15

Languages and identity

EXPRESSIVE PRODUCTIONS AND MEDIA ARTISTS

There are boundless ways to create moving-image media that is expressive, stylistic and innovative. Key to creating an innovative product is experimentation – asking 'what if I …?' – guided by a **stylistic intent**.

A media artist may choose to experiment by:

- **Using a single long take to show a long period of time.** Russian filmmaker Alexander Sokurov uses this technique to express 1000 years of history in *Russian Ark* (2002).
- **Modifying technology to allow exploration of an idea.** Australian director Lynette Wallworth's virtual reality documentary *Collisions* (2016) about atomic testing on Martu land in Australia used a camera composed of 16 GoPros to capture 360-degree footage.
- **Composing each shot like a painting to convey nostalgia.** This characterises the work of America director Wes Anderson, such as in *Moonlight Kingdom* (2012), *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), *Fantastic Mr Fox* (2009) and *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001).
- **Challenging editing conventions such as the purpose and use of cutting.** The cinema of the French New Wave (directors such as François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard) uses a cut not simply to progress narrative but instead to linger on beauty.
- **Using close-ups to powerfully express an individual's inner psychological state.** An excellent example of this is in Danish filmmaker Carl Theodor Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928).
- **Exploring a personal event through mixing forms.** The use of animation, poetry and music to explore cultural identity can be seen in Ann Marie Fleming's *Window Horses: The Poetic Persian Epiphany of Rosie Ming* (2016).
- **Express an opinion on a political event through stop-motion animation.** Mexican animator PES uses this technique with seemingly unrelated children's toys in the short film *KaBoom!* (2009).

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Figure 15.1 The stunning, emotive use of close-ups in Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) convey the inner emotions of Joan (Renée Jeanne Falconetti). As this is contrasted against a barely present set and minimal *mise en scène*, the audience is forced to focus solely on the face in close-up. Dreyer's shots still look modern today, but in the 1920s he was considered to be experimental.

Key features of expressive productions

Media artists will challenge prevailing codes and conventions, experimenting with languages, representations and technologies, thereby creating expressive and stylistic moving-image products. These products are generally referred to as 'art', 'avant-garde' or 'experimental' film. Avant-garde is French for 'ahead of the crowd'. Moving-image products under this banner are always a vehicle for filmmaker expression, creative innovation and learning about the potential of moving-image media.

Expressive, avant-garde productions are generally characterised by:

- **Experimentation.** This often occurs in terms of narrative or visual representation, or as a departure from current norms or conventions.
- **Focus on the lyrical, poetic, aesthetic or abstract,** such as beauty for its own sake.
- **Frequent iconoclasm.** Avant-garde productions often mock conventional values – for instance, through a focus on extremes of eccentricities.

- **Restricted context of production and use.** Small budgets, lack of studio use and release for local audiences are common institutional features of expressive productions.
- **Varied creative processes.** Some artists carefully plan their choices, while others prefer spontaneity, with the filming process itself as an act of expression.
- **Expression.** Social or personal expression is a key motivator in the creation of expressive productions.
- **Artistic fusion.** Avant-garde productions often combine elements from other artistic mediums, mixing and manipulating forms to further expressiveness.

Avant-garde films may also feature a lack of characters or human presence, instead focusing on nature or on inanimate objects. Media artists working in the avant-garde often have a social concern driving their work, and an underpinning belief in the cultural and political benefits of making film. Many are supported in their experimentation by collaborators, all aligned by a clear stylistic identity.

Pes's short film, *Fresh Guacamole* (2012) is the shortest film to be nominated for an Academy Award (Best Short Animated Film). In this film, Pes replaces the familiar objects involved in the creation of guacamole with gambling items such as dice and poker chips. Pes essentially creates avant-garde film, experimenting by removing narrative and animate objects, and using stop motion animation of familiar objects in symbolic, unfamiliar ways. Follow the weblink to the Pes YouTube channel to view the film.

15.1.1 Fresh Guacamole (2012) by PES

Expressive moving-image media artists

As all moving-image media creators are informed by a variety of influences, examining the work of several expressive media artists will serve to highlight the multitude of ways in which a moving-image media artist can pursue a stylistic intent by experimenting with languages, representations and technologies.

When exploring expressive moving-image media artwork, *auteur* theory is a useful tool for analysing and appraising the work of expressive media artists. In assuming that the director is the author, the central controlling force on a production and the chief creator of stylistic identity, *auteur* theory proposes that the director's body of work will be characterised by three features:

1 **Technical mastery**, indicating an ability to manipulate filmmaking techniques expressively.
2 **Personal style**, stylistically linking all works together with the same recognisable 'signature'.
3 **Consistent representations**, underpinning and linking all works.

The following sections outline a variety of moving-image media artists, from past and present, and from across the world, and highlights the importance of collaborators in the development and realisation of stylistic identity.

Jane Campion (1954–), New Zealand

Figure 15.2 Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993). Ada and Flora arrive in the remote wilderness of New Zealand after a long journey from Scotland. The expressive impact of this shot comes from the incongruity between objects and location – a piano, better found in a house, and Ada's elaborate outfit, isolated in a long shot on an uninhabited grey beach. Campion's work often explores isolation and centres on strong female characters.

Alamy Stock Photo/Collection Christophel

Table 15.1 Key work of Jane Campion

KEY PRODUCTS: JANE CAMPION	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES	COLLABORATORS	CONVENTIONS CHALLENGED
An Angel at my Table (1990) *The Piano* (1993) *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996) *Bright Star* (2009) *Top of the Lake* (2013, 2017) – television series	• strong, grown-up female characters – trying to be themselves, but also trying to be what others want them to be • themes explore gender politics, e.g. seduction, repression, female sexual power • isolation • everyday experiences • use of words to express and conceal self • enormous, mystical landscapes • naturalistic audio • dreamy surrealism – actors seem directed to react just a beat after the audience assumes they should • lack of judgement for all characters	Holly Hunter (actress)	Gender stereotypes – role of women

Ivan Sen (1972–), Queensland and New South Wales, Australia

ArenaPal/Collection Christophel

Figure 15.3 Vaughn and Lena, teenagers on the run, share a joyful moment in Ivan Sen's drama *Beneath Clouds* (2002). Lena, the daughter of an Indigenous Australian mother and an Irish father, spends the film searching for her father. Vaughn has escaped prison because he needs to visit his dying mother. Sen's films explore characters caught between worlds, such as Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

Table 15.2 Key work of Ivan Sen

KEY PRODUCTS: IVAN SEN	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES	COLLABORATORS	CONVENTIONS CHALLENGED
Beneath Clouds (2002) *Mystery Road* (2013) *Goldstone* (2016)	• themes of dislocation, family, culture and race, place and identity • character caught between two worlds – Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia • taut, pared-back dialogue to allow silences to play out • lingering camerawork	Sen as writer, cinematographer, composer, editor and director	Use of experienced, established actors – Sen often uses first-time performers as his protagonists

Jean-Luc Godard (1930–), France

age-fotostock/The Hollywood Archive

Figure 15.4 A tender moment between Patricia and Michel in Jean-Luc Godard's film *Breathless* (1960). This sequence, like much of the film, was shot on Parisian streets – a break away from the studio-based nature of mainstream film. Godard, like fellow filmmakers in the French New Wave, used location filming and natural lighting, and didn't always show the audience the actors' faces. Godard liked to show fleeting moments of experience – such as in this moment.

Table 15.3 Key work of Jean-Luc Godard

KEY PRODUCTS: JEAN-LUC GODARD	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES	COLLABORATORS	CONVENTIONS CHALLENGED
Breathless (1960) – also known as *A bout de souffle* *Vivre sa vie* (1962) – also known as *My Life to Live* *Pierrot le fou* (1965) French New Wave cinema	• natural light, creating soft shadows • use of faster film speeds and lighter cameras • handheld camerawork • improvisation • location filming – e.g. on real streets and inside cars • jump cuts and sudden changes in shot distance – cuts as beautiful in themselves, serving to emphasise that the audience is watching cinema • **homage** • sensory experience • self as subject – imagination, fragility, alienation • the shot as a unit of time – of thought, not just action • freeze frames to extend the pleasure of looking • fleeting aspects of experience • a look at the back of actors' heads at times – audiences don't always have to see faces • ambiguous conclusions • unclear character motivations • characters searching for meaning – indefinable, transcendent	Raoul Coutard (cinematography)	• Narrative cinema conventions – Godard is quoted as saying, 'A film should have a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order.' • Cinema not about capturing real life, but as part of life. • Use of studio conventions, such as makeup and three-point lighting • Use of shot and cut – the temporal and spatial continuity of traditional narrative film storytelling

Alfred Hitchcock (1899–1980), UK and US

Alamy Stock Photo/cineclassico

Figure 15.5 A disorienting moment in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). Scotty, the protagonist, suffers from vertigo. Hitchcock portrayed this sensation through use of the famous **contra zoom** (also known as dolly zoom or triple-zoom reflex; see page 30), where the subject remains stationary but the size of the background changes. Hitchcock was influenced by the disorienting perspectives used in German Expressionism, but experimented further with camera movement.

Table 15.4 Key work of Alfred Hitchcock

KEY PRODUCTS: ALFRED HITCHCOCK	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES	COLLABORATORS	CONVENTIONS CHALLENGED
The Lodger (1927) *The 39 Steps* (1935) *Rebecca* (1940) *Notorious* (1946) *Strangers on a Train* (1951) *Rear Window* (1954) *Vertigo* (1958) *North by Northwest* (1959) *Psycho* (1960)	• understanding of audience, allowing the director to continually adapt to changing values and contexts • shadowy, expressionist-influenced lighting • building suspense through use of silence – influenced by beginnings in silent cinema and long takes • cutting away just when the audience wants to look • loading each shot and each cut with information, conveying characters' thoughts without words • often the middle-class 'everyman' protagonist has been wrongly accused and may engage in a double-chase • female protagonists are glamorous blondes • motifs – stairs, trains, brandy, personal cameo	• Bernard Herrmann (composer) • Cary Grant (actor) • James Stewart (actor) • Grace Kelly (actor) • Alma Reville (screenwriter)	• Hollywood lighting – three-point, studio interiors • Showing the audience what they want to see

Terry Gilliam (1940–), US

Alamy Stock Photo/Photononstop/Screen Prod

Figure 15.6 One of many bizarre scenes from Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985) – cosmetic surgery in a **dystopian** world. *Brazil* takes place in a totalitarian bureaucracy, obsessed with whimsical machines in disrepair. Gilliam uses surrealist, nonsense comedy to portray a society gone berserk.

