other student films in the festival), the theme of mother and daughter relationships were explored and may suggest the struggle of Deaf children learning a Mother Tongue or first language. *To Have/To Find* as well as *Flying Fingers* use dream like sequences and feature shared reoccurring motifs of hands and eyes. While *Flying Fingers* is a surrealistic computer animated film, *To Have/To Find* is a realistic hand drawn cell animation piece with a fantasy element. Both feature a mother and a daughter communicating in sign language and both employ animal symbolism. These films suggest a tendency for animal motifs due in part to the fact that Deaf children in hearing families often bond strongly to their family pet as they both experience a level of mutism due to the hearing family's inability to fully understand and express themselves in ASL.

Flying Fingers, a seven-minute-and-thirty-second short was created by Gallaudet Film Professor Tracey Salaway while she was an MFA student in RIT's Film and Animation program. A four-fingered signing alien-like girl, who lives by the sea, is told by her mother that they will have lobster for dinner. Both girl and mother are Deaf, symbolized by their lack of mouths. Under the watchful eyes of her pet bird, the girl falls asleep, dreams of a lobster seaman with his traps, and of a visit one of the seaman's lobsters. In her attempt to protect the child, the bird is knocked unconscious by the lobster and her eyes are symbolically knocked out of her head. In a strange twist, the girl awakens, seeing her bird still safe in her cage. Thinking it was all a bizarre dream, she looks down in shock to discover that her hands are gone. The viewer realizes that the girl's clipped hands have been harvested by the lobster of her dream. This alludes to the oppressive forces of oralism and some interpret the seaman to be Alexander Graham Bell. The film concludes by zooming into the black pupil of the girl's eye, a journey through the eye shot. This allows the filmmaker to emphasize the use of eyes as a common

motif, and further communicates the beginning of an era of blackness in which signing will no longer be viewed as natural and normal.

To Have/To Find, is a five-minute-and-thirty-second short created by artist Susan Dupor while she was a BFA student at School of the Arts Institute of Chicago. The semi-autobiographical film shows a young Deaf girl interacting with her mother and her dog just before boarding her school bus. During her ride on the handicap van, she falls asleep and dreams of a world where natural elements such as trees and clouds take on hand-shaped forms. There she finds her dog, humanlike, and ready to communicate with her using sign language. While the filmmaker has described this as an unfinished work, the film conveys the distinction between what we have and what we need to find. In the film, the mother communicates via signed English that the daughter needs to have C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-C-E and the film implies that this can only be found when one enters the Deaf world and can communicate freely and naturally in ASL.

The use of children in *Don't Mind?*, *AsramaKu*, *Flying Fingers*, and *To Have/To Find* contrast the fictive kinship of Deaf culture with a Deaf child's family of origin lineage. The films described above represent a variety of backgrounds from which Deaf people come into the Deaf community and provide insight concerning the vertical transmission of Deaf culture. The film *AsramaKu* takes place at a Deaf boarding school whereas the child in *To Have/To Find* clearly is mainstreamed. While *To Have/To Find* describes a Deaf child in a hearing family, in *Flying Fingers* the family is Deaf. Yet, regardless of this variety, the films emphasize Deaf children as our posterity and the value of cultural survival. Themes of resistance to the dominant culture are also shown in a number of films. *Flying Fingers* documents cultural resistance by exposing to viewers language oppression. In addition, *To Have/To Find* delineates a process of liberation: in the beginning, the filmmaker shows visual resistance to the mother's use of signed English, and later affirms ASL as natural. Thus, Deaf children frequently appear in films by Deaf people in order to express hope for our future.

DEAF CINEMATIC DISCOURSE

Why might Deaf filmmakers use a different discourse format when telling a story via film? In addition to having a unique "cultural sensibility," Gabriel (1995) presented a comparison between western-dominated and nonwestern-dominated film conventions. In this comparison, he suggested that there was a relationship between the oral folkloric traditions of African storytelling and filmmaking. Thus, it may be that Deaf filmmakers are influenced by the discourse style of ASL story telling and may apply this to film. While

we recognize that mainstream films often employ open/closing shots and/or twist ends, it is curious to see the prevalence of this structure in emerging Deaf filmmakers, many of whom have not formally studied filmmaking. It may be that ASL storytelling discourse is subconsciously or intuitively informing and shaping their attraction to the parallel open/closing shots and twist ending frameworks. When Deaf people use ASL to create stories, make presentations or converse, Bienvenu & Colonomos (1989) identified a common, particular discourse structure that is used.

