Editing for Animation

I'm talking to you today about editing for animation.
many animation thesis students underestimate the power of editing for animation --
>   **-- taken for granted as happening in advance in the storyboarding process**
>   **-- unwillingness to sacrifice previous labor**
>   **-- lack of a contextual understanding of rhythm beyond animation**

Storyboard+animatic are only the first draft of the film.
Compositing is the most subjective part of the editing process vis-à-vis experimentation with moving camera, rack focus, and improving staging
Slugging footage into the animatic gets you to a rough cut only, really only a second draft of the film. The fine cut, where nips, tucks, overlaps and inventive transitions are implemented, is where the film fails or blooms.

Many animated films with strong concepts, designs and editing are undermined by lackluster editing.

Editing is about intimacy.
-- intimacy with your audience in that you share a common language with them

--intimacy with your footage by getting outside it to recognize, trust and adjust to content and rhythms present, provided, and possibly missing.

-- trust in sharing a personal philosophy with your audience.

Ideally in your production you are generating an abundance of footage rather than hitting the bare minimum so your rough cut captures the "bleed" of your imagination, which leads to:
1) What your film is REALLY about
2) What your NEXT film will be about
3) Outtakes for promotion, secondary artwork for portfolio, animated gifs for web use, etc.

From one idea may spring many -- "a picture tells a thousand words"

Out of many oblique ideas which emerge from intentional footage, an essence (dominant theme) will likely present itself. Despite the best intentions, sometimes the actual meaning of the film differs from its original aim. Sometimes that makes for a better film.

The most controlled, intended idea may in fact be the weakest application: the process of editing of the content will spotlight this.

Editing can be most powerful in reorienting an initial position into its transformative outcome.
I want to remind you of some possibilities to help you make this happen.

THE OBVIOUS:
CUT OFF THE DEAD TISSUE, MAXIMIZE THE RHYTHMS PRESENT FROM SEQUENCE TO SEQUENCE, TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MATCH-ON-ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

FROG, Chris Conforti, 2004

Chris' philosophy for this film regards being caught between two states of Florida: harsh nature and crazed development

no spoken language dialogue = international airplay

genre: survival gross-out cartoon -- animal vs. nature, animal vs. man, animal vs. animal

This film won a Silver Medal Student Academy Award in 2005. Chris is currently working on Team Umizoomi at Curious Pictures. He has not made another independent film.

Moving camera always reveals multiple layers of information, allowing viewers to access point-of-view, feeling and tactility IN ADDITION to marking out space and transitioning

This storyboard was nearly perfect, but he almost lost the film in the edit: he held one second at the beginning and end of every shot so viewers could get "oriented"

---- this in a film about madcap disorientation in a place where life is supposed to be "better"

As an editor you are the first reader/viewer of the material. ARE YOU TRUSTWORTHY?

Should you hand over your footage to a more objective viewer -- a real editor?

Are you taking full advantage of the plasticity of the moving camera and/or lensing in the compositing process?

Editing is not about selection but instead primarily about direction coming from instinct regarding a collection of material: qualities inherent to the raw material will lead the final edit better than forcing judgments about that material.

Editing creates flows and grinds, bridges and disjunctions, strings and percussion.

Multiple edits may occur within one field or frame in addition to between shots.

Editing shouldn't create a noun in the end but a verb -- an active object or experience in motion, changing in flux, a question not an answer.

(Y)OUR TIME IS COMPRESSED:

How many of you start your films with a pan or a truck?
HOW MUCH INFORMATION IS REVEALED?

Animation pans rarely reveal anything but a character entrance or exit: this is not good enough in the 21st century

We live in a contemporary technological sublime in which everyone is constantly under bombardment of information -- we are all constantly editing in our real (and virtual) lives!!

INTRO TO *THE DEPARTED,* Martin Scorsese, 2006
what does the pan reveal?
--This pan constructs a survey of the time passed as the protagonist is in jail.
--No huge moves but layers of information from left to right
--Protagonist is progressing, moving forward, even when still
--All his trauma is always at his back: the inmate looking him over, the information he receives in line, at sequence's end when he traverses frame from right to left (going backwards in time)
--Psychological trauma is supplied by theme song: it's not illustrationally nostalgic genre window

dressing but in fact demonstrating a state of mind
--Protagonist is large in jail, loses his stature as incarceration ends and he's released into larger world
--Layers open up as incarceration ends
--Listen to how the music cuts short as the door opens -- state of mind continuous when not interacting with others as evidenced by how music fades when he gets the info in jail

DIRECTOR IS SUBJECTIVE: MAKING SOMETHING FROM NOTHING
EDITOR IS OBJECTIVE: WORKING WITH READYMADES

Martin Scorsese's films look like they do because of Thelma Schoonmaker: she builds his work in her own image and he trusts her to do so; it is an exchange which trumps ego.

Editing is about overlapping, suturing, stretching, snapping, layering, ordering, and delivering information all at once.

Editing needs no gimmickry, only proximity to get us to see things anew.

Editing in a painting is destructive; editing in video is constructive.

How much information are you putting into your pans and trucks?

SUBTLE COMPLEXITIES NESTED IN VISUAL RHYTHM:

Persepolis (2007) Marjane Satrapi + , Vincent Paronnaud, 26:35-29:00

-- point-of-view here is unique regarding a female protagonist growing up in revolutionary Iran
-- genre: coming-of-age historical drama
-- Black is a graphic editing element beyond design
-- BLACK holds mystery, then critique, then mood, then future in this sequence
-- point-of-view shifts from child to mother over three sections
-- transition point is in Marjane's room -- it's the place of the break, the safe place
-- music is cultural marker (postmodern), then state of mind (relational), then revelatory transition
        (expressionist) to the sounds of war

what is the genre of your film? is that in your one sentence description?