Table 15.5 Key work of Terry Gilliam

KEY PRODUCTS: TERRY GILLIAM	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES	COLLABORATORS	CONVENTIONS HALLENGED
Jabberwocky (1977) *Brazil* (1985) *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) *Twelve Monkeys* (1995) *The Brothers Grimm* (2005)	• Surrealism • influence of animation – fantastical *mise en scène* • comic nonsense to create visions of society gone berserk • past or future settings • use of the grim and grotesque – e.g. blood and excrement • revisiting fairytales or familiar stories through a distorted lens • irreverent, low-brow wit • characters are naive dreamers, underdog protagonists • themes explore distrust of systems	Michael Palin (actor)	Social mores

Baz Luhrmann (1962–), Australia

Figure 15.7 A wild song-and-dance sequence introduces us to the Moulin Rouge in Baz Luhrmann's musical film *Moulin Rouge!* (2000). The tragi-comic story of a star-crossed love between a poet and a courtesan, *Moulin Rouge!* uses well-known pop songs, extravagant, colourful sets and quick-cut musical sequences to construct an over-the-top, un-real world. Luhrmann's 'Red Curtain' style utilises a key device, such as song and dance, to ensure the audience knows they are watching a film.

Table 15.6 Key work of Baz Luhrmann

KEY PRODUCTS: BAZ LUHRMANN	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES	COLLABORATORS	CONVENTIONS CHALLENGED
Strictly Ballroom (1992) *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) *Moulin Rouge!* (2001)	• 'Red Curtain' style • simple, predictable stories • heightened setting • use of a stylistic device to ensure audience involvement and engagement – e.g. iambic pentameter or singing • **hybrid** of multiple styles – music video, musical, stage opera, Hong Kong action films, 1970s disco, Mardi Gras, Bollywood • themes of love and rebellion • hybrid musical 'moments' – pause for extended, dynamic, lavish dance routines • intercut tracking shots • uses editing technology to create a distinct rhythm – fast cuts central to style • set and costume design highly colourful	• Jill Bilcock (editor) • Catherine Martin (production, costume, art design)	• Gender stereotypes • Realism

Alamy Stock Photo/A.F. Archive

Akira Kurosawa (1910–1998), Japan

ArenaPaL/Performing Arts Images

Figure 15.8 A scene from the beginning of Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The deliberate framing of the two men and the rising mist creates a mythical, foreboding world. Often Kurosawa's work fuses eastern and western influences – in *Throne of Blood*, Shakespeare is transposed to feudal Japan and infused with traditional Japanese Noh theatre.

Table 15.7 Key work of Akira Kurosawa

KEY PRODUCTS: AKIRA KUROSAWA	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES	COLLABORATORS	CONVENTIONS CHALLENGED
Drunken Angel (1948) *Rashomon* (1950) *Seven Samurai* (1954) *Throne of Blood* (1957) *The Hidden Fortress* (1958) *Yojimbo* (1961)	• fusion of Western editing styles and deep focus with eastern martial arts narrative • influence of John Ford's Westerns, Shakespeare, samurai tradition and classical texts • characters are isolated individuals, such as lonely men and samurai • themes explore ennobling self-preservation and self-sacrifice • framing and horizontal composition • staging of action – unrealistic and exaggerated blocking • deliberate use of movement to be unexpected, meaningful and cinematic • backgrounds of all shots contain movement – weather • shots often contain large groups of people • use of long lenses and deep focus • fluid camera movement in long takes • cut on movement • experimentation	• Takao Saitō (cinematographer) • Asakazu Nakai (cinematographer) • Takashi Shimura (actor) • Toshirō Mifune (actor) • Ichirō Minawa (sound effects engineer) • Teruyo Nogami (assistant) • Kamatari Fujiwara (actor) • Yoshirō Muraki (production designer) • Fumio Yanoguchi (sound technician) • Kurosawa wrote and edited his own work	• When to cut • How to use movement

15.1.2 Akira Kurosawa – Composing movement

Tracey Moffatt (1960–), Queensland, Australia

Figure 15.9 A dying non-Indigenous woman is cared for by her adopted Indigenous daughter in Tracey Moffatt's *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1990). The film is an emotive portrayal of the relationship between mother and daughter, and is powerfully supported by vibrant, colour-saturated *mise en scène* and a soundscape. Moffatt's work includes photo narratives that probe social and cultural representations of Indigenous Australians and women.

Table 15.8 Key work of Tracey Moffatt

KEY PRODUCTS: TRACEY MOFFATT	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES	COLLABORATORS	CONVENTIONS CHALLENGED
Nice Coloured Girls (1987) *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1990) *BeDevil* (1993)	• **photo narratives** • video collage • formal and stylistic experimentation with still and moving image • explores gender, sexuality, history, representation and race – e.g. social and cultural representations of Indigenous Australians and women • non-realistic narrative scenarios – vignettes • sets: shot on interiors – 'fakeness' of locations • non-acting • evocative use of sound and music • juxtaposition • humans superseded by entities woven within landscape • layering of cultural icons and references, especially Indigenous Australian, photographic and historical	Moffatt tends to work without collaborators	• The social construction of Aboriginality • Linear narrative structures of western Hollywood storytelling

Wong Kar-wai (1958–), Hong Kong

Alamy Stock Photo/Entertainment Pictures

Figure 15.10 Wong Kar-wai's film *In the Mood for Love* (2000) is a dreamy, aesthetically beautiful mood piece set in 1962 Hong Kong. Su Li-zhen and Chow Mo-wan are attracted to each other, but don't want to have an affair and thus stoop to the moral level of their own unfaithful spouses. Wong Kar-wai's characters drift through life, experiencing longing and unfulfilled desire. The director's work is languid and romantic, capturing fleeting moments of beauty, and focusing on creating mood more than narrative.

Table 15.9 Key work of Wong Kar-wai

KEY PRODUCTS: WONG KAR-WAI	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES	COLLABORATORS	CONVENTIONS CHALLENGED
Days of Being Wild (1990) *Fallen Angels* (1995) *Happy Together* (1997) *In the Mood for Love* (2000) *2046* (2004)	• dreamy, floating camerawork – fleeting moments of beauty • characters are drifters, existential loners • style is languid, romantic, elliptical • rambling, anarchic process • themes of loss, longing and unfulfilled desire; transient, surface beauty of youth, experiencing social and sexual ennui • mood more important than narrative • use of 'dead time', as per **Italian neo-realism**	• Christopher Doyle (cinematography) • William Chang (designer, editor)	• Use of scripts

15.1 ACTIVITIES

1   View two of the works listed in this section – for instance, *KaBoom!* (2009) by PES and *Russian Ark* (2002) by Sokurov.

    Explain the stylistic intentions of the artwork. **Identify** the key features of the artwork in terms of representations, technologies and languages.

    Analyse how each artist has experimented with technologies. **Examine**, in detail, the component parts of two sequences and use this evidence to help you **make judgements** about the artist's experimentation.

    Appraise how the artists used technologies to fulfil their stylistic intentions. **Systematically examine** how technologies have been used through the artworks and **interpret** how these have supported the stylistic intentions. **Draw conclusions** about how significant each artwork is as an example of use of technologies to fulfil stylistic intentions.

2   Select a moving-image media artist from this section and view two or more of their key products.

    Explain the artist's style, **identifying** their key languages, technologies and representations.

    Explain what the internal, contextual and stylistic influences on the artist have been, **demonstrating** understanding gained from research. **Identify** the significant representations in the artist's work. **Clarify** any links to the artist's influences.

    Analyse how the artist has experimented with technologies and languages. **Evaluate** how such experimentations have constructed these representations. **Make judgements** as to whether such experimenting is key to the artist's stylistic identity.

    Appraise whether the artist is an *auteur*. **Systematically examine** your analysis and **draw conclusions** using specific examples from the artist's work.

    Synthesise a moving-image sequence in the style of your chosen artist. **Plan** and **sequence** audio and visual elements according to the artist's stylistic identity, **solving conceptual and technical problems** as you go.

CREATING EXPRESSIVE MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA ARTWORKS

Just as there are no hard-and-fast conventions of expressive moving-image media artworks, neither are there established processes around the design and production of these artworks.

Designing

Finding an initial idea is often the greatest challenge. An artist may have a message they wish to relay through moving-image media, a story to tell or an idea to explore. To find ideas, artists seek out, explore and reflect on influences. From a political event may come a message, and the form through which to express this message may come from a stylistic influence.

Developing an idea into an innovative moving-image media product requires creative thinking, and a willingness to explore different ways of thinking and doing. Sometimes these haven't been explored before or perhaps they are uncomfortable.

Shutterstock.com/Alhero

Figure 15.11 Experimenting to develop innovative ideas requires thinking outside of the box – reflecting on the known, the unknown and the untried, and giving it a go.

Once an initial concept or subject is identified, an artist may examine the idea from multiple perspectives and break it down into as many component parts as possible – any narrative, characters, locations, symbols, shots, audio and so on that the subject or concept brings to mind.

Next, an artist may further develop concepts by seeking influences, experimenting, trialling, testing, re-trialling from another perspective, reflecting, collaborating, and seeking feedback from peers and mentors.

Austrian–American screenwriter and director Billy Wilder is known for films such as *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), *Some Like It Hot* (1959) and *The Apartment* (1960). Framed and hanging in his office he had the words 'How would Lubitsch do it?', referring to fellow director Ernst Lubitsch, a major influence and mentor. Having a mentor, clear influences and a mantra helped Wilder generate ideas, solve problems and ensured that stylistic identity was clearly maintained through all processes of experimentation and creation.

