Mise en scene

“a film’s look or décor, as created by its sets, props, costumes, lighting, photography, and actors’ postures and proximities, making up the film’s visible universe and generating much of its mood and meaning.”
Elements of the mise-en-scene

- Dominant
- Lighting key
- Shot and camera proxemics
- Angle
- Color values
- Lens/filter/stock
- Subsidiary contrasts
Mise-en-scene II

- Density
- Composition
- Form
- Framing
- Depth
- Character placement
- Staging positions
- Character proxemics
Form: Open or Closed

- Open: Does the image suggest a window that frames our view but also that the world continues beyond the frame?
- Closed: Does the image suggest a proscenium arch (frame of a stage) in which everything is carefully arranged and balanced. The suggestion is that the world (at least for the character in this scene) stops at the edges.
Dominant

Where is the eye attracted first? Is it to a character? An object? A particular color or light? Why is it attracted there? Is the screen otherwise empty? Is everything else out of focus? Is the object or person the only element which is moving? Is it bathed in light? Does everything else point to it, as in a classical painting?
Framing

- Do the characters have room to move or are they constrained by the frame or objects within the frame
Composition

- How is the space organized?
- How many planes are there?
- Do horizontals or verticals dominate?
- How does the dominant influence the arrangement?
Character placement

- Where are the characters within the frame? At the edge? In the center? At the bottom or top?
- Where are the characters in relationship to the camera? Close or far away?
- Where are characters in relationship to each other and to objects (see also proxemic distances).
Color values

- What is the dominant color?
- Are there contrasting colors?
- Is there color symbolism?
- Are the colors crisp or fuzzy/hard-edged or soft-edged?
- Are they muted, pale, or vibrant?
- Do different locales have a different color scheme?
Density

- How much visual information is in the image?
- Is there much clutter between the characters and the camera?
- How detailed is the image?
Depth

- On how many planes is the image composed?
- Is the screen flat (2-dimensional) or does it suggest space (3-dimensional).
- Do persons and objects cross planes?
Character proxemics

- How much space is there between the characters?
- What is suggested by characters who are close to each other?
- What is suggested by characters who are far apart?
- Do distances change as film progresses?
- Do distances depend on the scene’s other content?
Films

- Citizen Kane
- Nashville
- Elephant
- Cabaret
- Christiane F.: The Children of the Subway Stop at the Zoo
- Romeo and Juliet
- Face/Off