Bienvenu (1993) and Roy (1989) describe the features of ASL discourse in terms of the opening, middle, and closing features. The opening feature of ASL discourse includes a main topic of the stories, presentations, conversations or films. Another discourse feature is ASL expansion, in which the Deaf person may add information such as historical background or a flashback sequence. Explanations and elaborations, either with language or images, make up the main body of the "text" of this type of discourse. Finally, when ending the stories, presentations, conversations, or film, the audience is returned to the initial point or topic. In our analysis of the DRFF '05 student films, we found three different types of discourse patterns. These patterns we describe below and are identified as parallel opening/closing shots, opening/closing with twist ending and closing with a twist ending.

Parallel Opening/Closing Shots. In our preliminary analysis, we found three types of discourses among a number of films. Like the ASL discourse pattern described by Bienvenu & Colonomos (1989), Deaf filmmakers frequently show similar open and closing shots. This was evident in the film, *AsramaKu* described above. The film opened with a shot of the dinner plate of a middle aged Deaf man eating at a Deaf school class reunion. While most of the rest of the film is told in flashbacks, the final shot returns to the same dinner plate of the same Deaf man at his class reunion. Thus, the open and closing shots serve as contemporary bookends for his past experience.

Open/Close With Twist Ending. In both *Soulmate* and *Don't Mind?*, the filmmakers modify the opening and closing shots to include a twist ending. In *Soulmate,* the techniques used by the filmmakers for opening and closing are similar with the exception that the man and woman's places are reversed. In the opening shot, a casually-dressed man seems to look over his shoulder, feeling a sexually-clad woman in black behind him. In the closing shot, the woman is now casually-dressed and she is glancing backward toward the man, who now wears more professional black-colored clothes. In this way, the film communicates an on-going chase that ends with the man and woman simply switching places. In *Don't Mind?* both open and clos-

ing shots include Deaf women and their children ringing the doorbell at an elderly Deaf man's house. The twist in this ending is that there are two different sets of Deaf mothers and children and the elderly Deaf man gazes to the camera at the end of the film. In this final moment, the man communicates directly with the audience and breaks down the wall between us (a characteristic of non western cinematic practices as noted by Gabriel, 1995).

Closing With a Twist Ending. In the three-minute film *Mr. V*, filmmaker Wayne Betts Jr. uses the two-finger "person walking" classifier to tell an iconic story of Mr. V's search for a companion. The film shots focus on only the fingers of a person whose 'V' handshape shows Mr. V walking, jumping, and climbing up to meet another two-fingered classifier person. As Mr. V nears the end of his journey and amorously hooks up with his companion, the camera abruptly cuts to two men opening a door into the room, and reacting with confusion. Then, we are shown what these men see: the camera cuts back to the image of the man who had been using his fingers to enact Mr. V's sensual meeting, and he reacts in embarrassment dropping his hands. Thus, while the film convinces us this is the story of Mr. V, the twist ending breaks us out of this fantasy and pans back, so to speak, returning us to the real world so we too have been caught in the act.

DEAF/VISUAL AESTHETICS

In our analysis, we strove to discover and describe the visual aesthetics used by Deaf filmmakers. Aesthetics, in terms of filmmaking, are generally considered to be the choices and techniques used by filmmakers such as types of shots, editing styles, and other creative devices. Unlike hearing filmmakers who use sound techniques to trigger emotions and transitions between scenes, we hoped to look at how Deaf filmmakers exploited the visual techniques available. Because Deaf people have a visual language and visual culture, it is expected that Deaf filmmakers' sensibility or instinct would be used and recognized by Deaf filmgoers. In addition, we wanted to see how the gaze of deaf filmmakers represented sound, hearing people, and a visual way of being in the world.

