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Between Image and Text: Tensions in the art of Hans Haacke and Jenny Holzer

Eilish O'Donohoe
Swansea Institute of Higher Education

Abstract

This article considers the nature of the relationship between image and text in a visual work by the artists Hans Haacke and Jenny Holzer. It proposes a need for a formal tool of analysis for image-text works and in the process offers an original systemic-functional semiotic model as a methodology for analysis of dual-coded works. M.A.K. Halliday's linguistic model of analysis (1978), adapted by Michael O'Toole (1994:24) for the analysis of painting, has been modified for analysis of image-text artworks, thus offering a more challenging and enriching experience in the production and perception of meaning in such works. The model allows for a shared language in the negotiation of meaning and helps the viewer to articulate what is being experienced on engaging with the works. The model also facilitates the active construction of meaning without necessarily needing a detailed knowledge of the provenance, politico-social, philosophical and academic debates leading up to current developments in the acceptance of such works - although all such cultural references would indeed enrich perception - thus empowering the viewer. This could have profound effects on the teaching of undergraduate programmes in the Visual Arts that are concerned with the intersection of image and text, whereby design students are enabled to both analyse visual messages all too often taken for granted and to create work in the knowledge that where there is choice there is meaning. The direct relationship between the typographic semiotic and the rendered image is emphasised. The focus of this relationship is one of linguistic signifiers, the consideration of the typographic connotations of those words, a range of social meanings produced, the material significance of the compositions and how all of this may be decoded through a matrix of systems of semiotic choices. The relationship between visual and visible language, and the physical and social contexts in which it operates is emphasised.



Introduction

In offering a systemic-functional model for the analysis of painting, Michael O'Toole (1994:4) stresses that

semiotics – the study of sign systems- can assist us in a search for a language through which our perceptions of a work of art can be shared. I believe that we should start with the impact the particular work has on us in the gallery, or even in a book of reproductions, but this semiotic approach will also allow us to relate the nature of this impact to the scene portrayed...

This is in reference to much gallery viewing emphasising other discourses surrounding our perception of visual works; provenance, the voice of the expert, art theory, history and the social, economic and political factors which can preclude a direct, primary engagement with the visual work, leading to a sense of estrangement rather than recognition.

The impetus of this study shares O'Toole's concerns, but rather from a pedagogical point of view based within the art-school context. It aims to demonstrate the efficacy of applying a systemic-functional semiotic model to the domain of image-text works which empowers the student, as a viewer, to consider such works without necessarily having the cultural references already mentioned, even though these references would obviously benefit perception. Engaging with the work in the gallery or in reproduction, the student/viewer can be faced with an enormous amount of information and theory which can be confusing, and which can often lead to aberrant interpretations.



FUNCTION of → COMMUNICATION LEVEL ↓	INTERPERSONAL	COMPOSITIONAL	REPRESENTATIONAL
Work in Physical Context	Environment Atmosphere Aura Mood	Framing Scale	Public / Private
Work as a Whole	Rhythm Frame Light Scale Perspective Mood Position Gaze	Proportion Geometries Scale Diagonals Rhythm Line Horizontals Verticals Colour Pattern Framing	Portrayal Theme; ideology, e.g. social, cultural, political, economic etc.
Relations between sections of Composition	Relative Prominence Centrality / Marginality Scale Presence Range of Moods:e.g. Heavy/Light: Hot/Cold	Relative Position Alignment / Symmetry Interplay / Harmony Coherence	Static / Dynamic Permanent / Impermanent Order / Disorder Word connotation Image connotation
Combination of Elements	Gaze Stance Contrast: scale light line colour	Relative Position Materiality: material chosen Process of making: cast/painted Process of inscription: carved/ photocopied	Weight Pattern Rhythm Size Scale Depth
Element	Stylization Range of Moods: Engaged / Disengaged	Shape Tone Texture Line Colour	Mark: Word /denotation Image /denotation

Fig. 1 Systemic – Functional Semiotic Model for Multimodal Visual Compositions

The model provides a way of talking about what one perceives and how to engage in an immediate analysis and discussion of the work in question, in a rigorous and sustained manner. The model also aids in the production of the student's own work and helps clarify the process of creativity itself and the creation of meaningful work. This methodological process acts as a platform from which to conduct further research and to become familiar with the critiques and discourses surrounding the relationship between image and text in visual works.

