

The Visual Storytelling of Your Name: A Beautiful View

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82-278 Japanese Film and Literature: Art of Storytelling

— It was almost as if.. as if a scene from a dream. Nothing less than a beautiful view.

This quote is said by both main characters at the beginning of the Makoto Shinkai movie “Your Name” about the “day when the stars came falling”. This beautiful, yet devastating event where a comet strikes the earth is the event that the movie is centered around, but I believe this quote acts as a preface to the movie that you are about to watch. Shinkai’s striking visual style and direction, along with the score by RADWIMPS, create the atmosphere and punctuate the themes of this movie.

The first notable aspect of Shinkai’s style is the hyper-detailed and realistic world that he renders. By packing each scene full of details in the environment and setting, then overlaying lighting and shading where fit, Shinkai fills Your Name with striking detail. Every frame is rendered as a beautiful artwork. This emphasis on striking visual style and meticulous detail dazzles the viewer and overloads them with detail in nearly every scene. The details in a scene also help to characterize those who inhabit the frame. For example, Mitsuha’s simple, traditional room mirrors her simple, country life, while Taki’s room displays his densely packed city life as well as his fondness for architecture. Additionally, the structure of their rooms mirror one another. This mirroring of the structure and layout of the two main characters rooms emphasizes the connection of fate between them.

Shinkai uses artfully crafted scenes to emphasize the theme of Musubi, connectedness, and separation in many different ways. The most interesting in my opinion, however are some of the transitions that exist throughout the movie. These transitions, that take a low camera shot at a door sliding open or closed, emphasize this sense of 2 worlds, and a transient connection between the two. There are seven total sliding door transition scenes in the movie, each of them happening seemingly randomly, but a majority occur when dealing specifically with the connectedness between Mitsuha and Taki. Interestingly, the only shot of a closing door is also the only shot of a train door closing. The significance of this mechanical train door closing, as opposed to wooden sliding doors opening, may symbolize the closing of these two worlds in a modernized city, as opposed to the openness to these two worlds in a more traditional setting. Whether or not significance can be granted to these transitions, they work well to emphasize the themes of Your Name in a subtle way.

Whether it is through his large, beautiful scenes densely packed with information, or small, subtle moves, Shinkai is an expert at coding his animated films with depth and meaning. That being said, his work, and particularly Your Name, is focused on the careful, meticulous, and thought out production of a truly beautiful view.