Visual Rhythm. In three of the films discussed here, we have found patterns of visual rhyming used by the filmmakers. These are repeated camera and editing techniques used throughout each of the films. These filming choices add a cohesive element to the films and create artistically-driven visual events. In *Soulmate*, the filmmakers use a particular camera technique which shakily zooms in, zooms past, zooms around, and zooms out. In addi-

tion to using this shaky zooming technique during the opening and closing shots, the filmmakers use it up to three more times in the course of the film. This camera technique both creates an urgent, frantic atmosphere and creates a way in which the film scenes are linked into a whole piece.

In *Mr. V*, there are several instances of visual rhythmic patterns in the film. In one specific instance, the Mr. V classifier "walks" in an even six beats, and then the film shot changes perspective. Viewing the classifier from behind, the camera then continues to follow Mr. V, walking six beats in this second perspective. The camera shot shifts again showing Mr. V climbing up a rope in six beats, before showing a shot of Mr. V's eye-view of moving upwards and closer to the top in a similar six-beat matter. This type of filming, and in particular the editing style utilized, creates a predictable visual rhythm throughout the film. The effectiveness of this type of filming is related to the story: it is a continuous yet systematic search for another V-classifier companion.

The film *Flying Fingers* employs visual rhythm techniques via computer animation. Salaway's filming of the lobster fisherman's rocking boat is repeated in various other scenes in the film. The alien girl's pet bird sways in its cage with a rocking-boat rhythm. When the girl dreams, she leaves her house on a magic carpet which visually echoes the bird cage and the rocking boat. The connotations of such a technique may imply that nothing is truly stable or grounded, and that the lines between dreams and reality may be vague.

Visual representation of sound/hearing people. While hearing filmmakers have been criticized for their gaze at Deaf characters, we were curious about how Deaf people used film to gaze at hearing people as objects, how they gazed at Deaf people as subjects, and how sound might be represented. As noted above, not many of the films we received focused on the relationships between Deaf and hearing people. While these areas of tension have been emphasized in theatrical productions (i.e., "A Play of Our Own," "Side by Side," etc.), we did not find this to be true in the student films we reviewed. The two films mentioned below, that did address these tensions, *To Have/To Find* and *Paper Airplane*, were autobiographical in nature.

In *Paper Airplane*, RIT student filmmaker Adrean Mangiardi presents a fourteen-minute short which includes interviews with family members, old home video clips and a stop motion sequence focusing on his cochlear implant. In the introduction to this film, Mangiardi creates a visual montage sequence which highlights the representation of sound visually. The clips are repeated actions of, the running of a finger along a row of lockers with padlocks, the sawing of a piece of wood, the throwing down of a tray, and tapping of a glass with a spoon. It is a Deaf view of sound in that it is created by the hands and perceived by the eyes. The sequences of the movement of the locks,

saw, tray, and spoon become images that are created by the hands and preserved and recorded by the eyes. Perhaps the filmmaker decided to repeat the images because Deaf people find sound so momentary and elusive. In this way, he makes sound a concrete visual experience. It is also a tactile experience in which hands interact with objects that are touched and held.

Deaf views of hearing subjects. In *Paper Airplane*, Mangiardi examines his own experience as the only Deaf child in a hearing family. As a filmmaker, Mangiardi interviews his parents and brothers talking to the camera without signing. Lest we forget the filmmaker is Deaf, Mangiardi has superimposed his own eye as a motif into the shots to indicate the lack of visual stimulus within the context of the hearing world and how insufficient lipreading is. In this way, his parents become virtual talking heads whose words are only accessible to Deaf viewers and their own son via subtitling.

In *To Have/To Find*, Susan Dupor turns her camera on a child's view of her hearing mother's communication. The camera shows the mother's awkward attempts at signing English and fingerspelling. The mother's signing, unlike her daughter's requires a long sequence of shots which drags on a bit. There is one instance when her mother fingerspells a word that her handshapes become the focus and take up the whole screen.