A key principle in the generating and refining of concepts, common to all innovative and stylistic moving–image media artists, is asking the question 'what if?'

What if *I* …
- tried to approach this like a stylistic influence or mentor would?
- simplify the story further, or remove something from the shot?
- repeat a symbolic audio, visual or story element?
- merge unconnected shots, stories, styles, sounds and visuals through editing?
- extend, expand or literally magnify an idea, image, object or technique?
- transfer the idea, object or images to a different time, context or location, or approach from a different point of view?
- put the audience in the subject's shoes?
- give inanimate objects human qualities, such as through animation?
- layer images over images, or sounds over sounds?
- increase or decrease the size of a shot or element of *mise en scène*, or the volume or pitch of a sound?
- swap something else into the place of a key object or image?
- use editing to dissect or interweave ideas or emotions?
- twist subjects, characters or stories through use of *mise en scène*, shots, audio, effects or editing?
- hide ideas or objects within something else?
- portray the inverse of a symbolic element of *mise en scène*?
- link unrelated techniques, styles, forms, audio, concepts or objects to each other?
- ridicule an idea through humour, visual jokes or references?
- use camera movements, angles, lighting and audio to make an object gain further symbolism?
- create metaphors?

Useful creative thinking tools for generating ideas are synectics – the 'what if' thought triggers initially outlined by Nicholas Roukes. Having approached their concept from a variety of angles by asking 'what if I …', the artist will then reflect on any experiments and select the best option, structuring this into a cohesive design concept.

15.2.1
Synectics

Producing

Producing expressive moving-image media artworks is, at times, a spontaneous and fluid process. A product may be precisely planned down to each shot or it may organically evolve through multiple iterations of experimentation and reflection.

An artist influenced by the Dada movement, where process is the most important factor, will focus on experimentation – on play, chance and reflection. From these experimentations, the artist will create a final artwork with technologies, languages and representations that best align to their stylistic intent. However, an artist influenced strongly by German Expressionism is more likely to carefully plan each shot of their process, given the essential role to the style of *mise en scène* and the required props, costumes, settings, lighting and acting.

Synthesis of a design concept into a tangible product through the production process requires continual pause for reflection and review. Reflection and review of a concept is done by self, by peers and by mentors to evaluate and refine the artwork. New possibilities may emerge that lead to further refinement.

15.2 ACTIVITIES

1   **Explain** a key idea or concept for an expressive production. **Identify** any key audio, visual or symbolic moments.
    Analyse your concept. **Consider** it from multiple perspectives, so that you can **examine** as many of its component parts as possible (narrative, characters, locations, symbols, shots, audio, and so on) that the subject or concept brings to mind. **Make judgements** as to what you think are key elements.

2   **Construct** a concept for a short art film, **designing** using a format such as storyboard or treatment.
    Experiment with film languages and representations in order to create your design.
    Appraise why your favourite moving-image media products appeal to you by **systematically examining** their style, creative process or the identity they are expressing.
    Review your design concept according to these influences.
    Structure your film product, **systematically sequencing** your footage and audio according to your design.
    Experiment with technologies throughout your production process in order to fulfil your creative vision.
    Synthesise your production, **solving technical and creative problems** to **combine elements** into a final product.

DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTIONS AND MEDIA ARTISTS

Michael Moore (1954–)

Moore's documentaries and approach to filmmaking have been the subject of controversy on numerous occasions. Much of the criticism stems from the ways in which he represents truth. Prior to the 1980s, documentary filmmaking constructed truth in terms of absolute fact: the image that appears on the screen must have a strict correlation to the object recorded in reality. Moore's construction of the **real world** represented a departure from that basic convention. Much of his work received criticism for failing to convey truth in documentary form.

The biggest contention was over one of his earlier works, *Roger & Me* (1989). This documentary focused on the impact of closing the General Motors auto factories in and around Flint, Michigan. While the film received critical praise for its comedic approach to the social and economic problems of the factory workers, particular attention was levelled at how events were represented.

According to film critic Pauline Kael, the film was not a documentary because it modified the narrative in order to construct a more meaningful climax. Moore responded by admitting that events were reconstructed to elevate emotional investment, but he remained adamant that this did not change the nature of the work. For Moore, the work was still a documentary because it conveyed the **essence of truth**. This is precisely the point about Moore's approach to documentary. Truth does not necessarily need to be an exact representation – if the essence of the matter is communicated, then it doesn't matter how it appears in screen space because the message remains the same, Moore says.

Representing the 'essence of truth'

Moore's approach to truth is simply a subjective reworking of the representation of the real world. His documentaries transform truths in various ways, and in so doing reject the notion that there is only one objective way to read the historical world. To a large extent, the difference from earlier approaches to documentary is located in his perspective and attitude.

'I think of what I do as a work of journalism. It's more than the op-ed page, though. These are my opinions. My point of view.'

Michael Moore, documentary filmmaker

Although Moore's reshuffling of narrative events to heighten experience might violate documentary convention, his argument is presented in a much more accessible way. For Moore, that is the point of documentary – audience positioning. In *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), Moore employed the use of animation to convey a point about the real world. This was highly experimental at the time. It represents one of the many ways in which he created new conventions in representing truth.

The essential issue was that animation is typically reserved for children's television, and not the appropriate tool for an adult text such as documentary. However, Moore's decision to employ it was connected to the ideas surrounding the 'essence of truth' – truth could still be represented even if the camera was not used to capture the communication.

Figure 15.12 In *Bowling for Columbine*, Michael Moore discusses the fascination with guns with *South Park* creator and animator Matt Stone. After this scene, a highly innovative animated sequence was used to convey the history of guns in the US. This animated scene was created by Matt Stone specifically for the documentary.

Since the 1980s, documentary filmmaking has begun to embrace new directions in representing truth. Today, documentaries often mix fact with fiction film techniques in order to convey a point more effectively – a technique that Moore employed in *Bowling for Columbine*. Moore's approaches to filming and representing truth changed not only the way in which documentary is constructed, but also in how it is received.

Narrative structure

Moore's narratives follow a typical structure of orientation, complication, climax and resolution. For him, narrative is a matter of strategy rather than blind adherence to objective history. Because his interest lies in the power of his persuasion and argument, Moore will record truths but then reshape them to help push the complication in a more dramatic fashion. This has a run-on effect – the climax is elevated even further, and the catharsis or relief the viewer feels at the moment of resolution is more succinctly felt. Sometimes this process may require showing information in a different order to how it occurred in history. It also may require withholding information or omitting certain truths to elevate the engagement.

Documentary in general seeks to engage its viewer either through emotive or persuasive means. Moore's choices related to how his narratives unfold are merely an expression of that desire to engage emotionally and persuasively with viewers. In *Bowling for Columbine*, Moore chose to open with a comical scene where he obtains a shotgun by simply opening a bank account. This scene, along with its satirical content, shapes the argument being presented about the current state of gun laws in the US, and how this is related to the school shooting at Columbine. Although Moore's shotgun purchase occurred a few years after the Columbine shooting, and in many ways was entirely unrelated, the scene can be considered in the documentary as being historical. Moore used the scene to shape how he had interpreted the history of America's gun laws in the documentary. The scene is featured at the start of the documentary, as a part of the orientation, in order to position the viewer to think about gun control and the Columbine massacre in the same sentence.

Alamy Stock Photo/United Archives GmbH

Figure 15.13 Michael Moore purchases a shotgun in a bank to illustrate the state of gun control in the US. This scene, occurring a few years after the Columbine school shooting, is the opening for his documentary *Bowling for Columbine*. Moore used this scene to establish the key conflict in his narrative, and to help present a convincing argument for the viewer.

Aesthetics and style

Much of Moore's approach to aesthetics is related to his personal views about persuasion and its connection to the documentary genre. His stylistic choices are generally employed to elevate the likelihood of emotional investment. Thus, his aesthetic and style are informed by persuasion. Music is one of the ways in which Moore creates a certain tension that underpins his narrative. This is primarily because Moore wants to elevate his argument to be much more persuasive. During comical scenes, light-hearted music is used to support the humour. During emotionally charged scenes, Moore will strategically use sad music to amplify the effect of the 'acting' on the screen. In so doing, Moore's work begins to border on representation rather than fact. This is Moore's style and his personal identity as a documentary artist – it is about the essence of truth, not an exact replication.

Moore frequently uses cinéma vérité as his chosen means of communication. This shapes his work according to a more accessible realist aesthetic, but also converts his style to be more aligned with reality. The use of simple, handheld cameras creates a more intimate and engaging aesthetic that the viewer equates with real experience. The freedom of the cinéma vérité style allows Moore to improvise with more efficiency. Instead of being bogged down by large tripods and convoluted camera set-ups, Moore is able to move through space to capture what is needed. Again, this is about persuasion – that movement through space translates into a dynamic viewing experience on the screen. There is an allure in the way the camera has the power to bring the viewer into the action.

Moore's aesthetic and style are also informed by the use of direct address. Since he is a participatory filmmaker, Moore will sometimes use his presence in screen space to speak to the viewer. At other times, his voice appears as a part of a commentary, usually during emotionally charged montage sequences. In this way, Moore's voice functions as one of authority. The deep and richly toned nature of the voice lends itself to the ways in which viewers receive it as authoritative. This is not necessarily a result of Moore himself, but rather how male voice in documentary in general came to be equated with fact over time.

Persuasiveness

The viewer's role in the documentary process is simple – to be engaged. Engagement is not just a matter of emotional investment, even though Moore's texts are structured around the idea of entertainment. Persuasiveness is an engaging element that shapes the flow of information. A viewer must engage with the nature of that persuasiveness if the argument of the documentary is to be successful. That is not to say that a documentary does not have an accessible emotional plane. There are many examples of Moore's work where the real world is framed to evoke emotions.