The systemic-functional model presented here (O'Donohoe, 2004) is an adaptation of the matrix O'Toole (1994) devised for the analysis of painting, for application to image-text works. It is also influenced by Howard Riley's (2000) matrix for drawing. It is based on a synthesis of linguistic and visual communication theories and facilitates the domain of typographic as a semiotic process. The works of artists Hans Haacke and Jenny Holzer provide an ideal platform for analysing dual-coded work, in particular, the nature of the relationship between the image and the concrete visible form of the word, the typographic semiotic.



In this study, the nature of pictures and words as a composite form of communication within the visual arts is inflected by WJT Mitchell's contention (1994:3) 'that the tensions between visible and verbal representation are inseparable from struggles in cultural politics and political culture.' In tracing relations between linguistic meaning, visual representation and aesthetic principles a systemic-functional semiotic analysis of the artists' works explores and reveals not only dominant readings but also alternative interpretations of the artists' works. The study also includes the signifying processes of the social contexts of dual-coded works and stresses the social semiotic as vital in determining the relationships between image and text in visual works and that social semiotic theory allows for meaningful debate as to what constitutes representation in such works.

Social Semiotics

Social semiotics is a way of construing how the relationship between codes of communication and the (social) contexts in which they are used, construct meaning. Michael Halliday's (1978) seminal systemic-functional linguistic model has inspired research in visual semiotics by Michael O'Toole, Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, among others. A social semiotic approach to negotiating meaning assumes that the social context of the text is all-important. For Halliday:

a text is embedded in a context of situation... an instance of a generalised social context or situation type...a semiotic structure... This presupposes an interpretation of the social system as a social semiotic; a system of meanings that constitutes the reality of the culture. (in O'Toole:1994:216).

Kress and Van Leeuwen, (1996:32) extend Halliday's linguistic model to visual language and stress its semiotic nature:

Visual communication is always coded. It *seems* transparent only because we know the code already, at least passively – but without knowing what it is we know, without having the means for talking about what it is we do when we read an image. A glance at the 'stylized' arts of other cultures should teach us that the myth of transparency is indeed a myth.

Visual sign-making is never arbitrary and motivation should be seen in terms of the sign-maker and the context in which the sign is produced. Sign-makers choose the signs most



apt for producing their referents. Inscribed words are visual signs. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:11) also contend with the nature of subjectivity as being the 'transformative productive stance towards sign-making' and sign-making 'rests on the interest of the sign-makers, which leads them to select particular features of the object to be represented as criterial, at that moment, and in that context'. (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996:11) They have also included the concept of the materiality of the signifier in their work.

Materiality

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:231) argue that the material aspects of representation, to include surfaces, substances and tools in the making of artworks cannot be ignored, so that: 'a real distinction appears between the linguist's concern and the semiotician's.' For the signmaker/artist, the choice of material is significant; whether to use brush or knife, canvas or paper, computer or camera is part of the signifying process. The particular context is another vital signifier; 'signs as materials are fully motivated though as always the motivations are those of a particular culture and are not global'. (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996:232)

The materiality of the sign and its significance as more than a vehicle for other signifiers, be it oil, newspaper print or found objects, and first considered by the Russian Formalists, was taken up later by Yuri Veltrusky in 1973 who emphasised: 'the materiality of the significant (signifier) affects considerably the specific way in which the picture conveys meaning.' (Drucker 1994:32) In advocating materiality as a facet of an analysis for typographical manipulation Johanna Drucker contends that:

Invoking the term materiality begs two questions immediately; that of matter, with all the self-referential attention to questions of production... and second, that of materialism and the discourses of cultural theory which index the analysis of social conditions, contexts, and claims for the political effects of signifying activity. (1994:43)

Drucker (1994:45) also insists on the materiality of the typographic sign as central in the process of making meaning:



The force of stone, of ink, of papyrus, and of print all function within the signifying activity – not only because of their encoding in a cultural system of values whereby a stone inscription is accorded a higher stature than a typewritten memo, but because these values themselves come into being on account of the physical, material properties of these different media. Durability, scale, reflectiveness, richness and density of saturation and color, tactile and visual pleasure – all of these factor in –not as transcendent and historically independent universals, but as aspects whose historical and cultural specificity cannot be divorced from their substantial properties. No amount of ideological or cultural valuation can transform the propensity of papyrus to deteriorate into gold's capacity to endure. The inherent physical properties of stuff function in the process of signification in intertwined but not determined or subordinate relation to their place within the cultural codes of difference where they also function. Materiality and cultural context are inseparable from the signifying process; making meaning and assigning value are culturally specific. It is also argued that not only the cultural context but the physical context also in which meaning is assigned to an image-text work, is part of the signifying process.

The Work in Physical Context

It is inevitable in this kind of study that the artworks being discussed cannot be seen in their original form or context. This can be said about a discussion of the *Mona Lisa* as much as about Hans Haacke's *The Right to Life* (Fig. 2) In the main, the vast majority of people who recognise images of the *Mona Lisa*, could be said to have never seen the original painting, or if they have, their experience of it might well be disappointing. Less imposing and duller than in reproductions, the *Mona Lisa* could be seen as diminished in stature by comparison to its high status as a symbol of Western European artistic achievement.

Experiencing a work of art in its original context, perhaps in a public gallery or museum, produces a range of connotations different to experiencing the same work in a coffee-table book. The positioning of both viewer and work in the context of the privacy of the book format, an aspect of the Interpersonal function of communication identified in the



model (Fig. 1), the quality of the reproduction, the absence of the original scale, the absence of the aura of the space it is presented in, must contribute to a range of inflected meanings, different to those invoked in the original setting.

Jenny Holzer's Guggenheim Museum installation of both *Laments* and *Inflammatory Essays* contains mobile text. This cannot be reproduced in the coffee-table book. The interactivity of such a composition is absent, our eyes and heads do not need to travel the text so explicitly in print. The physical dynamics are lost in transposition to reproduction. Questions as to the efficacy of these kinds of works in non-original settings arise.

The analyses of art in this study take place in a two-dimensional form: photographs of the originals in an art-book setting. The systemic-functional semiotic model outlined below facilitates alternative meanings to be constructed meanings depending on the context in which the works are engaged with, in this case, the reproduced form.

A Systemic-Functional Semiotic Model for Image-text Works

As the nomenclature suggests, the model in this research is a matrix of systems and functions which provide a mapping facility for decoding image-text works. In Fig. 1, the Interpersonal Function positions the viewer in terms of mood and attitude towards the work being analysed. It enables the viewer to engage with the work, and the work in its physical space, through a range of choices from each system. The Representational function deals with the information conveyed and the meaning of the work. It functions to represent our experience of the world. The Compositional function, which is the 'design' range of choices, what might be called the tool-kit of the artist, and caters for the media, processes and surfaces chosen by the signmaker, conveys "more effectively and more memorably the represented subject and to make for a more dynamic relation with the viewer" (O'Toole:1994:22) The three functions are interdependent.

What Halliday termed 'Rank' and O'Toole termed 'Unit' is here labelled 'Level'. Each function is divided into a means of ordering and structuring information as one travels the matrix. There is an escalation of the depth of meaning constructed from the basic level of a single element, to the whole work, so that for instance the external rectangular



box in Hans Haacke's *The Right to Life* remains at its basic denotative level of Element if isolated from the other elements of the work or from the work as a whole. It's connotative meaning comes into play at the level of interaction with the rest of the work.

The systemic nature of the matrix allows for a synchronic reading of the works. The model is laid out in a format which is familiar to Western reading protocol, from left to right and top to bottom, or from column to column. In practice however, when looking at the visual works such as the ones being discussed here, they are seen in their entirety – as opposed to reading a book or watching a film – and so the systems functioning in the production of meaning operate synchronically, or simultaneously.