At the end in her dream, the Deaf girl's dog signs which contrasts the beginning of the film where the Deaf child uncomprehendingly watches cartoon talking dogs on television.

Deaf views of Deaf Self/Subject. In most of the Deaf student films shown at DRFF '05, Deaf subjects are filmed in normalizing situations. For example, the film *Don't Mind?* does not plot camera angles specifically for focus on the characters' signing nor does it continually emphasize the Deaf characters' particular points of view. However, in both *To Have/To Find* and *Paper Airplane* the filmmakers turn the camera on themselves or representations of themselves.

The Deaf girl in *To Have/To Find* is drawn in complete detail, with a body hearing aid and harness. In the dream sequence, the ear molds are slowly pulled from her ears in a visual moment expressing freedom. Throughout the film, the filmmaker draws extreme close ups of the girl, with a focus on her large eyes.

In *Paper Airplane,* Mangiardi shows his cochlear implant up close: filming the place in his skull which attracts magnet-like things such as paper clips. In addition, his cochlear implant becomes personified and moving of its own accord with Mangiardi's sleeping body dragging behind. In this scene, done in a series of stop motion animation, we are informed via sub-

titling that music from the horror film *The Exorcist* plays in the background. Vineyard (1999) notes that speeding up shots such as this adds a comic effect while mixing slow and fast shots add a surreal effect.

In many ways filmmakers use editing techniques in order to frame a Deaf character's point of view. In *AsramaKu,* the narrative of the Deaf boy's experience is emphasized when we are shown the character's point of view. Often, this is done by a filmed close up of the character, then the character's point of view shot, and then a return to a filmed shot of the character. In this film, Lim focuses in on a Deaf boy laying on his bed looking out on the school courtyard. The film then cuts to what the boy sees: two Deaf students meet and the younger is pressured to give the older something that he has. Again, the film returns to the Deaf boy who has been watching this exchange. After a minute, the deaf boy rises from his bed and snaps his fingers. The exchange has given him an idea which is developed as the film moves along. Significantly, the audience is privy to how this idea had come to the Deaf character completely through a visual context—no words having been signed or spoken.

Emphasizing story elements. Like many filmmakers from the dominant culture, Deaf student filmmakers utilize aesthetic techniques to emphasize film narrative elements such as foreshadowing and climatic film moments. Foreshadowing in the film, *Soulmate* occurs in the beginning of the film when a montage of shots of the man from different angles as he stands in an alley. The final shot of this montage is a dark voyeur shot. That is, a framing shot of the man as viewed by someone watching him through the weeds. This is an effective way in which to foreshadow the psychological thriller aspect of the film. In *Flying Fingers,* the alien girl's hand amputation is foreshadowed in her dream when her hacked off hands appear in one the lobster's bubbles. These bubbles indicated the lobster's way of communicating with the girl.

The climax of the film *Soulmate* occurs during another montage sequence which ends in a drawn out shot when eye contact between the man and the woman is made. This moment is emphasized by repeating the jarring camera work which appears elsewhere and which is filmed at both fast and slow motion spinning around the two as they embrace. Not only is the climax of this film emphasized using multi shots and a variety of film techniques to draw it out dramatically, the moment itself is a visual eye-locking moment between the man and woman.

CONCLUSION

"Film is a social practice for its makers and its audience; in its narratives and meanings we can locate evidence of the ways in which our culture makes

sense of itself" (Turner, 1999:3). The increase in the number of Deaf films being produced and the demand for Deaf films at Deaf Film Festivals have lead us to an initial analysis regarding Deaf cinema and Deaf film practices. In looking at a sampling of the Deaf student films shown at DRFF'05, we have found that these filmmakers utilize a number of similar thematic concerns, motifs, discourse styles and visual aesthetics.

Clearly, the emergence of Deaf films have brought about even more questions about film techniques, cultural sensibility and interpretations, visual storytelling, and the authenticity of representation. With these questions, we hope to encourage Deaf filmmakers to develop visually aesthetic experiences in which Deaf audiences can view critically, recognize intuitively and enjoy fully, as we all explore what it means to be people of the eye.

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