Sicko (2007) features a lot of moving stories of medical patients who have suffered under an unfair medical system bent on profit. While not necessarily argumentative, its content is emotionally charged enough to convince the viewer of the plight being represented. Primarily, Moore makes use of logic and rhetoric in his information flow. Starting with a premise, he then proceeds through a well-reasoned argument in order to reach a logical conclusion.

Werner Herzog (1942–)

Werner Herzog's documentaries have received notable critical acclaim. As a result, they have become a very popular body of work consisting of over 70 films. Often compared to art-house cinema and Impressionism, Herzog's films have been the subject of fascination for many film critics. Herzog's understanding of film is a product of his time spent in the German New Wave movement, and much of his identity stems from this. However, at the same time, he was anxious to distinguish his own work as unique.

> 'The roll of unexposed celluloid you have in your hand might be the last in existence … so do something impressive with it.'
>
> **Werner Herzog**, documentary filmmaker

His approach to filmmaking is highly experimental and serves as an interesting case study in the intersection between art, personality and the goals of documentary. One of the chief characteristics of his work is the physical dimension of filmmaking that he often exhibits – a director in action, running around and being very much an active part of the diegesis. He once described filmmaking as athletic work.

Cinematography and narrative form

One of the best ways to exemplify Herzog's experimentation with documentary is through an examination of cinematography and narrative form in his film *Lessons of Darkness* (1992). Forgoing typical approaches to documentary via narrative structure and cinéma vérité, Herzog constructed a unique perspective of the real world that was entirely dependent on editing and style. This film was shot at the tail end of the Gulf War, and was recorded in a raw, direct manner. The focus of the footage is the burning oil fields of Iraq. The theme of the film hovers around anti-war sentiment – however, it grows to be much more than just that. *Lessons of Darkness* has been described as a work of art. The film employs long takes of the oil fields, shot from an aerial camera, which are then supported by beautiful music.

The purpose of this approach to sequence is to mirror the scope of the damage. As the oil fields seem to drift on and on into the distance, seemingly without end, so does the cinematography. As such, the film becomes a damning survey of wanton destruction, combining beautiful spectacle with violence. Herzog did not redefine documentary in this simple approach, but he did find a fascinating way to allow the truths of the real world to speak for themselves.

The use of the single long take meant that narrative structure was not needed. There was no need to orient information to lead to some kind of climax. The image is all the persuasion that the viewer needs. In some ways, the film is similar to how the poetic mode draws on the real world for its commentary. This film draws on the real world through an aestheticised composition, and a particular and simple shot scale. The film has a mesmerising effect on the viewer. Just before the imagery becomes entirely too boring, the sequence is interrupted by a simple interview in which a mother recounts the effects of war on her child. Then, just as abruptly as its opening shot, the film ends.

Documentary truth

Herzog's work is not always strictly a matter of objective **documentary truth**. A number of his films interrogate the differences between fact and fiction. Herzog will use any filmic device he sees fit to communicate his content. This unconventional approach to the design of documentary stems from a simple belief that the boundary between documentary and fictional film does not exist. For him, all stories convey truths – all films take facts and mould them in specific ways. There is no such thing as documentary, and no such thing as fiction film. There is only film.

Herzog believes that real life and fiction feed off each other. This gives him more freedom. Sometimes he might apply style, sometimes he might not. Sometimes he might use a script, and other times he might not. He does this in order to pursue an illumination of moments of truth. If his interaction with the real world happens to bend facts, then there is no cause for alarm, he says. He claims that he seeks 'ecstatic truth' – rare moments of illuminated truth accessible only through style. It is in this sense that he sees himself as more of an artist than a documentarian.

This kind of improvisation does at times lead to issues. However, for Herzog, this is just a fact of life. Mistakes will be made in the process of filmmaking. In many ways, mistakes serve to provide character to both the filmmaker and the text. For this reason, Herzog suggests to never do 'reshoots'.

15.3 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** at least two scenes from a documentary by Michael Moore. **Interpret** the text to determine what parts appear to be examples of actual truth, and then to determine what parts of the text appear to be examples of an 'essence of truth'. **Construct** a table that illustrates your answers. **Design** the table using the column headings 'Pre-1980s truth' and 'Post-1980s truth' and place your analysis answers in either column.

2 **Analyse** at least two scenes from a documentary by Michael Moore. **Examine** the similarities and differences between Moore's text and the various documentary movements. Is there a movement that fits neatly? Is there more than one movement that connects to Moore's text?

3 View one of Michael Moore's documentaries and one of Werner Herzog's documentaries. **Analyse** each documentary, **breaking them down** into **constituent parts** and **examining** each in their portrayal of truth. Compare the two texts using the features of documentary movements and styles as points of comparison or **criteria**. How are they similar? How are they different?

WORLD CINEMA

World cinema usually refers to films from countries outside of the English-speaking world. However, the term can also indicate films from countries outside of one's own country – as long as that excludes Hollywood! Before world cinema, Americans tended to use the term 'foreign films'.

Typologies of world cinema

A classification system for films from around the world has been prepared by Dr Stephen Crofts, an authority on national cinemas. He lists eight types of cinema:

1 **United States cinema** – may include US independent and also English-speaking cinema that imitates US cinema production style.
2 **Asian commercial cinema** – includes Hong Kong, Japan and Bollywood.
3 **Entertainment cinema** – in Europe and the developing world.
4 **Totalitarian cinema** – includes cinema in states such as Iran, where there is considerable political or religious control.
5 **Art cinema**
6 **International co-productions**
7 **Third cinema** – political and revolutionary in nature (see following section).
8 **Sub-state cinema** – small centres of filmmaking within a larger country; for example, French-speaking Quebec in Canada or possibly (since 1997) Hong Kong within China.

Another system was devised by Argentinian filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino. They list three cinema types in the world:

1 **First cinema** – large-scale commercial production along Hollywood lines. It includes Bollywood and Hong Kong cinemas. 'Third-world' India hosts a 'first cinema' commercial industry.
2 **Second cinema** – art-house, *auteur*-style and independent means of production represent the second mainstream type of cinema.
3 **Third cinema** – made up of political films of liberation from national and corporate oppression. Third cinema is not necessarily 'third-world' cinema. It can be made in the first world (developed countries). For instance, Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* (2004) might be called 'third cinema'.

Indian cinema

'Cinemas are the temples of modern India.'

Das Gupta, Indian film critic (1921–2011)

Indian movie production is twice the size of Hollywood's. The statistics are staggering. Close to 1000 new films each year are distributed to more than 13 000 movie theatres, with an average audience of 11 million each day. More than 800 languages are spoken in India, and there can be as many as 20 different language versions of the same film. The cinema is perhaps the sole model of national unity, says Indian cinema analyst Vijay Mishra.

Bollywood

Bollywood was originally a nickname for the Indian film industry, but it has now gained wide acceptance as a term for the Hindi-speaking film industry based in the city of Mumbai. The name is a combination of Hollywood and Bombay (the old name for Mumbai).

The Bollywood style of filmmaking is also used in other film centres throughout India. The Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam commercial cinemas produce films in their own languages but use Bollywood conventions.

Alamy Stock Photo/Pep Roig

Figure 15.14 Indian cinema produces more movies each year than Hollywood. In the cities as well as the villages, the cinema has an important cultural place in Indian daily life.

Cultural context

After their shows in Paris, the Lumière brothers brought the first moving pictures to India in 1896. The first Indian feature film was made in 1913, and it dealt with themes from Indian mythology – gods and demons in combat. Cinema became immensely popular very quickly, partly because most Indians could not read and had relied on an oral tradition of storytelling.

By the 1930s, India had developed a studio system very similar to that used in Hollywood. Just as the American cinema developed the classical Hollywood narrative, India developed its own pattern of storytelling. Many films had a mythological basis and used song and dance extensively. A Bollywood film of the 1930s could have 50 or 60 song sequences. As box office prices were relatively high, audiences wanted their money's worth, so the length of a feature film was established at about three to four hours.

Around the time of Indian independence from Britain, movie stars became prominent in Indian life, and magazines and newspapers began writing about their exploits. The huge success of the film *Mother India* (1957) showed the ability of the film industry to reflect the national mood and become a uniting force in Indian culture.

'Playback singers' gained wide acceptance at this time as the links between the film music industries developed. On-camera actors mimed to the off-camera voice of the playback singer. The practice became so widespread it was soon normalised. Even today, Indian audiences readily accept singing voices that are dramatically different from the actors' real voices.

Today, 70 per cent of India's population lives in villages. In the mid-20th century that figure was even higher, but by the 1970s the great movement to the cities had begun. Cinema-going audiences grew. Action and revenge movies became popular. Bollywood films began to take a mixed approach to filmmaking, combining all genres in a single movie. Sometimes this is referred to as Bollywood masala (spice). 'This can translate into the hero fighting a sinister politician in one scene and serenading his heroine, with forty dancers moving in unison behind him, in the next,' says Indian film expert Nasreen Munni Kabir.

'Most Bollywood films do not shoot what we know in the West as sync sound. Large numbers of Indian films are totally dubbed after the movie has been edited.

As much as 30 per cent of a film's financing can come directly from the "music launch" of an upcoming release. This usually takes place a few weeks before the general release of the picture.'

Larry Engelmann, Bollywood film colourist

In the west, the music recording industry developed separately from the movie industry. In India, these industries are intertwined. By the 1970s, films had become one of the prime sources of recorded music in India. Pop music was the song-and-dance music from Bollywood films. Cheap cassette players made it possible for the bulk of the population to listen to much-loved film soundtracks.

Television and video came to the Indian villages in the 1980s and 1990s, changing film viewing habits dramatically. Many villages pooled their funds to install satellite dishes. As a result, Bollywood suffered a temporary decline.

One way that Bollywood countered the influence of television in the 2000s was to increase the spectacle and glamour in movies. Another response was the rise of independent producers, many of whom rejected the escapism of traditional Bollywood in favour of **social realism**.

Features of Bollywood cinema

Like Hollywood, Bollywood makes many different kinds of films. India has a significant independent sector producing what might be called art films. However, some features of Indian filmmaking have remained consistent over the past century. Certain themes or discourses crop up regularly, even though filmmakers address them in different ways and from different points of view.