In applying the model to the following case studies, not all systems are necessarily employed at all levels, nor are they applied in a particular sequence. The sign reader can move around the model in whatever direction desired, in no apparent sequence other than what he/she deems fit. Unlike in conventional reading, the viewer can 'hop' from box to box diagonally, from right to left or from bottom up. The subjective viewer chooses particular systems, relative to one's own experience, in order to negotiate meaning. The range of the semiotic resources the viewer can call upon will determine the depth of meaning acquired.

To this extent, as the viewer can come to the works with little or no knowledge of history, provenance or academic critique and look at and make meaning of the work. Equally, the viewer can engage with the works in an informed way, using their experience and a portmanteau of cultural references. This does not preclude debate or disagreement. Indeed, this is the ideal site for fruitful discussion and negotiation of meaning.

In the following case studies, the functions, systems and individual cells of the matrix are italicised in order to identify them as such, and in order to differentiate the semiotic nature of the terminology from everyday language.



Case Study 1: The Right to Life (1979)



Fig. 2 *The Right to Life*, 1979. 128.2 X102.8cm. Colour photograph on 3-colour silkscreen print, in brass frame under glass. (Hans Haacke)

In *The Right to Life* (Fig.2), Haacke exposes the methods of constructing mythologies whereby the vested interests of corporate industry are protected from public scrutiny. The systemic-functional model (Fig.1) helps us to explore the methodology employed by



the advertising industry in establishing these myths by revealing the actual process of construction of meaning.

At the level of the *work as a whole*, identified in the model, the viewer is seduced by the female *gaze*, a system of the Interpersonal function. Framed as a vignette, the image of the Breck Girl allows an immediate rapport with the viewer to be established. Her bright smile and confident *gaze* lure the viewer into a mood of trust and complacency. Compositional systems of *framing* support this position. At the level of *relations between sections*, the vignette evokes notions of intimacy; *connotations* of the sweetheart locket, the ebony and ivory silhouette, the chocolate box are evoked. Chosen from the paradigm of available frames, the vignette represents the format of intimate *portraiture* of classic stature. There are no hard edges, it is a rounded feminine shape befitting a feminine product. The *work as a whole* is framed discreetly, quietly protecting the cameo. Further compositional devices endorse the *mood* of complacency. The interpersonal system of *centrality*, functioning at the level of *relations between sections*, establishes the integrity of the image:

For something to be presented as Centre means that it is presented as the nucleus of the information which all the other elements are in some sense subservient.
(Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 206)

At the level of *relations between sections*, the systems of *coherence* and *harmony* of the text also maintain the *mood* established by the image. This is achieved by combining systems of inscription - the use of italics and serifs along with discreet lower case typeface in the body of the text exude an aura of classical beauty and stability. The *rhythmic* order established by the flow of text is encapsulated in the traditional typographic layout. A caption followed by an image, followed by the body of text is in the order of a soothing melody, with a beginning, middle and end.

The semiotic of the corporate brochure - clean, apparently transparent in its delivery of information, dignified and graceful - reassures potential customers that their interests are being looked after. The female consumer can feel confident in buying *Breck* shampoo. She will also buy into the captivating smile, the glowing complexion, the radiant hair, the



allure of youth and the confident pose. Thus the myth is established. In this case, the myth of the promise of the all-American girl is invoked. Regardless of the actual demographics of the American female population, a specific idealisation of American femalehood is *portrayed*; young, white, blonde and not overtly sexual. Unlike that other icon of American femalehood, Marilyn Monroe, the *Breck* girl reassures the female consumer that beauty and allure need not be at the expense of her modesty.

However, the cost of buying into this myth is rapidly exposed. The trusting mood of the viewer established by the image is subverted by the information of the text. What was initially perceived as classical and beautiful in the *materiality* and *inscription* of the text, is exposed by the representational systems of *word connotation*. The viewer, formerly complicit, is confronted with *themes* of a cultural and political nature not normally associated with the purifying qualities of *Breck* shampoo. The myth of the promise of the *Breck* Girl is shattered by information which counts the actual cost of supporting the myth.

