

# THE PRINCIPLE OF ASYMMETRY AESTHETIC IN CINEMATOGRAPHY

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## ABSTRACT

*The research showed the principle of asymmetry having a grasp of aesthetic in cinematography. It was needed the understanding of conceptual tools in filming, not only the physical tools. With this principle, the research presented the recommendations in practice that could be applied better in visual for the audience. Methods used in this research was qualitative descriptive. There was a connection of the principle asymmetry with object research (conceptual tools in cinematography) included; frame, light and color, lens, movement, texture, establishing, and point of view with comparison with symmetry principle, then simulate with 3D (three dimensional) editor. The result of this research is people can apply this principle to experience the constant that added the aesthetic in the film with hope to give advantages to the Indonesian movie industry.*

**Keywords:** *asymmetry principle, asymmetry aesthetic, cinematography*

## INTRODUCTION

Glebas (2009) has said that people watch the movie because for the entertainment. In the film, people enjoy the tools and the technique the director used. The problem is when young directors want to make films; they do not know how to start directing. Several of them thinking about how to improve the physical tools technique, but in this research, the researcher hopes to give an understanding - what is the important tools and principle concept technique that is needed to be applied in cinematography to be aesthetic.

The first concept is design. People know that there is some fundamental principle to add the aesthetics in the art and digital including; balance, rhythm, variety, proportion, unity, and emphasis. The principles of design help to arrange and organize the elements in a design, arrangement, and alignment that can affect the overall design and provide clear and consistent emotional connections. Balancing a composition is needed to involve arranging both of positive elements and negative space in such a way that no one area of the design is overpowered than the other areas. Everything works and fits together in a seamless white. The individual parts contribute to their sum but do not try to become the sum.

The principle of balance has three division of common, namely; symmetry, asymmetry, and radial. Symmetrical balance is the image balance. If you draw a line down the center of the page, all the objects on one side of the screen are mirrored on the other side. They may not be identical objects, but they are similar in terms of numbers of objects, colors, and other elements. Asymmetrical balance occurs when several smaller items on one side are balanced by a large item on the other side, or smaller items are placed further away from the center of the screen than larger items. One darker item is needed to be balanced by several lighter items. Radial balance occurs when all the elements are

radiating out from the central point, and the visual weight is distributed equally that creates a strong focal point in the center of the design.

Through this writing, the researcher wants to recommend the composition balance like what is the right thing to apply into the cinematography with the aim of making the film to connect with an emotional level with the audience. Here it can be learned from history that aesthetic level of any concept of beauty is in the subconscious. Starting from the prehistoric, there is known Lacaux-France-Cave painting that expected from 1500 BC. Through this painting, the notion of the concept of asymmetric is highlighted in the delivery story of what the painter's desire. That cave painting can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Lacaux – France - Cave 1500 BC  
(Source: <http://www.arthistoryarchive.com>)

The artistic development in time to time can be seen from any prominent masterpiece of work that always uses composition balance asymmetric that more appreciate than having the style of the symmetries. This is the result of the work of several artists that is noted for applying the composition balance asymmetry; in the left is artist Michael Angelo (David 1504), in the middle is artist Leonardo DA Vinci (Monalisa 1503), and in the right is artist Pablo Picasso (Weeping woman 1937). It can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2 David (Michaelangelo), Monalisa (Leonardo Da Vinci), and Weeping Woman (Pablo Picasso)  
(Source: <https://www.google.co.id/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi>)

Asymmetrical forms lack the balance of symmetrical forms, although the entire composition can be asymmetrically balanced. Asymmetry is rather common in natural forms, such as people are probably right or left handed, fiddler crabs have different sized claws, tree branches grow in different directions, clouds have random shapes. Asymmetry creates more complex relationships between the elements, and so it tends to be more interesting than symmetry. Because of that, it can be used to draw attention. Space around the asymmetrical forms is more active. Unpredictable patterns are created, and overall people have more freedom of expression with asymmetry than with symmetry. The tradeoff is harder to achieve. It is in the same way that similarity and contrast can work together, so that symmetry and asymmetry can combine to make the good effect. Symmetrical forms can be balanced in an asymmetrical way, or asymmetrical forms can be balanced symmetrically. Symmetrical forms can be split with a random mark to add others interest. By adding the contrast symmetry and asymmetry in the composition can make these elements get more attention.