- **Length and time.** Bollywood films are usually between three and four hours long. Hindi films also structure time somewhat differently from Hollywood films. Flashbacks are used extensively. Stories are not always told using the sequential time structure of the average Hollywood blockbuster.
- **Indian nationalism.** Many films raise questions of Indian identity. Some films are concerned with the Indian nation and its history. Others touch on national identity only as it affects individuals.
- **Mythology.** Like many western epics or fantasy films, Bollywood films often refer to mythological characters such as gods and demons. They may also draw on traditional religious stories or folktales. For instance, *Love Story 2050* (2008) combines science fiction with an eastern mystical approach to reincarnation.

- **Traditional plots.** According to Indian film critic Asha Kasbekar, certain plot lines crop up frequently in Bollywood films.
  - **Family relationship plots** are very common and often focus on an individual character and his or her response to dilemmas relating to family duty. Family plots also often involve a search for a lost brother or a quest to be reunited with the character's mother. Arranged marriages are another common plot element. One film that demonstrates this concern with family is *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham …* (2001).
  - **Romance stories** are a main theme of Bollywood. In a typical story, an impoverished young man falls in love with a wealthy woman. Her father disapproves, and the young man must prove his worth – perhaps by saving her father's fortune, or even his life. Love triangles also feature regularly in Bollywood plots.
- **Song and dance.** Every film typically has five to ten songs, often dubbed by professional playback singers. Film soundtracks represent 75 per cent of the total music market. Most films feature at least two dance items. The dances are a loose mixture of traditional and western music styles.
- **Emotion.** Emotional appeal is considered very important in Indian film, says Asha Kasbekar. 'It must reach out and touch their hearts.' This tradition goes back to ancient Indian theatre, which is governed by eight emotions (love, humour, energy, anger, fear, grief, disgust and astonishment) and eight matching sentiments (erotic, comic, heroic, furious, apprehensive, compassionate, horrific and marvellous).
- **Spectacle.** Traditional Indian entertainment uses elaborate costumes, makeup and masks. Bollywood has incorporated these traditions into spectacular visual displays. Lavish sets and exotic locations make expensive backdrops for actors in glittering costumes. Love songs and dances are often performed as elaborate dream sequences. Often a new panoramic setting and complete costume change accompanies each verse of the song. Switzerland is a favourite location because it resembles the alpine beauty of war-torn Kashmir. *Salaam Namaste* (2005) was filmed in Melbourne. *Love Story 2050* was

filmed in Adelaide. Other films set in Australia include *Janasheen* (2003), *Chak de! India* (2007) and *Prem Aggan* (1998).

- **Stars.** It is possible that the stars in Bollywood are more important to a film's success than they are in Hollywood. Male stars earn much more than female stars, but both earn vast sums of money compared with ordinary Indians. Unlike Hollywood stars, Indian stars work on numerous films at once. It is not uncommon for them to be acting in 10 to 12 films at the same time. Huge hand-painted billboards of stars are all over Indian cities. These actors often appear in national television commercials as well, and many go on to pursue political careers.

- **Genre 'masala'.** Bollywood films almost always include a mix of family drama, action sequences, romance and music. Many genres can appear in one film. The primary focus is the emotion of the film, and the dominant emotion determines the style of film.

- **Censorship.** Just as Hollywood was constrained by the Hays Code (see chapter 3, page 64), Bollywood has its own censorship code. The focus is on perceptions of decency and morality. Nudity is forbidden. A discreet kiss is rarely permitted in a love scene. Seductiveness is therefore transferred to the song-and-dance sequences.

Reuters/Danish Siddiqui

Figure 15.15 A travelling cinema set up in the village of Palli. With nearly half of India's population living in villages, Bollywood filmmakers must take into account that their films may be shown on ancient projectors with the sound system turned up high to drown out the noise of cooling fans.

Indian movies

The following titles are among those that have been released in Australia on DVD. Many of them are by 'indie' (independent) directors rather than Bollywood directors.

Table 15.10 Indian films released in Australia on DVD

INDIAN FILM TITLE	DETAILS
Earth (1996)	While not strictly a Bollywood film, Deepa Mehta's feature *Earth* addresses Indian nationalism.
Salaam Bombay! (1988)	This moving film is in the Indian independent social realist tradition rather than commercial Bollywood style, but it makes a useful contrast. Many of the actors are amateurs and street children. It was funded internationally.
Monsoon Wedding (2001)	Although funded internationally, Mira Nair's film contains many of the traditional elements of Indian cinema.
Queen (2014)	This film by Vikas Bahl is often seen as feminist. A young woman is jilted by her fiancé and then decides to go on her honeymoon by herself. She travels alone in Europe and eventually thanks her ex-fiancé for freeing her from her old identity.
Raman Raghav 2.0 (2016)	Directed by Anurag Kashyap, this film is based on the story of a real-life 1960s serial killer who lived in Mumbai. The film is a violent thriller about a policeman and a murderer whose lives seem to mirror each other.

Influential Indian directors and identity

Anurag Kashyap (1972–)

Sometimes called the Tarantino of India, Anurag Kashyap is often hailed as an *auteur* in Indian film. He is often seen as having a signature style and tends to have a set of common themes in his work. Kashyap is often credited with having influenced Danny Boyle in the making of *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008). His films are well-known in world cinema circles and include *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012), *Ugly* (2013) and *Raman Raghav 2.0* (2016). Kashyap's work tends to exhibit the following features:

- brutal realism
- dark but very engaging stories
- noir-ish dystopian *mise en scène*

- angry arrogant characters struggling with personal issues
- experimental **soundscapes**
- innovative editing.

A key influence in Kashyap's filmmaking are his own life experiences. The experience of the migrant as someone perpetually in motion across global urban environments is a common theme in Kashyap's films, argues Kaushik Bhaumik of Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi. Most of his main characters are migrants in one way or another, says Bhaumik. However, they are migrants in a brutally greedy globalised world.

Figure 15.16 *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) is the gory story of the violent power struggles between three crime families. Some critics have likened it to the Australian film *Animal Kingdom* (2010).

Deepa Mehta (1950–)

The Indian–Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta became widely known with the release of her elements trilogy. Each of the three films focuses on the experience of Indian women in different ways. *Fire* (1996) focuses on controversial female desire, *Earth* (1998) looks at the experiences of women during India's battles for independence, and *Water* (2005) looks at the oppression of Hindu widows. Mehta moved from India to Canada in 1973. She sees herself as a hybrid person who moves between continents. The work of Mehta tends to focus on the following:

- the oppression and brutalisation of women in traditional societies
- women with a strong sense of inner power
- unconventional people undertaking journeys of new identity to break free from highly restricted traditional identities
- exotic features of traditional India
- migrant experiences.

Mehta has also produced a number of North American films that form another body of work. The Indian films are often about restricted identities and material poverty. The North American films are about life in overly individual societies where family and community ties have broken down. The lonely characters in these films yearn for the warmth of traditional extended families and close communities.

Figure 15.17 *Water* (2005) is set in 1938 and deals with the issue of Hindu widows. If their husband died, Hindu women were often faced with death themselves, or with banishment. The films of Deepa Mehta often deal with the restrictions on women in traditional societies, and the journeys the women make to be free.

Chinese cinema

Chinese-language cinema has at least three distinct branches, based in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Since 1997, Hong Kong has been incorporated into China as a special administrative region.

Mainland China also has a diverse cultural mix, embracing the majority Han people and at least 55 minority cultures.

Chinese cinema is taken to refer to the movie production of mainland China. Most of these films are produced by graduates from the state-approved Beijing Film Academy. Production output varies between 100 and 200 films a year.

Mainland Chinese films are subject to state censorship. The government-controlled press can also be highly critical of movies that pass censorship regulations but still meet with state disapproval.

Context

After the 1949 communist revolution, the government used movies as a propaganda tool. The Soviet style of filmmaking (see chapter 2, page 40) was the biggest influence during the Chairman Mao era. All foreign films were banned. Chinese films focused on revolutionary heroes and the struggles of working people to overcome oppressive landlords and capitalists.

Under Chairman Mao, romance stories were discouraged. Rather, young men and women shared political idealism and revolutionary goals. The state called this style of filmmaking 'socialist realism' or 'revolutionary romanticism'. Directors were ordered to integrate revolutionary movements into their films and to portray characters as class types. For instance, a hero would always be a factory or farm worker, whereas a villain would always be from the capitalist class – perhaps a landlord or a foreign factory owner.

Directors were also ordered to make their films as Chinese as possible. Often they would include symbols from traditional poetry or painting. For example, a shot might be framed by branches of blossoms in the style of traditional 'bird and flower' painting. Or a film might start with a long tracking shot or pan to represent the unrolling of a scroll.

After the opening of China to world trade in 1978, a new generation of filmmakers emerged. They were called fifth-generation directors because they were the fifth generation of directors to come out of the Beijing Film Academy since 1949. Unlike earlier graduates, they were allowed to begin directing straight away, and their films began appearing in the 1980s. Fifth-generation directors abandoned the socialist realist model in favour of a return to historical Chinese literary and artistic traditions. The best-known of these films are *Yellow Earth* (1985), *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991) and *Farewell My Concubine* (1993). Foreign distribution and funding has ensured these films are well known in the west.

Increasing industrialisation has brought many problems to China's cities. Despite state censorship, a 'sixth generation' of film-makers is beginning to depict these problems. Their films are often privately financed and shot in low-budget digital formats using handheld cameras. Sometimes they are filmed in secret. The underground nature of sixth-generation films has meant that western funding has tended to stay with fifth-generation directors. One sixth-generation film that is readily available in the west is *Beijing Bicycle* (2001).

Epics are not favoured by sixth-generation directors. Neither are mythical heroes and spectacle – so loved by western audiences. The films are likely to be structured around the daily lives of ordinary people. The narratives are sometimes called 'stream of life' stories because of their natural flowing style and non-political subject matter.