The subliminal codes of advertising are revealed along with the motivated methodology of industry. Both the advertising industry and the company being advertised are exposed and ironically subverted by their own tactics. The alluring image is shown to be an artificial construct of the consumer industry. What was initially a seductive *portrayal* is revealed as a sham. The title caption now becomes the bearer of distressing information, the image becomes a parody of the myth and the body of the text exposes the consumer to the tragedy of complying with advertising tactics.

If, in a visual composition, some of the constituent elements are placed in the upper part, and other different elements are placed in the lower part of the picture space or the page, then what has been placed on the top is presented as the Ideal, what has been placed at the bottom as the Real. (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 193)

The Ideal of the all-American, white, blonde, bright-eyed, girl-next-door placed in the top part of the page, is subverted by the Real information of the demands made of the workers producing those cosmetics which keep her beautiful. The text subverts the

message of the image, causing tensions in the relationship between them, fracturing what is usually, in advertising, an image-text composite, producing an image-text gap.

Case Study 2: Laments and Inflammatory Essays (1989-1990)

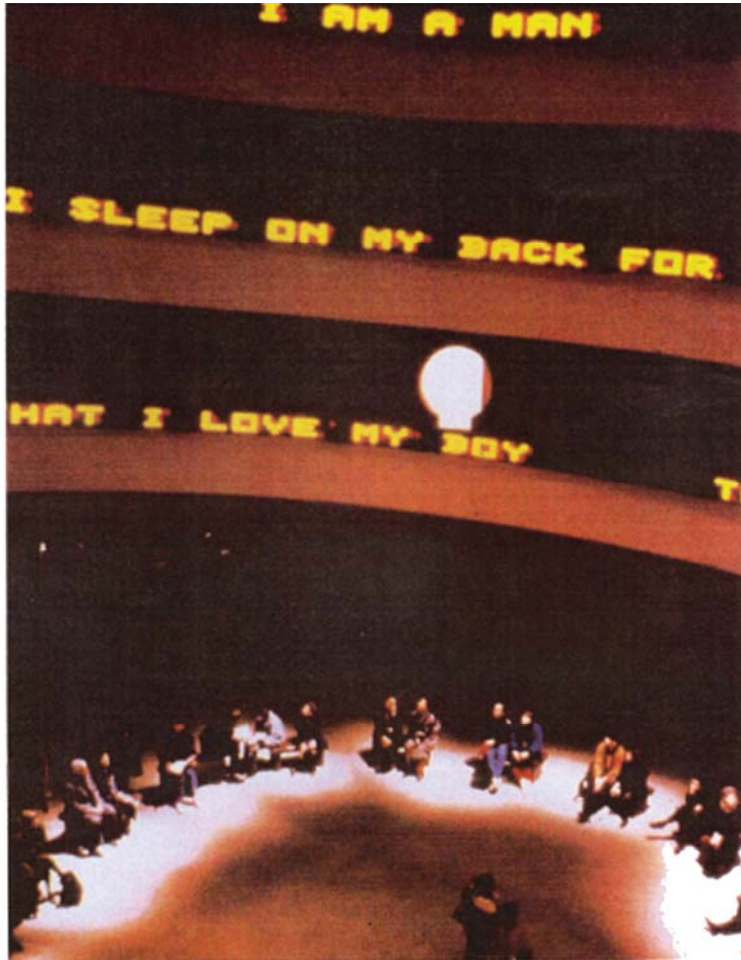
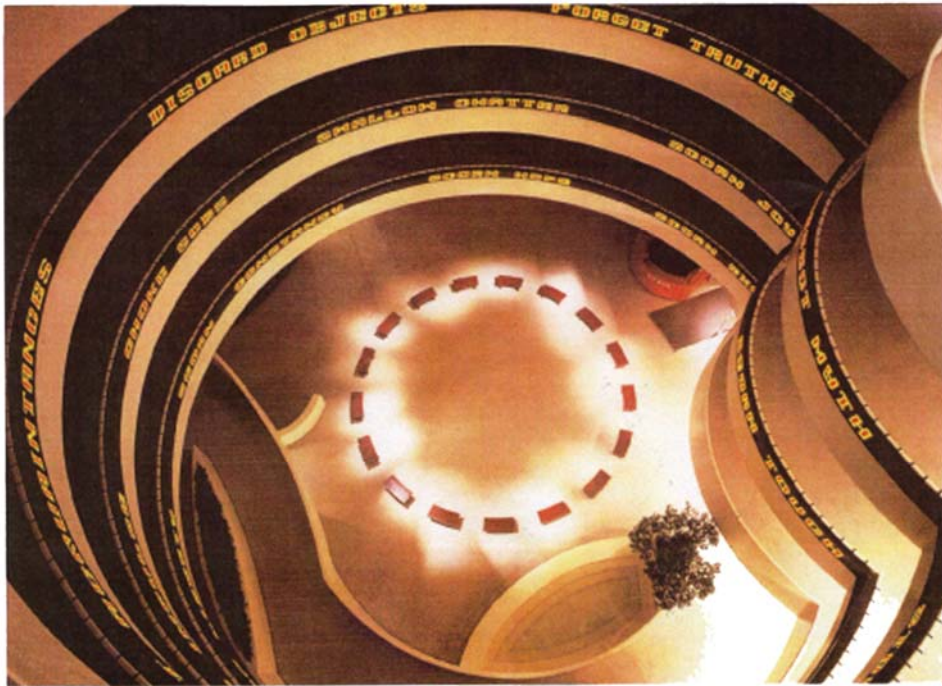