In very simple terms, the middle line can be made in any composition of an element that would like to show as a work that is potential to attract attention. A contrast composition between the left and right sides give the impression the dynamic, and it looks better to be noticed. Figure 3 shows the asymmetry comparison.

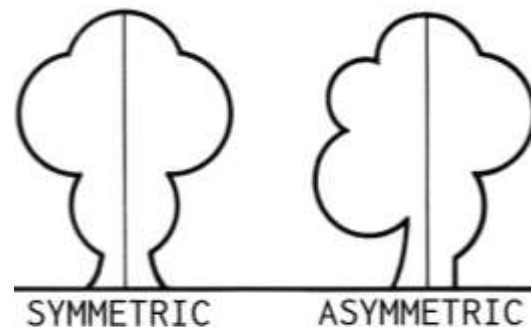


Figure 3 Assymetry Comparisson  
(Source: <https://www.interaction-design.org>)

Finally, how people might connect the principle design with cinematography to produce aesthetic is increased in making an interesting film. The term cinematography is from the Greek roots meaning “writing with motion”. At the heart of it, filmmaking is shooting. But, the cinematography is more than the mere act of photography. It is the process of taking ideas, words, actions, emotional subtext, tone, and all other forms of non-verbal communication and rendering them in visual terms. The cinematic technique is the entire range of methods and techniques that usually people use to add layers of meaning (Brown, 2012).

The tools of the cinematic technique are used by both the director and Director of Photography (DP), either working together or in doing their individual jobs. As mentioned, the cinematography is far more than just photographing what is in front of the camera. The tools, the techniques, and the variations are wide-ranging in scope; this is at the heart of the symbiosis of the DP and the director. If talk about cinematography, it cannot talk just about physique tools (the camera, dolly, the lights, crane, and camera amounts), but also about conceptual tools in cinematography to make form visual storytelling in film. It can be classified into some general categories; the frame, light and color, the lens, movement, texture, establishing, and POV. This research will explain one by one the conceptual tools of asymmetry in cinematography.

At least this conceptual tools of cinematography needs composition and pleasing for the aesthetic of audience (Merriam-Webster, 2015). A film that corresponds with one of the attitudes is appraised as appealing and will elicit emotions like attraction (Desmet, 2003). The art itself has meaning, something that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing to eyes. Accordingly, it needs to understand the principle of design to compose element with conceptual tools of cinematography into the film. Objective research this research is the researcher wants to recommend the good method in cinematography that can apply to make the best film composition.

## METHODS

This research uses qualitative descriptive approach. Through qualitative research, people can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences, and imaginings of the research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate (Mason, 2002). It is appropriate to the audience when the director to use this research method with an intention developing the relationship with it. The first step of this method is the researcher has to collect the data picture scene from many movie, books, and internet with comparison about understanding the principle of balance (symmetry/asymmetry). Then, the researcher will demonstrate the principle asymmetry into conceptual tools of cinematography (Brown, 2012) with descriptive approaches such as how to apply into the actual shot in the film with 3D Editor.

The picture frame can be set and whatever is needed to testify against to the audience or not, consisting of the direction of the point of view, distance, and a method of the actual shot that is wanted. The light and color direction of one scene and composition color could give the emotional mood of the audience. The lens is an instrument for making the depth of the side of an object of a picture every reference to the space that broad nor narrow that are going to bring the audience into the scene in what it is trying to be shown by the director. Reference movement of the camera is like dolly in/out, the panning left/right, zoom in and out, the orbit, a tilt up and down, truck, crab, and crane, as well as the movement of objects using motion blur and forth to give the impression of dynamic in a scene that is desirable. Texture – Reference how ancillary state who wants to give directly to the audience to give the impression of dramatic in a scene that has determined. For example, smoke, rain, and color tone that is seemed ancient or futuristic. Establishing – Establish shoot is the first image of any scenes to be providing information thoroughly of scene film that will serve to the audience so that the audience get a whole of a scene that may on gave. POV (Point of View) where the camera some array of the audience how they see, the point of view that will exactly bring the audience into the feeling of the film that served.

