

SUMMER SCHOOL 2011 AT MOMA PS1

“HOMEWORK” ASSIGNMENT

Prior to the first class session, please visit the study center on the 3rd floor of the museum, “Summer School presents Gus Van Sant and James Franco: My Own Private River” before the first class session and prepare responses to the following questions:

* THE TRANSMODAL: FROM VISUAL TO PICTORIAL ILLUSTRATION

Describe a scene in which something one might expect to happen subsequently does NOT happen or is not shown to happen but is suggested instead by the film's turn from the depiction of dialogue to the depiction of pictorial setting, for example, using architecture or nature not just to convey mood but to extend the logic of the action. Words into images; words as images; images speaking.

* THE METAPHORICAL: THE JOURNEY AS (OR AGAINST) PLOT

In many works of film and literature, a central metaphor for action is conveyed by the notion of a Journey. In this, the place of origin establishes the protagonist's problem, and the destination is held up as the possible solution. Describe one film from the show that conforms to this pattern and one which does not, and explain the basis of this fundamental contrast. Cite specific scenes from each.

* THE MORAL: THE STRUGGLE FOR PERSONAL TRUTH

Morality can be understood the tension between the expectations of a constructed collective order and the innate forces of one's nature and character. Describe several ways in which any single film of your choosing explores how its characters struggle to be truthful to themselves in the face of what happens. Do you feel there is a moral quality to the film? If so, what is it? If not, why not, given its subject matter?

* THE EXCEPTIONAL: IMPLICITNESS AND SECOND LOOK DISCOVERY

Name two features -- one visual and the other psychological (non-visual) -- of any single film in the show that do not seem obvious until a subsequent viewing. Why are these subtle phenomena less obvious or resistant to a superficial or initial reading? These can include such aspects of the film as the apparent intention of a director's shooting style; the apparent nature of a certain character; the apparent passage or use of time; etc.

* THE CINEMATOGRAPHICAL: TECHNIQUE AS VOICE

Select one film from the show and describe one or two filmic techniques that are applied throughout much of the work and speculate on the connection between the technique and the mood or effect that the director may have wanted to convey in support of the story.