

:

Audiovisual salience, PECMA aesthetics and the dopaminergic seeking system

Torben Grodal

Department of Film Studies, University of Copenhagen

The talk will first discuss some essential features of audiovisual narratives and their brain implementation and discuss differences between non-temporal and temporal art. I'll discuss how films rely on fundamental mechanisms that link perception, emotion, cognition and motor action that is implemented in a continuous flow (the PECMA flow, short for perception, emotion, cognition and motor action). I will then discuss different types of salience, linked to the different processing steps: *Perceptual salience*, linked to primary visual processes, *emotional salience*, linked to association-and-memory processes, *incentive salience* linked to cognitive-hermeneutic-action-oriented dopaminergic seeking processes (cf. Panksepp, Berridge, and Conan Doyle's cocaine abuse) and *action salience* linked to exertion of agency and simulation of motor events. Films may focus the experience on the different types of salience, or integrate them in a continuous flow, and I'll discuss some of the means for manipulating focus and type of salience. Finally I'll discuss why salience and existential relevance is a better cue to the fascination of films than the hedonic tone (pleasant/unpleasant), because many films portray painful, disgusting, sad or horrifying events and use salience with negative valence, although the majority of films portray events that have or end with having a positive hedonic tone on one or several levels (visual beauty, achievement of positive goals etc.) Art provide mental activation related to concerns molded by evolution and culture.