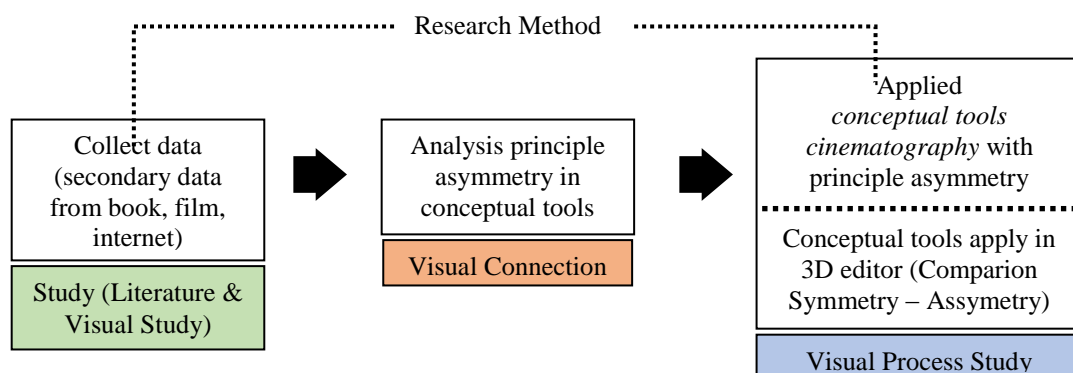


Figure 4 Design Method  
(Source: Ferric Limano, 2017)

Figure 4 presents the research method that is divided into three phases, there are: the study, visual connection, and visual process study. In the process visual comparison and study, the researcher collects secondary data from another researcher, from books, and journal first to get an understanding about principle asymmetry and get the visual study from the good movie to get facts about balance in conceptual tools in scenery film. After studying and get facts about aesthetic with principle asymmetry, the researcher has to connect principle with conceptual tools from data study and literature. The last process is visual process study; researcher applies to the study and connection in object research. The simulation visual comparison makes in the 3D editor to give a comparison in visual principle symmetry – asymmetry in size HD pixel 1920x1080.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To know about the principle of asymmetry, it needs to understand what is symmetry principle and comparing in the aesthetic pattern that can be described. The following is the meaning of between symmetry and asymmetry that are said by several figures have researched according to I.C McManus (2005). Symmetry signifies rest and binding, while asymmetry is motion and loosening, the one order and law, the other arbitrariness and accident, the one formal rigidity and constraint, the other life, play and freedom (Frey, 1949). The pure symmetry is somehow too harsh, too rigid and unlikelike that is suggested by Immanuel Kant. He comments how all stiff regularity (such as borders on mathematical regularity) is inherently repugnant to taste, in that the contemplation of it affords the no lasting entertainment, and people get heartily tired of it (McManus, 2005).

The art historian, Ernst Gombrich has a similar mind that seeing a banality of symmetry and asymmetry. Once people have grasped the principle of order, they are able to learn the thing by heart. People have easily seen enough of it because it holds no more surprise, but a struggle between two opponents of equal power, the formless chaos, on which they impose the ideas, and the all the formed monotony, which brighten up by new accents (McManus, 2005).