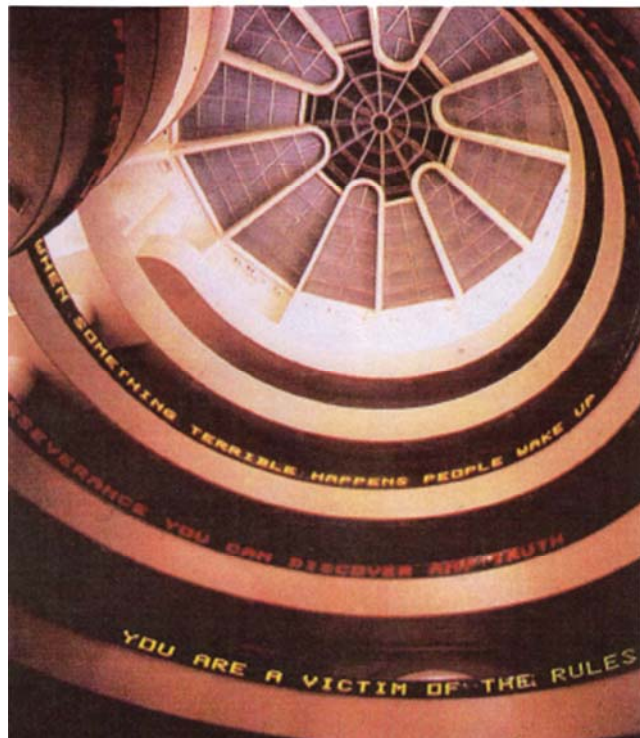
Fig. 3 Jenny Holzer. *Laments*, 1989-1990. LED sign. Installation. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

In *Laments* and *Inflammatory Essays* (Figs. 3, 4 and 5), Holzer exposes tensions between socio-cultural systems by exploring visual and verbal codes of representation. The muteness of the visible linguistic sign is questioned by foregrounding the typographic materiality of inscription in a context not normally available. *Laments* and *Inflammatory Essays* were exhibited together at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, alternating with each other on a timed loop. For the purposes of continuity here, I refer to both as

Laments in the main, except when specifically referred to separately as their linguistic significance is analysed.



Figs. 4 and 5 Jenny Holzer, *Inflammatory Essays*, 1989-1990. Guggenheim Museum.