Films of broad international appeal are now being made in China. They star Chinese actors and are produced with a combination of Taiwanese and Hong Kong expertise. Some of these have toppled Hollywood films at the US box office. These internationally produced Chinese films are often in the *wuxia* genre – examples include *Hero* (2002) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004).

Features of Chinese cinema

Before the 1980s and the fifth generation of Chinese filmmakers, films kept to the socialist realism style. In particular, fifth-generation films are a return to classical Chinese traditions. Chinese painting has been a key source of inspiration. Some critics have referred to this as the 're-Orientalising' of Chinese film. According to Hao Dazheng, professor of film theory at the China Film Art Research Centre in Beijing, these films share many of the following features:

- **Traditional painting style.** Historically, Chinese painting uses a different sense of perspective from that used in western art since the Renaissance. Western art uses a perspective based on the point of view of one person, with the distance disappearing away from a single vantage point. Chinese landscape painting uses a multi-focal perspective that is based on multiple viewpoints. Chinese painting aims to represent spiritual rather than physical truths. In film, this multi-focal approach influences camera style, *mise en scène* and plot lines.
- **Large-scale framing.** In ancient Chinese thinking, humans are mere specks in nature's grand scheme. Chinese painting miniaturises humans in vast natural landscapes. Newer

Chinese films reflect this with an emphasis on scenic shots on a larger scale than is typical in western films. In fifth-generation films and beyond, more of the screen is occupied by space. High or low shots often fill the screen with earth or sky. If humans are represented as only a small part of nature, then there is no need for the traditional Hollywood sequence of shot sizes that move from long shot to close-up.

Bridgeman Images/Private Collection/Paul Freeman

Figure 15.18 In traditional Chinese painting, human figures are often dwarfed in a landscape that occupies most of the frame. Fifth-generation Chinese filmmakers have used the same kind of framing.

- **Medium shots emphasised.** Traditional Chinese social taboos did not allow for the sort of close-up, face-to-face interaction that is permissible in the west. Lots of close-up shots can be a source of uneasiness. Fifth- and sixth-generation filmmakers have preferred medium shots that show a character's activities but do not invite overly personal inspection.
- **Limited shot-size variation.** According to Hao Dazheng, Chinese directors avoid sudden changes of shots. In the west, a jump from a long shot to a close-up may give force and rhythm to a scene. In contrast, Chinese directors often use one primary shot for a whole scene.

Transitions to different shot sizes are very gradual. Zooms are viewed as an unnatural progression and are rarely used by fifth- and sixth-generation directors.

- **Lateral tracking through landscape.** The return to traditions has meant that lateral tracking shots are often used. In these shots, the camera moves sideways on tracks past a landscape, revealing an expanding natural environment, rather like multi-focal painting. Lateral tracking makes it possible to shift focus from one character and set of events to another, a little like unrolling an ancient scroll. However, lateral tracking can result in the *mise en scène* looking rather flat – it has length, but little depth.
- **Flat lighting.** The Beijing Film Academy's approach has been to use flat lighting rather than the traditional Hollywood studio style. They have not favoured sharply contrasted shafts of light in the low-key style. Flat lighting allows for a more neutral viewpoint from which audience members can take their own meaning from a scene.
- **Use of colour.** Drawing on the style of the ancient woodblock printers, Chinese filmmakers use primary colours to represent moods and to create episodes within a film. According to traditional Chinese cosmology, a colour can induce certain feelings. The meaning of the colour is not fixed – it can be changed by the content of the scene. For instance, in *Yellow Earth*, red at the beginning of the movie is a positive colour symbolising freedom. It is a masculine or 'yang' colour that is considered to be positive for males in the film, but in the scenes involving females it is considered to be negative.
- **Multi-focal narration.** Chinese storytelling tradition is based on the same ancient world view as Chinese painting, says Hao Dazheng. The narrative technique is multi-focal, with events and characters represented in parallel. In contrast, the Hollywood style more commonly places events in sequence, usually with one other subplot that joins the main plot at the resolution. Chinese narrative also tends to avoid descriptions of people's inner worlds. Instead, says Hao Dazheng, the movies try to affect the viewer through the plots and the vast scale of events.

State control in Chinese cinema

The Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China controls all filmmaking in China. The Department has the following powers:

- Film studio executives must meet with the Department to discuss quotas and targets as well as types of films to be made.
- All scripts must be submitted and approval gained before filming can begin.
- Films can be censored after they have been produced. The Department can demand that a film be reshot. To avoid this, communist party officials within each of the film studios must make sure that the film is in line with government policy.
- The Department is able to control film release dates and their distribution. For instance, if a film is controversial, the release date can be delayed indefinitely until the subject matter seems no longer relevant. An outright ban is also within the Department's powers.

Censorship of nudity, graphic violence and explicit sexual content is a form of social control exercised by the Department. Political controls are also applied to films. Political control has become the main activity of the Department. Films must not question the government or show negative social or environmental conditions. Since the 2000s, there was some slight relaxation of the controls, allowing films such as *Beijing Bicycle* to be released. However, since 2012 there has been a new tightening of regulations.

Figure 15.19 *Beijing Bicycle* is a film from the so-called sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers. It deals with issues facing people in China today – industrialisation, unequal wealth distribution and pollution. Earlier Chinese movies masked this kind of criticism by setting their narratives safely in the past.

Effect on Hollywood films

Chinese censorship has had an influence on Hollywood movies. The Chinese government restricts the number of foreign films it allows into China. In 2017, only 34 big-budget films were imported. Because of this, Hollywood studios are engaging in co-productions with Chinese companies as these are not restricted by the quotas.

The money to be made in China is enormous. *Warcraft: The Beginning* (2016), the film adaptation of the digital game *World of Warcraft* (2004–), made $25 million at the US box office on its opening week. The same film made $156 million on its opening week in China. Financially, it is very important to Hollywood studios to get films into China without censorship. This means Hollywood is cutting out scenes that may offend the Chinese government and including scenes that may appeal to the Chinese market.

Mainland Chinese film

Some mainland Chinese films from the fifth- and sixth-generation directors are available on DVD in specialty video stores in Australian capital cities.

Table 15.11 Chinese films released in Australia on DVD

CHINESE FILM TITLE	DETAILS
Yellow Earth (1985)	The fifth-generation director Chen Kaige is well known in the west. *Yellow Earth* is regarded as the first film of the fifth generation. It is the film that demonstrated the new Chinese film language with its return to traditional national styles.
Farewell My Concubine (1993)	This movie, also by Chen Kaige, gives an overview of China's turbulent 20th-century history through the eyes of two stars of the Chinese Opera. It was banned twice in China before its international release.
Beijing Bicycle (2001)	This film by Wang Xiaoshuai, from the sixth-generation of filmmakers, is concerned with the issues facing ordinary Chinese people as industrialisation rapidly changes their lives. The film pays homage to Vittorio De Sica's Italian neo-realist film *Bicycle Thieves* (1948).
City of Life and Death (2009)	This film tells the story of the 1937 Japanese massacre of Chinese citizens at Nanking. The estimated death toll of this massacre is between 100 000 and 300 000.
Stray Dogs (2013)	This film by Tsai Ming-liang depicts the impoverishment of a family forced into homelessness. The film examines life in China as it industrialises but leaves some people behind.

Influential Chinese directors and identity

Jia Zhangke (1970–)

A leading sixth-generation filmmaker, Jia Zhangke has combined fiction film and documentary elements in artistic ways. In his films, he has highlighted the problems caused by China's transformation into an industrial and commercial powerhouse. He has also highlighted the problems caused by globalisation. Jia's work tends to focus on the following aspects:

- alienation and social dislocation caused by industrialisation
- migrant worker experiences
- those who fall between the cracks as a formerly communist China becomes an emerging capitalist China
- weaving together of documentary and fiction elements
- occasional bizarre surrealist elements
- use of slow long takes
- use of extreme violence in his later films to highlight injustices.

Figure 15.20 *A Touch of Sin* (2013) is a very violent film and represents a break from Jia Zhangke's earlier works. Recent violent incidents in China have been widely circulated on Weibo, the Chinese version of Twitter. The film is organised around four of those events and focuses on four very different characters. Jia uses these to draw attention to the social inequality and injustices in post-communist China.

Ning Hao (1977–)

Probably one of the most commercially successful directors in China today, Ning Hao graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 2003. Although one of China's most popular directors, Ning has developed a very personal style. Well-known films include *Breakup Buddies* (2014), *No Man's Land* (2013) and *Guns and Roses* (2012). Some critics compare his movies to *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) or *Pulp Fiction* (1994). His work focuses on the following aspects:

- black humour, as used in *Breakup Buddies*
- absurdism
- road movies (China is beginning to make these as the car becomes popular)
- greed
- violence.

Latin-American cinema

Third cinema (see page 371), a term used to describe revolutionary political films, originated in Latin America. However, greater commercialisation has meant that South American films are becoming more entertaining and less political. Mass mobilisation of the people to overthrow fascist governments is less often the goal of modern films. This is partly because of the slow spread of democracy in South America since the beginning of the 21st century, says Latin American film specialist B. Ruby Rich.

Latin-American film refers to the films of the 20 countries within continental South America and Central America, and the nearby Hispanic islands of the Caribbean. The region is called Latin America because the primary languages spoken are Spanish and Portuguese. These are European languages descended from Latin – the language of the ancient Roman Empire.

Many Latin-American countries do not have longstanding, internationally recognised film industries. The key film industries of South America are located in the larger countries, such as Mexico, Brazil, Chile and Argentina, and also in Cuba.