The psychologist Rudolf Arnheim has also emphasized, symmetry means rest and tie, asymmetry means movement and detachment, order and law here, arbitrariness and chance there, stiffness and compulsion here, liveliness, play, and freedom there. On the one extreme, the stiffness of complete standstill is on the other the equally terrifying formlessness of chaos. Somewhere on the ladder between the two extremes, every style, every individual and every artwork find its own particular place (McManus, 2005). After getting some understanding of symmetry and asymmetry, summary can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of the Psychological and Aesthetic Properties of the Symmetry and Asymmetry According to Art Historians and Philosophers

Symmetry	Asymmetry
Rest	Motion
Binding	Loosening
Order	Arbitrariness
Law	Accident
Formal rigidity	Life, Play
Constraint	Freedom
Boredom	Interest
Stillness	Chaos
Monotony	Surprise
Fixity	Detachment
Stasis	Flux
Simplicity	Complexity

Comparing the outlined in Table 1, it can be seen the contrast between the principle of symmetry and asymmetry, and objectives of the target visual to be transmitted for audience accordance the approach of conceptual tools in cinematography. Therefore, it needs to know which is preferred in cinematography, symmetry or asymmetry, like most things cinematography design that depends on what others try to communicate. Weyl (2016) has said that about symmetry is something like well proportioned, well balanced, and it denotes that sort of concordance of several parts by which they integrate into a whole. But in his writing, the context of symmetry always puts about perfection, especially God. In reality, it must have understood that the perfection cannot be found in what people look and live. So, the relation and emotional feeling for the audience with the principle of asymmetry must be considered. The message of perfection, formality, and elegance of symmetry makes sense. But if people make the cinematography about the dynamic nature of asymmetry is likely preferred. But in commonly, they have studied with a case to know about the answer which principle has taken for well pleasing to the audience.

A picture is worth a thousand words, is an English language idiom. The art historian Ernest Gombrich makes demonstration using leaflet designed to teach amateur photographers about composition. The two sketches in Figure 5(a) are as Gombrich prints them, and, as he says, a sailing-boat photographed in the center of the picture will look be calmed, one shown off-center will appear to move. And he then goes on to add, of course, which suggests that event here meaning has a large share in the resultant impression. A potential problem with Gombrich's demonstration is that the boats in the original images are not quite identical, the sails in the 'moving' image billowing more than in the 'becalmed' image. Figure 3(b) and 3(c) show the original images manipulated so that the boat is, in fact, identical in each image; the effect is still compelling (McManus, 2005).

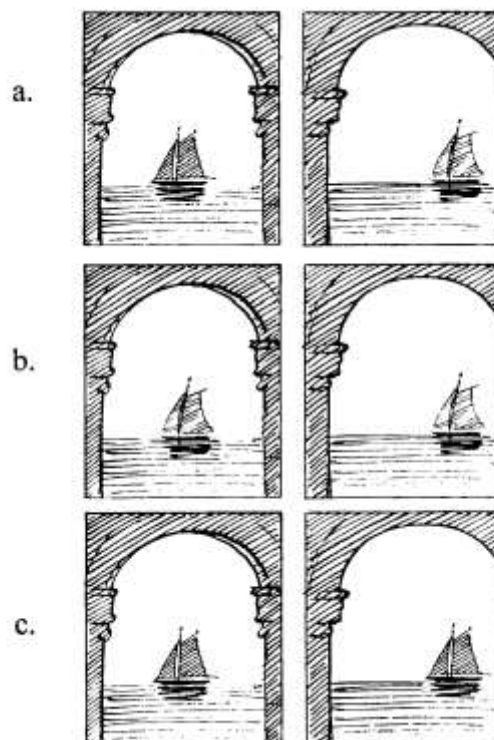


Figure 5 Gombrich's Demonstration of Asymmetry Results in a Sense of Movement  
(Source: McManus, 2005)

Why people have chosen the image asymmetry than the symmetrical image because in their brain can prove about hemispheric asymmetry brain. The hemispheric asymmetry brain is the principle in human emotion processing and experience caused by differences right and left brain (Ocklenburg et al., 2017). So, aesthetic asymmetry is much better than symmetry that would increase interest and excitement the audience. The principle of asymmetry is when each side of an imaginary line is different but equal in composition cinematography.

