Critical Analysis of Visual Communication

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← NOT ME
Definition by Henrik:

**Communication is an interaction between persons**

*(not just a ’transmission’ of data representing the world)*

This interaction takes place by means of gestures, speech, drawings, writing, photo, video, sites, etc. – academically often referred to as ”texts”.
Textus = loom weaving

Just like a woven fabric
a text, a film, a website, an exhibition can have:

- many threads and layers
- in many colors
- in two main dimensions
Communication is an interaction by means of “texts”

Person  “text”  Person

Sender (receiver)  Receiver (sender)

speech – writing – images – sites – film – hypertext
(sites and expositions)

Production analysis
Content analysis (looking at the textual features)
Reception analysis
But can we analyze so many different types of texts and their features with the same tools?

And all of the other new media and their media specific forms and features?

This is where we need Aristotle & Roman Jakobson
General tools for analyzing (visual) communication as interaction:

Type of appeal/persuasion:
logos, ethos, pathos (Aristotle)
and type of communicative function (doing/pointing):
emotive, referential, conative, phatic, poetic and meta-communicative (Roman Jakobson)

Neither language nor pictures are just copies of reality – but this is the ‘positivism’ that still haunts us!

Perhaps language and pictures are constructing “reality” - and us?
Don’t use – or, handle with care!

- Signifiant/signifié (Saussure)
- Transmission (Shannon and Weaver)
- Encode-decode (Hall)
- Language-reality (Plato – Wittgenstein etc)
- Picture-reality (photo and ‘documentary’) 
- Denotation-connotation (Barthes)
- Anchorage and Relay (Barthes)
- Index, icon, symbol (Peirce)
Visual (media) phenomena are too often seen (in theory) as mainly re-presentations of something (e.g. photos of some original events) and not as part of a communication process (an interaction) where someone is presenting something to someone in order to influence, to do or express something
3 kinds of persuasive appeal: (from Aristotle – and others)

• Ethos (delectare) ~ to please and win over 
  [by means of the personality and status of the speaker]

• Pathos ~ (movere) to catch and to move
  [by means of the passions in the audience]

• Logos (docere) ~ to instruct and to prove
  [by means of the nature of the case, the order of things]
Communication is much more than an exchange of info or facts
(from Roman Jakobson)

Whenever we communicate we are in principle doing 6 things:

We show something about ourselves  \textit{emotive function} \hfill \textsc{symptom}

We are talking about something (topic, the world) \textit{referential} \hfill \textsc{symbol}

We are trying to influence whoever we adress  \textit{conative} \hfill \textsc{signal}

We are showing how we relate to each other \textit{phatic} \hfill \textsc{social}

We are toying with language and design options \textit{poetic} \hfill \textsc{sensuous}

We are commenting on the act itself \textit{meta-communicative} \hfill \textsc{systemic}
The six communicative functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referential</th>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
<th>The temperature here is 25°</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conative</td>
<td>SIGNAL</td>
<td>Open the window!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotive</td>
<td>SYMPTOM</td>
<td>Gosh, I am feeling hot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phatic</td>
<td>SOCIAL</td>
<td>Hello, anyone here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetic</td>
<td>SENSUAL</td>
<td>In Spain the rain fails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mainly on the plains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-communicative</td>
<td>SYSTEMIC</td>
<td>This is an example of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a comment on the meta-level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SYMBOL: The temperature here is 25°

SIGNAL: Open the window!

SYMPTOM: Gosh, I am feeling hot.

SOCIAL: Hello, anyone here?

SENSUAL: In Spain the rain fails mainly on the plains

SYSTEMIC: This is an example of a comment on the meta-level.
The six communicative functions can be found also in "visuals": pictures, film, tv, and web-sites

**Referential**

The image deals with a subject, and issue.

**Conative**

The image is trying to persuade you or making you do something.

**Emotive**

The image is expressive, revealing something about (the mood) of the (implied) sender.

**Phatic**

The image is establishing or maintaining contact between sender and receiver.

**Poetic**

The image has aesthetic qualities, form and style are predominant.