Context in Latin-American cinema

Many of the nations of South America have had similar histories and shared social problems. The continent is torn by class conflict and huge gaps between rich and poor. Dictatorships and corrupt governments have been common. Drug lords and organised crime have created further problems in some countries.
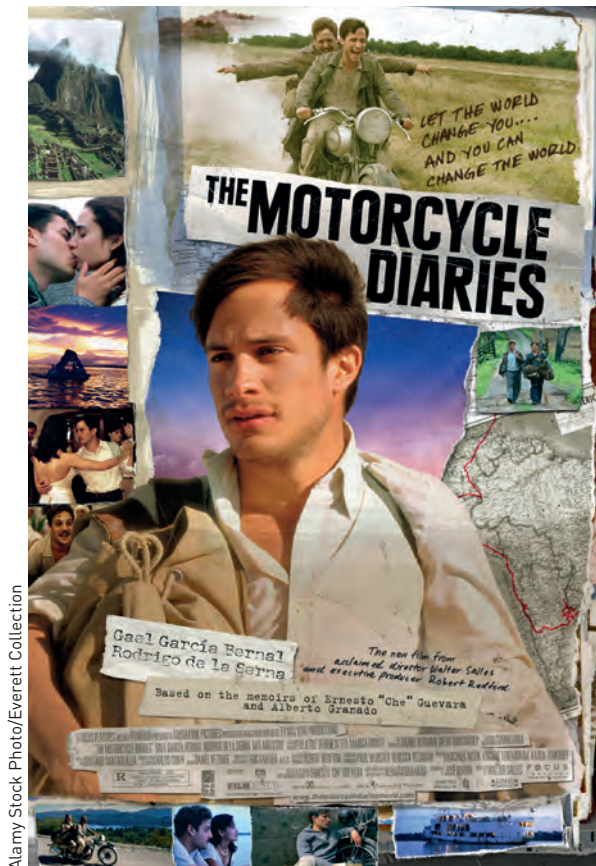
Cuba

In 1959, the US-supported dictatorship in Cuba was overthrown by a communist revolution led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. Castro

'There is an international division in cinema. Hollywood administers entertainment, Europe art, and Latin America social conscience.'

Ambrosio Fornet, Cuban film critic and scriptwriter

became president and, facing hostility from the US, formed an anti-US alliance with the Soviet Union. Moscow provided funds to Cuba – partly in return for a base close to the US. With state funding, the Cuban film industry thrived. Cubans had always been avid cinema-goers, and attendances at film theatres provided a strong support base for the industry. Cuban films became a significant force in Latin America. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 plunged Cuba into an economic crisis aggravated by the continuing US trade ban. Funding for films dried up. Now, only between four and 12 films are produced in Cuba each year. Among the best-known Cuban films are *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), *Strawberry and Chocolate* (1993) and *Guantanamera* (1995).

Figure 15.21 Third cinema, meaning revolutionary political films, is a term first used in Latin America. *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004) traces the early adventures of the Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara.

Mexico

In 2000, Mexico became a democracy after 71 years of one-party rule, although public concerns remain about the conduct of elections. The Mexican film industry is the most productive and the wealthiest in Latin America. It provides competition with nearby Hollywood for the Spanish-speaking audiences of Latin America and the southern US. At its peak in the 1960s, the Mexican industry was producing hundreds of films each year. Whereas many Latin-American filmmakers rely on state funding, most Mexican films are commercially funded. Three Mexican films have been highly successful in the English-speaking world: *Like Water for Chocolate* (1992), *Amores Perros* (2000) and *Y Tu Mamá También* (R-rated, 2001).

Chile

Chile had a democratic tradition but fell under the military regime of General Augusto Pinochet in 1973. Thousands were killed in the brutal intimidation exercises that followed. When his dictatorship ended in early 1990, Chile began its slow transition back to democracy. However, Pinochet had effectively destroyed the film industry. During the Pinochet years, many filmmakers continued to work in exile. After Pinochet, film became an important therapy for the nation, as tragic stories that had been suppressed for 17 years were told for the first time. Two of the most successful films from this time are *The Frontier* (1991) and *Amnesia* (1994).

Argentina

Once a wealthy country like Australia, Argentina was ruled by various forms of civilian and military dictatorship from the 1930s until just after the Falklands War in 1983. Currency troubles, hyperinflation and a huge international debt have led to great poverty and social unrest in Argentina. The country's film industry is small, but it has had success at international art-house festivals. Juan José Campanella is internationally widely known, and Gastón Duprat and Mariano Cohn are two

collaborating film directors and producers who have also created many art-house films. *The Man Next Door* (2009) is perhaps their most famous on the international festival circuit.

Brazil

Brazil, now a democracy, was once controlled by various military dictatorships from the 1930s. The most recent military government held power from 1964 until 1985. Brazil is the largest South American country and also has the largest Catholic population in the world. Great poverty exists side by side with great wealth. Apart from sub-Saharan Africa, Brazil has the most unequal distribution of wealth in the world. About 10 per cent of the population owns half the wealth of the country.

For most of Brazil's history, film production has been sponsored by the state and subject to strict censorship. After a disastrous collapse in the 1990s, the film industry has been revived with increased private investment. About 35 to 40 films are made each year, but production levels vary. A recent Brazilian film that was widely distributed in English-speaking countries is *Central Station* (1998).

Themes in Latin-American cinema

Many of the following features appear in Latin-American films:

- **Magical realism.** A popular style in Latin-American literature and film, magical realism combines everyday reality with supernatural events. Spirituality, folklore and legend merge with the physical world to create a 'magical' reality. Characters seem to accept both real and magical events as of equal significance. For instance, in *Like Water for Chocolate* (1991), Tita's cookery has magical powers of seduction.
- **Social realism.** Many Latin-American filmmakers have used the social realist style (see 'film movements', page 388) to focus on the political and social realities of life for the vast numbers of poor in South America. Casting non-professional actors in these films, such as the street children in *Central Station* (1998), adds to the social realism.
- **Historical themes.** With more than 500 years of interaction between Spanish and Portuguese Europeans and native South Americans (Amerindians), historical themes are a common feature of Latin-American films. Films focus on stories of the ancient cultures of the Aztecs

and Incas, Amerindian folklore, and stories of revolutions and political events. There are perhaps two main reasons for this focus on history. One is that the distance from the current political events makes historical subjects safer territory for state-sponsored filmmakers. The other is that damaged societies need to come to terms with their troubled histories in order to move on.

- **Religion.** Latin America has the world's largest Catholic population and a growing evangelical Christian presence. Some film critics say religion is a popular theme because these communities have been abandoned for so long they no longer expect anything from Earthly powers.
- **Gender and families.** Critics note variations among Latin-American countries, but a concern with families and gender relations is a common theme. Charles Ramírez Berg argues that recent Mexican cinema represents masculinity in crisis. Traditional machismo has been shattered, and films seek to redefine masculinity. Often women are portrayed as victims in this crisis. Sometimes the figure of an absent or failed father may symbolically represent the failure of the government or the state. In Brazilian film, children are used symbolically, says Ismail Xavier. 'They feature as an innocence not yet polluted, but about to be if society continues to be what it is.' This idea can be seen in *Central Station*.
- **Economic and political themes.** These themes are never far from the surface in Latin-American films, even if they appear in a disguised form. Directors often see filmmaking as a chance to send a political message. Many films have dealt with:
  - social class and the huge gap between rich and poor
  - economic policies that please world bankers but leave the poor worse off
  - national interest versus US business imperialism
  - corrupt or incompetent government agencies
  - the cruel and ruthless growth of cities and urban slums
  - consumerism and greed that is valued over human life
  - brutal intimidation, whether by governments or by drug lords
  - organised crime.

Latin-American movies

Figure 15.22 *Central Station* features a real street child as the lead actor. The former shoeshine boy turned actor used the success of the film to help other abandoned children he had left behind.

Table 15.12 Latin-American films

LATIN-AMERICAN FILM TITLE	DETAILS
Like Water for Chocolate (1992)	This is a romance movie in the magical realist style. The film is set during the Mexican Revolution (1910–17). Although it has been one of the most successful Mexican films ever, critics say the movie masks the problems of life during the 1990s by focusing on a safe and conservative past. The film was sponsored by the Salinas regime during the time of one-party rule.
Central Station (1998)	Unlike earlier films, *Central Station* deals with the abandoned children of Brazil in a positive way within the social realist style. The lead character, a nine-year-old boy, is offered hope in the form of a mother figure who saves him from the fate of most street children. Through the boy's journey, the movie also offers hope of reconstruction for Brazil. *Central Station* features a real street child in the main role. In real life, the former shoeshine boy turned actor used the success of the film to help other abandoned children he had left behind.
The Motorcycle Diaries (2004)	Based on an Argentinean book, this film is a co-production starring a number of well-known Latin-American actors. Officially the film is Brazilian. It is a road movie that recounts the early adventures of freedom fighter Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, one of the leaders of the Cuban revolution. His experiences as a young man on a motorcycle trip through South America sow the seeds of his revolutionary ideals.

Influential Latin-American directors and identity

Figure 15.23 Argentinean filmmaker Juan Jose Campanella's film *The Secret in their Eyes* (2009) has been likened to a contemporary *film noir*. The film is set in two time periods – in 1974 during a time of great political unrest, and in 1999 as human-rights abusers from the 1970s and 1980s were granted pardons.

Juan Jose Campanella (1959–)

Argentinian filmmaker Juan Jose Campanella is a well-known director in Argentina and throughout Latin America. He began studying as an engineer, but reportedly switched to a career in film after watching *All That Jazz* (1979) shortly before completing his degree. His films are not regarded as experimental, but nor are they standard commercial products. They tend to exhibit the following features:

- high production values with traditional Hollywood continuity editing (see chapter 2, page 41)
- the use of genre – for example, his film *The Secret in Their Eyes* (2009) has been described as 'Argentinean noir'
- concerns with injustice, and repressive and violent governments
- themes of memory and looking back.

Ciro Guerra (1981–)

Colombian filmmaker Ciro Guerra made his breakthrough with *Embrace of the Serpent* (2015), set in the Amazon. Guerra focused on the jungle because it used to represent half of the country of Colombia and contained many different cultures. Much of it has gone now. Guerra's films have dealt with the following themes:

- mythology and mysticism
- pre-history and encounters with westerners
- Indigenous peoples and remote locations.