Perhaps due to the more complex relationships in asymmetrical forms, it tends to find them more interesting and dynamic. Asymmetry creates visual tension and prevents objects from appearing static and superficial. There is more variety in asymmetrical forms which also lead to their being more interesting and more difficult to pull off in cinematography. Asymmetry evokes modernism, forcefulness, and feelings of vitality and movement. Asymmetry creates active space and leads to unpredictable patterns and greater freedom of expression. Active white space is one of the main aspects of a page perceived to be well-designed.

In framing is also known a theory composition that is put forward by John Thomas Smith in the year 1797. Suggested that, Figure 6 is divided into nine panels that are given a line every corner consistently. It is mainly framing composition that divided into two categories; composition static and dynamic composition. Composition static has the application of the principle of symmetry in implementing the division framing in vertical synchronization and horizontal. The framing composition dynamically the line framing undertaken diagonally is one principle of asymmetry to get the different composition of the general state of the day that has a missing perspective that horizontal or parallel to the point of view of the eye.



Figure 6 Nine Points Frame Composition  
(Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule\\_of\\_thirds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_thirds))

To make aesthetics in cinematography with the asymmetry, the director should not have only viewed only nine panels course. He/she can have the creativity and focus on that he/she wants to tell the audience and how to tell some more impressive composition scene. Heidrich (2012) has said that the camera frame composition is surrogate for the audience, the way it interacts, and it is something interesting to them. In a visual study process in the frame, the researcher does the comparison between the static composition with symmetry principle and dynamic composition with asymmetry principle. Figure 7 shows the static frame composition with the principle symmetry. The left picture is the preview shoot, and the right one is the setting camera. While Figure 8 shows the dynamic frame composition of principle asymmetry. The left picture is the preview shoot, and the right one is the setting camera.

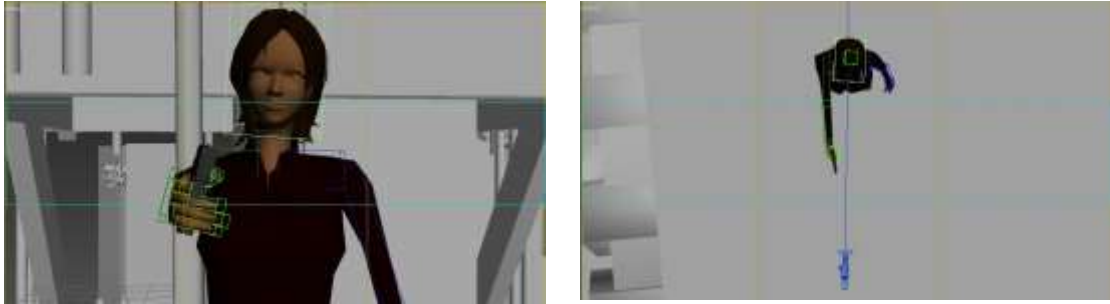


Figure 7 Static Frame Composition with Symmetry Principle  
(Source: Ferric Limano, 2017)



Figure 8 Dynamic Frame Composition – Asymmetry Principle  
Left preview shoot, right setting camera  
(Source: Ferric Limano, 2017)

According to Brown (2012), purposes of the provision of color and light in the movie among others are a full of tones and gradation of tone, color control and balance, shape and in individual dimension than self, separation subjects stand out against the background, depth and dimension in the frame, texture, the mood and tone emotional content, and exposure. The application is done in the tenets of asymmetry can understand from the colour wheel in allotments like the example in Figure 9, the composition in staining that can produce the aesthetic composition for the audience. When it uses setting light and gives ambient color with the principle of asymmetry, the result can get more life in the scenery film (contrast, saturate, brightness good in audience eyes). The researcher gives the comparison about asymmetry principle setting light and color and symmetry. Figure 9 shows the lightning in scene and setting. The left picture is asymmetry light setting – brightness, contrast, and depth shading, while the right one is symmetry light setting – brightness, contrast, and depth shading.