**Meta-comm**

The image has meta-comments or references to itself.
6 communicative functions – ready at hand

Me: the thumb *emotive*
That: index *referential*
!@!!”: the long *conative*
Us: the ring *phatic*
Playing: little *poetic*

About it all: the whole hand *meta-communicative*

Next: 3 portrait pictures. What do they do more than just re-produce (“copy”) the original live persons?
Hans Holbein (y), the ambassadors, 1533
David, approx. 1801-05
Critical analysis of visual communication and culture in new media

Don’t just look at what is in the picture or in the video.
But ask: who is trying to do what to us?

• Look behind the camera (see the camera work)

• Look in front of the screen (see the audience response)
1) Look behind the camera to see the (rhetorical) construction (invention, selection, shaping and styling) of the images/video/tv

Next: examples of framing and angle, selection, cutting out, and narrative construction (reaction shots).
Point of view and framing:

Hans Blix, March 7, 2003
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IImVN1dmGuY

Colin Powell, Feb. 5, 2003
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt5RZ6ukbNc

Same place and issue: Weapons of Mass Destruction?
Who is the most trustworthy and persuasive?
(Paris, Jan. 11, 2015 – after ‘Charlie Hebdo’)
World leaders in attendance included Germany's Angela Merkel, Britain's David Cameron, Italy's Matteo Renzi, Mariano Rajoy of Spain, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko, and European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker.
Did they have a good time as they walked along? Is this image perhaps not what they wanted to show?
הטרור האסלאמי בראש סדר היום העולמי:
ញיא ארה"ב גוזם פגמה פסגה ביגלואמי
ברושינפוס שיעסק בהמתמודדות מול הטרור

איסיס קורא לפגוע באסלאם • גורמי מודימיי: "הפיגועים拜רזיו יור Donetsk הפיתחה" • קומר:
"היוםavored ועד יחוד ארתון סניב רבות" • מחוזות איים על מערכות חיוניות נ贿פים

Photo from same event – something has been out....
Reaction shots show Helle Thorning Schmidt smiling and ignoring the speaker.
2) In front of the screen:
What does the audience expect, what norms and pre-understandings/prejudices prevail, what passions are at stake:

• Here below could be a photo or video from a refugee camp...

*Is it fake?*
*Is it beautiful to look at/horrible?*
*Is it rhetoric/propaganda?*
*Is it a weapon?*
*Is it fighting for truth, peace, love?*
*Was the photographer crying?*
*Do we want to see more?*
• **Look in front of the screen** to see the use and appreciation, social and emotional response to the images, video, tv, and their functions for us/you/someone (social, expressive, directive, descriptive, entertaining etc).

Next: examples of “news” with other functions than to just inform
Petra får en baby

Line fikser kroppen...

Matador - Den 11. t...
Communication is interaction between people

(Visual communication in new media is also interaction)

Interaction is vital (not a neutral contact), it is how we live, feel and breathe with each other, and how we develop:

Interaction is about power and affection
Critical analysis of (visual) media:

look at the production as rhetorical (and structurally based) power and persuasion manifestations,

and look at the reception as (norm based) emotional and social media use, consumption and dynamics
Where there is Power there is Rhetoric!

- Power manifests itself visually, and visual artefacts (images, videos, buildings, clothes, class rooms) are also rhetorical.

3 main rhetorical genres (situations):
Judging about the past, celebrating norms, values and power today, and pointing politically towards the future
“La France est en guerre”
Add-ons

• Where there is a sight there is rhetoric
  – Like The Colosseum, The Vatican, The Kremlin

What about a sight of nature, a vue of the mountains, the forest, the flowers on the river bank?
Well, we haven’t yet quite figured out the plot or the main point! (Thanks to Adorno)
• Facebook – we give away “info” about us: values, norms, emotions, interests, fascinations.
• It is sold – not to us - but to someone with money
• Money is power, info is power, info about the audience’s values, emotions and interests are essential to rhetorical persuasion.

• What we receive back: Rhetorical persuasion to buy commodities and politicians (same thing)
(Visual) Communication (within digital culture) is not just a representation (copy/reproduction) of the world/reality

See more http://www.henrikjuel.dk/

The duck and the dog – or my hands?
- A joke to be seen – only in class....