Iranian cinema

Iranian cinema has grown to become recognised globally, carrying as much critical weight as French and Italian cinema. Its work is described as highly engaging and challenging in its representation of everyday life in Iran.

Iranian cinema refers to film works that are filmed and produced in Iran. Stories often feature life under the rule of a conservative religious government.

Cultural context

Iranian cinema developed shortly after the Islamic revolution era of the late-1970s. The newly established government supported the idea of a film industry and enabled filmmaking to develop under the new government of Ayatollah Khomeini. Although the Iranian cinema was free to film stories, there was a significant amount of constraint set in place by the government. These constraints were all informed by the fundamentalist religious context of the nation.

Representation of public and private life was heavily scrutinised and shaped in accordance with religious instruction. Iranian films are prohibited from representing any physical contact between men and women, including romantic intimacy. Any female characters appearing in stories have to wear a veil along with traditional dress. Most importantly, there are to be no representations of criticism set against the prevailing government. These constraints make it difficult for stories to be earnest or true accounts of Iranian life, but many filmmakers break the rules and tell these kinds of stories anyway.

Features of Iranian cinema

Many of the features of Iranian cinema evolved in response to the government's constraints, in order to enable film to approach contemporary Iranian social reality.

- **Poetic realism.** The influence of Italian neo-realism and French New Wave on Iranian filmmaking cannot be ignored. Realism is a measure of Iranian cinema. Stories often draw on realist aspects either through social content (where unfolding action reflects real life) or through aesthetics (where the image is afforded some kind of style to resemble real life). Realism is also given a poetic slant in Iranian film by directors who merge creative intent with various representations. This is not a departure from neo-realism – instead it is a simple prioritising of directorial intent so that the filmmaker's perspective on the story becomes one with the aesthetic of the film. The colours of objects around a character might change to indicate a psychological state – for example, a cart of fruit might turn grey. The shot is no longer objective in the sense of realism but is a vision of sorts, originating from the character.
- **Static imagery.** The use of the long-held freeze frame is a common device in Iranian cinema. This is a simple device that usually appears as the closing image of a film. It is executed though a fade to black. The shot usually features the lead character in the middle of an action or in accentuated movement. As a device, this kind of shot comes from French New Wave, seen famously in François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959). The purpose of the shot was to represent a fracturing of everyday life – a kind of 'de-dramatisation' by freezing it for contemplation.
- **Disconnected spaces.** Most Iranian films feature a quest through mundane and realistic locations. The journey is often described as a meandering itinerary, which changes locations to be more like disconnected or unrelated spaces. Cinematography is used to hide the geography of the diegesis, so it becomes difficult for the viewer to tell where action is specifically unfolding. Yet as the film progresses, the locations shift and change aesthetically. The ways in which characters become lost in this zone are connected to an overt political commentary.

Iranian movies

Table 15.13 Iranian films

IRANIAN FILM TITLE	DETAILS
The Runner (1984)	Amir Naderi's film *The Runner* features a story about a young boy who, while struggling to make ends meet, expresses joy in his passion for running. Simple in nature and execution, the film became celebrated. Comparisons were drawn with Italian neo-realism through its use of untrained actors and gritty realist aesthetics.
Where Is the Friend's Home? (1987)	This film is a tale of schoolboy Ahmed's quest to return a homework book to his friend Mohamed. Abbas Kiarostami's story of mistaken property is simplistic yet visually arresting in its execution and delivery. Knowing that the teacher will expel Mohamed for doing his homework in the wrong book, Ahmed sets out on a quest across his hometown to return the homework book to its rightful owner. The film features many scenes of Ahmed running up and down the screen in a random manner, representing the haphazard life of some Iranians.
A Separation (2011)	This Academy Award-winning film by Asghar Farhadi is about a middle-class marriage breakdown and the fallout that lands on the innocence of their daughter. The film is often praised for its simple premise yet complex delivery, not only in narrative but in the subtext as well. The characters are quite richly portrayed through moral, social and psychological dimensions. In so doing, the film casts a spotlight on an often overlooked side of Iranian everyday life.
The Salesman (2016)	A young couple are rehearsing for a production of American playwright Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. The house they are in begins to crumble around them – a metaphor for Iranian society. The film depicts the conflicts that women in modern Iran face. It examines the social and religious roles that are gradually changing, even though it is from within an oppressive society.

Influential Iranian directors and identity

Asghar Farhadi (1972–)

Asghar Farhadi is possibly Iran's most successful filmmaker with films such as *The Salesman* (2016) and *A Separation* (2011). Farhadi has received numerous film awards including two Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film. The thematic content of his work primarily focuses on social and class structures, expressed in the context of Iran as well as religion. He achieves this by using editing techniques such as cross–cutting and tonal montage to interrogate the relations among class and gender in social contexts. The mixture of imagery creates a kind of disorientation that acts as a commentary on certain aspects of Iranian everyday life.

Abbas Kiarostami (1940–2016)

Abbas Kiarostami received many awards for his work, including the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for *Taste of Cherry* (1997). His style of storytelling differs from one film to the next. However, he does have a tendency to use child protagonists, rural village settings and an odd preference for shooting conversation in cramped spaces, such as the inside of a car. His stylistic approach is very smooth and graceful, making use of tripods for cinematography quite frequently, as well as drawing on documentary-style shooting for realism. His work is characterised in terms of a measured contemplation of Iranian life that stems from the use of carefully designed stylistic imagery.

Tahmineh Milani (1960–)

Some filmmakers have been jailed for their work. Female filmmaker Tahmineh Milani was arrested and charged her film *The Hidden Half* (2001) that questioned the current government. She was also responsible for other breaches of filmmaking constraints by telling stories about couples who resort to crime to survive their social conditions, and a couple out of wedlock being represented as living together in a romantic relationship. Much of her directorial identity is shaped around the political conditions of Iran. Her films raise questions about the rules imposed by religion in everyday life, along with suggesting that the current restrictions are unfair. Her style is informed by realism, forgoing lavish cinematography for a grittier handheld approach to the visual image. In this way, she is able to draw connections between the imagined world of her stories and actual lived experience.

15.4 ACTIVITIES

1 Using one of the typologies of world cinema (see page 371), provide examples of representative films for each of the categories.
   Explain how the film suits its place in the typology, clarifying its location in the classification based on your understanding of its meaning.
   Appraise the worth of the two typologies of world cinema. Do you believe they are adequate? Are there cinemas from some countries that don't fit? Are there other types of films? Make a judgement about the status of the typologies in the contemporary globalised world.

2 One *New York Times* movie critic believes the typical Bollywood movie can easily set world records in 'genre pile-ups' (number of genres in one film). This may well be true for many other movies of this genre. Select an Indian cinema movie you have access to.
   Construct a list of the western genres it seems to bundle together.

3 Select a Bollywood movie you have access to.
   Analyse its use of traditional ideas of emotion, examining which of the classical emotions and/or sentiments is dominant. Consider which others are present and evaluate their relative strengths in the story.

4 Compare a Bollywood movie and its use of song and dance with a typical Hollywood musical.
   Analyse the way Bollywood inserts musical sequences into the narrative. Compare this with the way Hollywood moves narrative forward through music and lyrics.

5 Australian director Baz Luhrmann visited the Mumbai film industry before making *Moulin Rouge* (2001).
   Appraise the significance of the influences from Indian cinema that can you see in this film. Draw conclusions about the degree to which Bollywood has influenced Hollywood through the musical.

6. View a film made by a Chinese fifth-generation director and compare it with one made by a sixth-generation filmmaker.
   Analyse the differences you see in subject matter and in characterisation. Consider any similarities you see in filming style. Make judgements about the styles of the two generations.

7 Select a landscape shot from a well-known fifth-generation film, such as *Yellow Earth* (1985), and also select a landscape painting from traditional Chinese art.
   Analyse the two works, breaking each down into constituent parts and considering the similarities and differences. Make judgements about the relationship between the two art forms.

8 Select a contemporary Chinese film.
   Appraise the film, referencing its use of the new Chinese film language (as outlined by critic Hao Dazheng, see page 376) and interpreting how the film applies the language.
   Explain your findings in a presentation to the class, showing excerpts of the film, identifying where it follows these conventions and where it breaks them.

9 Select a Latin-American film you have access to.
   Explain the concerns the film raises, providing additional information about them beyond what is in the film, and report to the class on each situation.
   Appraise its status as a film that addresses social and political concerns. Interpret the point of view in the film and whether the film presents a sense of hope about the situation. Make a judgement on the extent to which improvements have been made since the time in which the film was set.

10 View a Latin-American film that uses the magical realist style.
   Explain the use of symbolism in the film and identify the ways in which the fantastical elements are woven into the narrative.
   Analyse the amount of time the film spends exploring human emotion, expressing this as a proportion of total time. Consider to what extent the film uses folklore as a basis.
   Explain the folklore basis of the magical element, using the internet to provide additional information and researched examples.

11 Use the internet to research the funding received by a Latin-American film of your choice.
   Explain the nature of the funding, identifying whether the film has been funded by state or commercial funding (or both).
   Analyse the themes in the film, breaking them down into constituent parts that reveal the points of view the film is taking.

Appraise the **significance** of the funding source, **making judgments** on the extent to which the funding source may have influenced the themes of the film. For films that have international funding, take into account what world audiences may expect in a South American film. **Draw conclusions** about how this may have influenced the filmmakers.

12 Imagine Australia is the 'back lot' for the production of a film by a crew from India, mainland China, Latin America or Iran. You are the director.

Construct a 'pitch' for the film that follows many of the conventions of the national cinema and deals with familiar discourses or themes. **Outline** the planned narrative and some of the complications.

Explain how the traditions of the national cinema will be explored in fresh ways. **Identify** the conventions of film language and the stylistic production elements you will use to communicate with the home audience. **Identify** the locations you will use and **clarify** how these will be acceptable to an audience 'back home'.

Construct a workplace health and safety risk management plan, and explain how any action sequences will be fully supervised.

Synthesise the production, filming it and editing it into a resolved moving-image media product. **Solve** any **technical** or **creative problems** you encounter as you go.