The researcher does not discuss the lens physically, but the understanding of the concept of the lens. It produces depths on every side of the object picture reference to the narrow space that will bring the audience to enter the scene that wants to display by a director. The division of drawings in giving the depth of collectively is fore ground (the front), mid ground (an object or character), back ground (background pictures). The application of the principle of symmetry is the way to set of foreground, ground, and background so that it can produce a better image in the scene. Figure 10 shows the lens camera preview. The left picture uses the principle of asymmetry with the wide lens (20,0 mm), while the right one uses symmetry principle symmetry – normal lens (50,0 mm).



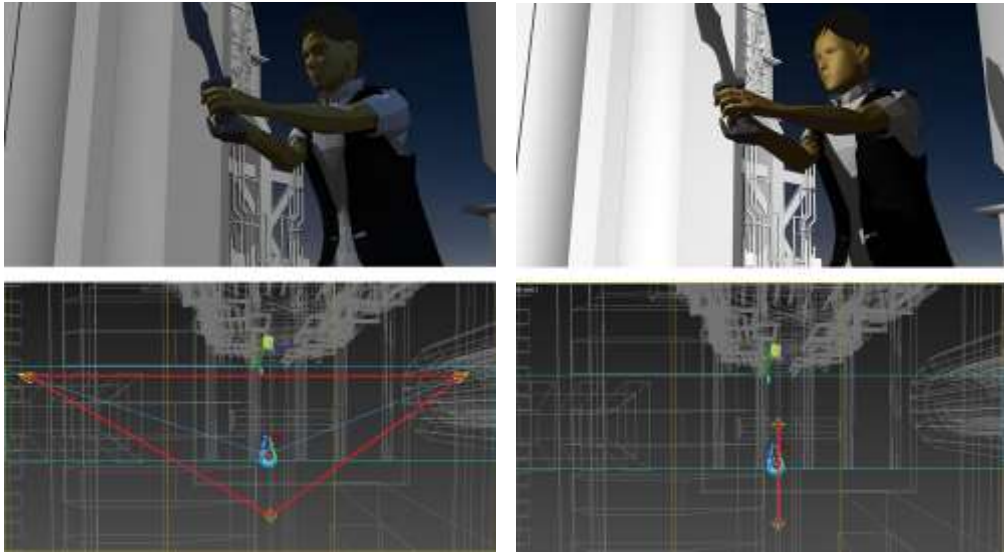


Figure 9 Lightning in Scene and Setting  
(Source: Ferric Limano, 2017)

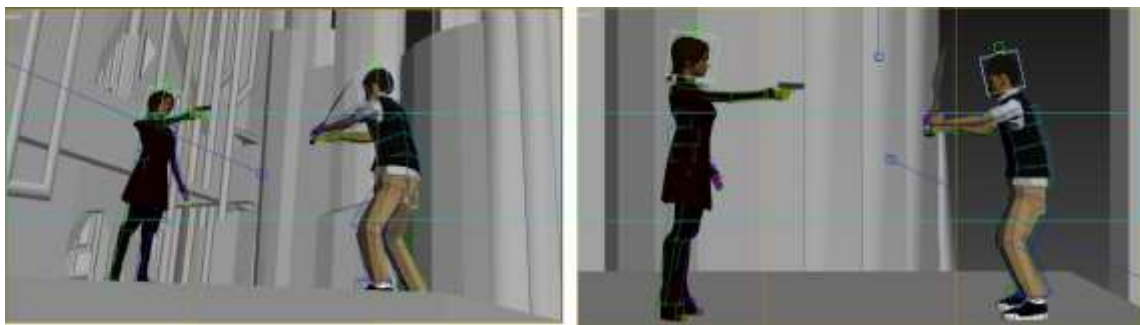


Figure 10 Lens Camera Preview  
(Source: Ferric Limano, 2017)

In this conceptual tool - lens, the result has more depth perspective and good visual with asymmetry principle than symmetry principle. Asymmetry principle can give division between foreground, midground, and background that makes audience's feeling can interact with film scenery. Figure 11 shows the lens result with asymmetry principle. A is the foreground, B is the midground, while C is the background.