At the level identified in the model (Fig.1), as the *work in context*, the hallowed *aura* of the *physical* space is commandeered by the brash LED (light-emitting diodes) texts encircling the architecture. The Guggenheim Museum, one of the most prestigious centres of cultural power and influence in the western world, is a *public* space whose interiors are constructed to elicit awe and admiration, in much the same way the great cathedrals and temples of the world were. It is a space of magnitude, of massive organic curves and spirals, where the *gaze* is seduced upwards in subliminal adoration. The *harmony* and symmetry of the compositional choices of repeated circles and *rhythmic patterns* induce a calm and reflective mood in the viewer. The hushed atmosphere of the cathedral, a site of prayer and reflection is represented in the cool, pale alabaster appearance of the gallery-space. One comes here to pay homage, to venerate. The vestibule space is designed as a space in its own right; it is not for exhibiting in – it *is* a work of art. Thus we can see how the particular selections from the systems of choices identified in the model pertaining to *materials*, their *textures*, *colours* and the ways they are combined, function to position the viewer in terms of *mood* and attitude towards the space represented.

Laments, however, does not conform to the cathedral semiotic. It usurps the space whereby the interior is corralled by an invasive demonstration. The *prominence* of the space's curves, the inspirational *presence* of the architectural features, which help form the museum's identity, are captured and emasculated by the *discordant*, strident display. The stature of the interior is satirised by direct intervention. The gallery's grandeur is subverted by the *positioning* of *Laments* directly 'on' the architectural features. Each powerful spiral of the museum, is subjected to interference and resistance, and is forced into becoming part of the composition, as opposed to being the composition. Relations between the space and the work are tense, the silence of the space is disturbed by visual clamouring of primary *colours*. These displays are not composed in delicate hues in keeping with their surroundings, they are pulsating and raw electric colours in direct opposition to the calm of the space, inorganic diodes contesting the natural light. These *compositional* choices, in a space designed to harmonious effect, for a public congregation engaged in private thought, allow the work *Laments* to represent an onslaught upon the conventional aura of the museum.



At the level of the *work as a whole*, *Laments*' system of framing operates through the compositional function, which facilitates the construction of meaning and serves to alienate and dominate the framing system of the interior space. For every architectural spiral, *Laments* provides an overhanging spiral. Instead of promoting unity, framing in this coupling produces discord; they do not sit well together. 'The absence of framing stresses group identity, its presence signifies individuality and differentiation' (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 215). The individuality of the environment is subverted by the even more strident individuality of the text. The original framing of the space - strong, enduring and seemingly immutable, is hi-jacked by the more pronounced framing of the typographics. What were mesmeric concentric circles have been overcome by demanding doppelgängers which haunt and taunt the space. Between the image of the vestibule and the image of *Laments*, a strong sense of antipathy is evoked, realised through the sharp contrast of colour (a framing device) between the pale walls and the primary red and yellow lights, with the former rendered helpless by the inflexible electronic colours.

The *process* of the production of materials applied in an artwork is also a system of the compositional function operating at the level of combinations of *elements in the work*, indicated in the model. The Guggenheim Museum is made from concrete, with connotations of strength, history, permanence and classical beauty. The contours are tactile. It is protective, it shelters one from the enemy and the elements - it is used to maintain ambient temperatures, it appears to be natural, organic and full of resonance. *Laments*, on the other hand, is constructed from *nouveau* materials: it cannot be touched, it is ephemeral and lacks the dignity of history. It represents the brash contemporary in a timeless setting. It belongs to the street and the flashing lights of the city, not to the order and solitude – and solicitude - provided by the museum. It represents a nervous and hyperactive dynamism in opposition to the stable, solid vestibule. A viewer may feel its presence to be disturbing; its weight is overbearing and immodest. *Laments* could be perceived by the conservative viewer as the loathsome enemy invading sacred territory.