Editing is about space as well as time, rest as well as action, blur as well as focus, edges and melds.

Check the rhythms of each sequence individually -- how do they flow, what is the repetition on the theme and how do those repetitions build upon and expand your case?

Can your staging be enhanced using camera movement as punctuation? This is a far more fluid and plastic process than it used to be when animation was shot using cameras-- take advantage!!

Editing creates attitude from subliminal visual information (in this case, black as connective tissue)

Editing has a dynamic range both synaesthetic and invisible when done well.

When editing works it creates something larger than the sum of its parts.

Editing connects threads unseen as well as those which are graphically available.

An edit should be obvious but not so as to be taken for granted: each edit is unique.

Editing is about streamlining and expanding at once.

AN IMPERFECT FILM THAT ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVES:

***Unfair,* Ian Jones-Quartey, 2006**

-- genre: postmodern coming-of-age racial satire
-- delivered from 3rd person camera view with 1st person voiceover
-- a Nickelodeon design style with content NSFNick
-- fragmented in such a way as to show off mastery of various techniques
-- each shot is composed a painting rather than a situation as in Frog

This film received festival play and got Ian a position at Nickelodeon after graduation; by age 23 he was already directing. Now he lives and works in Los Angeles with his girlfriend Rebecca Sugar, creator of Steven Universe, recently greenlit for production by Cartoon Network (first woman creator of a series in history of that network).

Head of the Animation Department said, regarding *Unfair*, "what the hell is this?!? it's nihilistic, it has no point of view!!!"

It proved Ian had command over an aesthetic not his own. He worked hard in his off hours on webisodes of *NockForce* to hone his performance, timing, and comedy skills in a forum where failure was acceptable.

Semiotics -- the study of signs and reading signs
A semiotic artwork provides information we already know in a language we don't yet understand. When narrative is involved, semiotics provide information we already know using shared language. This is postmodernism in action.

Postmodernism is in essence a skeptical interpretive stance or lens through which to view any product of human culture, in particular literature, art, philosophy, economics, architecture, fiction, and literary criticism. It is "a style and concept in the arts characterized by distrust of theories and ideologies by the drawing of attention to conventions."[1] It may refer to "any of various movements in reaction to modernism that are typically characterized by... ironic self-reference and absurdity (as in literature)", or to "a theory that involves a radical reappraisal of modern assumptions about culture, identity, history, or language".[2]

POST-MODERNISM IN CINEMA is generally found in parody, but also in narrative drama.

The Artist is a postmodern film: it references shots and techniques from silent film, Hollywood is presented as a set (shot on the Warner lot), the lead actor is even doing a George Clooney impression in his performance

Quentin Tarantino is a postmodernist.

trope: significant or recurrent theme

ex. Quentin Tarantino relies on tropes of B movie cinema to string together his narratives. His protagonists are anti-heroes, there is always a "groovy" soundtrack, every film has an interrogation sequence, while performances are usually strong, every significant action is a specific reference to another film done earlier, better, and more hardcore: Tarantino films are child's play compared to some of the work he references, for example *Foxy Brown* (1974).

Tarantino only threatens castration in *Django Unchained*, but in *Foxy Brown* a castration *occurs.*

Tropes and conventions are both the energizer and enemy of the edit as they decrease power, style, and attitude while professing to amplify them.

Post-Modernism's weakness as a theoretical construct is that it can only comment on a states of being using literal references from pre-existing cultural material (sampling).

We live in an age of relational aesthetics:
Relational art or **relational aesthetics** is a mode or tendency in fine art practice originally observed and highlighted by French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud. Bourriaud defined the approach simply as, "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space."[1] The artist can be more accurately viewed as the "catalyst" in relational art, rather than being at the centre.[2]

For a trope to be an energizing factor, the reference must be abstract and folded within another trope or convention to create a third, perhaps new experience -- this is relational aesthetics.

ex. Side Effects (2013), Steven Soderbergh's latest and supposed last film for theatrical release, takes the tropes of film noir (double-cross, femme fatale, murder over money, framing) and folds them into the visual style and language of anti-depressant ads. Nowhere is this more apparent or brilliantly done than in the revelation sequence in which footage we've seen before is played back (a film noir cliché) intersected with a third point of view, but all shot as a soft focus, amber lit, slow-motion set of vignettes literally made to look like ssri medication ads one sees during the morning or evening news.

Shared language brings the idea home to the viewer, creates intimacy. In the case of Soderbergh's *Side Effects*, he wants to make the viewer as paranoid as the characters are, or seem to be

Theater knows no editing in its temporal linearity: cinema is a collage.
Animated features were boosted in the '90's short term but damaged in the long term by producers' insistence upon the literally interpreted appropriation of the tropes of musical theatre.

Conversely, the work of Chuck Jones (*What's Opera Doc, Barber of Seville, Scarlet Pumpernickel*), which appears postmodern on first glance, uses heavy editing to condense major works of opera and literature into seven minutes cast with Looney Tunes characters who are mocking each other, not the source material. Chuck Jones' work is Brechtian (breaking the fourth wall).

Jones' cinematic work was perhaps as influential on the cinema of Jean-Luc Godard pre-Vertov Group as Brecht's theatricality was post-*Weekend*.