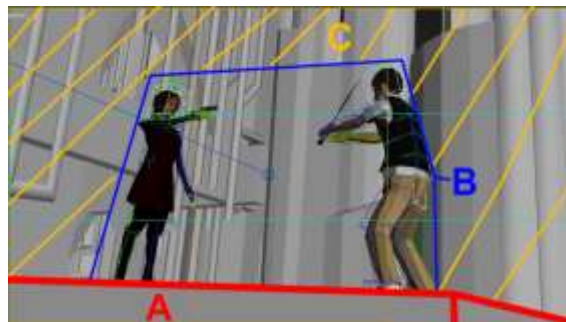


Figure 11 Lens Result with Asymmetry Principle  
(Source: Ferric Limano, 2017)

The movement reference of the concept in the move a camera with or without tools for assistance track the camera is dolly in/out, panning left/right, zoom in/out, orbit, tilt up/down, truck, crab, crane. The purpose of this movement is to produce the dynamic picture and natural impression in accordance with the naturalness of audience in the daily lives. The application of the asymmetry principle is laying on the object in the extract that needs to be made the asymmetry angle between the object in the movement cameras. Movement makes horizon line; not asymmetry but even little asymmetry horizon line makes it aesthetic in the eyes of the audience. It can be seen in Figure 12.



Figure 12 Camera Movement Simulate; From Symmetry Horizon Line to Asymmetry  
(Source: Ferric Limano, 2017)

Texture is an added element to a scene for gives a certain dramatization impression, drama, romantic, happy. It goes on like the addition of rain, lightning, smoke, the explosion. Each laying texture also uses the principle of this asymmetry to produce good aesthetic in the eye of the audience. Figure 13 shows the rain texture that drops by asymmetry gravitation that is compared with the rain drop with wind which is aesthetically added. Visual texture in the left picture shows the rain with symmetry texture, while the right one is the rain with asymmetry texture.



Figure 13 Visual Texture Comparison of Symmetry and Asymmetry  
(Source: Ferric Limano, 2017)

Establishing is the overall picture of an early scene that needs to be conveyed to the audience. It aims to give the overall picture of the place and time of the next scene will take place. In this conceptual tools, researcher compares established horizon line and composition with symmetry and asymmetry tools. Figure 14 shows the establish preview that the left picture shots with symmetry principle, while shots with asymmetry principle.

There are two categories of the point of view; POV vantage point and POV first person narrative voice. POV Vantage point is where director stands in relation to the subject he/she is in the film. It can also refer to director view or opinion on that subject. POV first person narrative voice is when a story is narrated by a single character at one time that speaks for and about them and represents a point of view in writing. The POV is where laid a camera that reference to the point of view of the character or how to make a point of view of whom want to serve to the audience to make

them as if in the inside of the scene. The point of view will be more interesting by using the high angle, or low angle compares with normal eye view. In this conceptual tools, researcher compares the normal eye view (symmetry principle) and low angle eye view (asymmetry principle). It can be seen in Figure 15. The above image uses symmetry principle with POV normal eye view, while the below image uses asymmetry principle with POV low angle view.