Its *presence* questions the museum's conventionality, the museum's stature as a repository of what is considered acceptable art. *Laments* is not a painting, or a sculpture, not even a



photograph, there is no 'picture'. It represents a form of popular culture usually associated with advertising. There are no exquisite brush strokes, or chisel traces, no mastery of hatching or sensitivity of palette. *Laments* does not represent the figure, or the landscape or a tragic historical narrative – it doesn't even represent a soup-can. Instead, the viewer is confronted, or affronted, by the *word*. This might be acceptable if it were carved into granite like a work by Eric Gill. Or if the inscription took the form of a beautiful Chinese calligraphic in which the connotations of draughtsmanship, of rarity, of the exotic, of age-old practices might render it fit to sit in the Guggenheim. But *Laments* is not what is expected in such hallowed quarters. Its materials are selected from those normally associated with the world of brash persuasion, of commercial communication, of consumerism. The connotations of the image represent a resistance and polarity of cultural forms; the exalted museum space is undermined by the presence of a visually aggressive intruder. Tensions result.

This analysis is supported when we engage with the work at the level of its *elements* and a combination of those elements: the letter forms themselves. Making language visible through its materiality, its typographic substance, and labelling it art, is still an avant-garde practice akin to Duchamp's urinal. Language as a visual art is still in abeyance. It is considered a medium for other arts like the novel or drama, or for the graphic design industry. To render it visible, as an image in its own right, is subversive. To foreground language in the context of a museum devoted to the visual, is subverting cultural convention. Illuminating the word via flashing neon lights could be considered an inferior substitute for brush and pigment. The conservative viewer's anticipation of a pleasant trip to the museum is further disrupted by a series of pithy disturbing commands and exhortations:

RESTRAIN THE SENSES FORGET THE DEAD LIMIT TIME
DISCARD OBJECTS LEAVE THE FAMILY FORGET TRUTHS

If the complacency of the viewer hasn't already been disturbed, *Inflammatory Essays* will surely accomplish its titular objective and produce a sense of outrage, not least induced by confusion. Not only has the museum space been invaded by an alien visual rhetoric, but all that is held dear in life – the dead, the family, possessions, integrity – is to be cast aside.



Conclusion

As a teacher and practitioner in the ever-broadening discipline of Visual Communication, it became necessary for me to search for pedagogical strategies which allowed for the negotiated analysis of image-text works, and in particular, strategies which allowed for the specific visual semiotic nature of the visible word – typographics. Although a thorough review has yet to be completed, it could be argued that there is little, if any, systematic teaching of typographic practices, either in the fine-art or design areas, *in light of the systemic-functional semiotic model*. Typographic meaning is largely, though not exclusively, considered transparent, and typographics as a discipline is generally considered as a complementary tool in the construction of visual and linguistic meaning, as opposed to a signifying process in itself.

It also seemed pertinent to consider strategies which allowed the student, as a viewer and maker of meaning, to engage with complex dual-coded works without necessarily having prior knowledge of either the works themselves or the cultural histories and theories surrounding the works. It is often the case that students of art and design disciplines, in particular at Foundation level, do not have many such cultural references and become confused by a surfeit of information, often leading to misunderstandings.

O'Toole's systemic-functional model for painting was identified as being appropriate for modification for engaging with such complex works, at a primary level, thereby facilitating the construction of meaning in image-text works, and enabling nascent artists and designers to construct their own work. The modified matrix (Fig. 1) is based on a synthesis of linguistic communication, visual communication theory and cultural theory. It includes strategies to facilitate the signification of the physical and social contexts of image-text works and for the signifying processes of visual and physical materiality. It allows for a shared language in negotiating meaning and helps the viewer/student to articulate the experience of engaging with the works.

The case-studies support the research that, in applying the model (Fig. 1) to image-text works by Haacke and Holzer, fresh insights into the relationship between image and text



may be revealed and this makes for a more enriching experience in the production and negotiation of meaning in such works. These analyses also demonstrate how systemic-functional semiotics can operate in the production of meaning in image-text works. Specifically, the semiotic nature of typographic inscription is revealed as a co-existent signifying practice along with visual semiotics. The social semiotic strategy reveals the underlying values of a society which in turn, form and inform the individual's aesthetic and enriches perception and understanding of these complex compositions.



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Contact

Eilish O'Donohoe
Swansea Institute of Higher Education
Foundation Art and Design
Alexandra Road
Swansea SA1 5DU
eilish.odonohoe@sihe.ac.uk