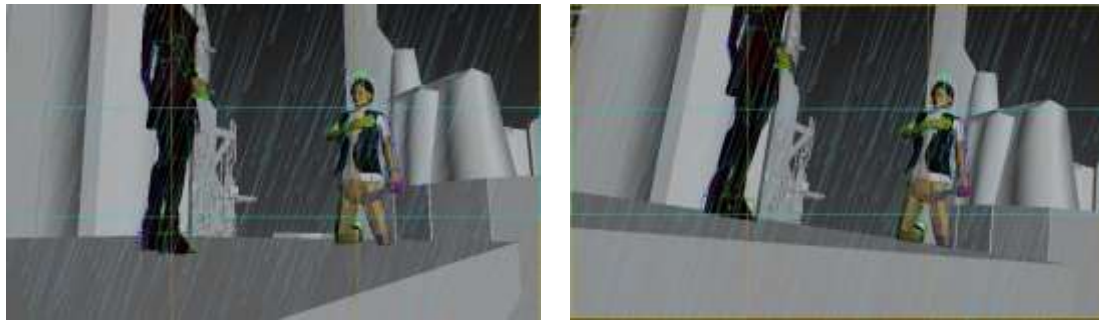


Figure 14 Establish Preview Shot with Symmetry and Asymetry Principle  
(Source: Ferric Limano, 2017)

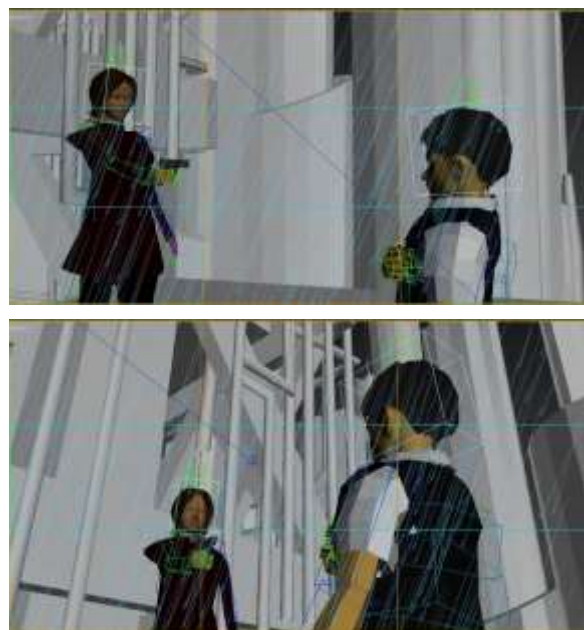


Figure 15 Symmetry and Asymmetry Principle with Point  
of View Normal Eye View and Low Angle View  
(Source: Ferric Limano, 2017)

After having understanding of conceptual tools in cinematography, it needs to contain an art form therein by applying the same principle with asymmetry principle. The researcher will provide an understanding in practice, in art form, and some merge forms to produce scenes to deliver for an audience which aims to tell the story of film title. Isrow (2017) has stated that to get the aesthetic (appreciation from audience), it needs focus on establish the art form. The art form in cinematography can be split into three major points in the film according to researcher's experience and understanding. Three point major art forms in cinematography are character, stage, ambient that needs applied principle.

If someone has an understanding of the exact conceptual tools in cinematography with the asymmetry principle to combine all the film, then he/she will have confidence in producing work of art that appeals to the audience. The work of established aesthetic for the emotional touch of the audience can give irrational logic in the film by break the grid with this principle (Verba, 2013).

## CONCLUSIONS

Talking about cinematography, people will think physical tools first like camera, a tripod lighting, and so on, even they have little understanding the concept in it. After perceiving asymmetry principle, it needs to apply in the film that has made fundamentally or digital. Every cinematographer cannot just focus on the physical tool, but he/she needs to understand about conceptual tools in any developed film to make interesting for the audience. Now it can be seen that the asymmetry principle applied to produce personal approachment to the audience that cannot be obtained quickly. Malcolm Gladwell needs 10000 hours rule becomes the expert and successful in this (Gladwell, 2008). Therefore researcher also acknowledged needs more time issued to be an expert in cinematography. But through the asymmetry principle, cinematographers can have direct approachment to get aesthetic value added for getting special attention from the audience. The asymmetry principle is very properly applied in conceptual tools cinematography, but it will be chaos if the cinematographers put it too much. Cinematographer or director must have both continuous experience and artistic feeling. By understanding the asymmetry aesthetic principle in cinematography, it will open up the new beginning of becoming professional director or cinematographer.

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