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Word to Image – Image to Word The Contribution of Visual Communication to Understanding and Dialog

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Abstract: Translation, understood as an interpretation of experience, opens a broad field of inquiry into a variety of disciplines. Hans-Georg Gadamer's description of hermeneutics as a language-based methodology to develop understanding, insight, and agreement within a group, serves as the starting point to analyze the practice of visual communication as a form of interpretation, negotiation, and insight.

In a first step, the paper discusses the process of drawing and its relationship to interpretation. The classification of drawing as a gestural activity establishes a link to recent anthropological theories, which see gestures as precursors of the human language. Through an analysis of processes in the field of corporate design, we can strengthen the hypothesis that images follow a logic that is only partially accessible through words. In respect to interpretation, the images of an identity visualization follow a convention held in our collective memory or derived from preconceptions and provide a new aspect of a familiar experience to a beholder. Following this line of thought, the paper suggests that "practice-led iconic research" is a methodology that uses a systematic generation of images to advance our knowledge of images. Going back to the initial question of a language-oriented hermeneutics, we can conclude that, in the context of iconic research, the combination of experimental image creation and the analysis of these images with the help of words leads to a unique insight. The generation and analysis of visual variations is comparable to a discursive and language-based methodology in hermeneutics which requires that various contrasting aspects be considered.

Keywords: interpretation, hermeneutics, visual communication, communication design, practice-led iconic research

Translation and Interpretation

Today, the term of *translation* is used in many highly specialized fields such as computer science or cell biology. But the most common use of the word *translating* means



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to transfer a text from its original language to another language. The etymological roots of the term of *translation* describes the activity of carrying something across¹. The person who is translating is called the *translator*, or even more to the point, the *interpreter*. This term is accurate because it describes the act of translation not merely as a one-to-one transformation, but rather as a process of re-formulation within the given context of another language. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900 – 2002) describes the problem of translation as follows:

“For therein lies all the misery of translation, that the meaning of a sentence cannot be transferred by the mere assignment of an element of a sentence to the corresponding element of the sentence in the new language, and that this creates the dreadful structures which we are so often asked to tolerate in translated books – insipid letters devoid of meaning.”² (Gadamer 1970 p. 84)

If we understand *translation* as *interpretation*, we open up a broad field of inquiry reaching from hermeneutics to the critical making of images in the context of visual communication. In both fields, there seems to be a link to an artistic activity with a *poietic* outcome.

“Hermeneutics primarily means an artful practice. This is indicated by the term itself, which has to be complemented by ‘*techne*’. The art it is all about, is the art of announcement, of interpretation, of explanation and of exegesis and finally and of course includes the art of understanding on which it is based and which is required wherever the meaning of something does not appear unambiguous.” (Gadamer 1966, p. 32.)³

The historical development of *hermeneutics* as summarized by Gadamer begins with a reference to Hermes, whose name and mythological role as a messenger of the gods already implies a double meaning. On the one hand, Homer’s *Ulysses* describes Hermes as a messenger literally conveying a message. On the other one, Homer describes Hermes in many situations translating what was formulated in a foreign and incomprehensible language into a language which is generally understood (Gadamer 1968, p. 32).

In addition to a historical elaboration, Gadamer points out the close relationship between hermeneutics and rhetoric – the art of speaking. But he claims that hermeneutics becomes more than mere rhetoric through the consideration of the opposite opinion:

“But hermeneutics always contains an element which goes beyond mere rhetoric: it always includes an encounter with the other’s opinions, which are also mentioned and considered. This also applies to texts which one wants to understand, as well as to all

¹ The Latin term of “*translatio*” is the participle of “*transfere*”, which is translated by “to bring something across”, “to carry something across”, “to transfer” and “to translate”. (Langenscheidt 1967)

² “Denn darin liegt das ganze Elend des Übersetzens, daß die Einheit der Meinung, die ein Satz hat, sich durch die bloße Zuordnung von Satzgliedern zu den entsprechenden Satzgliedern der anderen Sprache nicht treffen läßt und daß so die gräßlichen Gebilde zustandekommen, die uns im allgemeinen in übersetzten Büchern zugemutet werden – Buchstaben ohne Geist.” (Gadamer 1970 p. 84) English translation by the author.

³ “Hermeneutik meint in erster Linie eine kunstvolle Praxis. Das deutet die Wortbildung an, zu der ‘*techne*’ zu ergänzen ist. Die Kunst um die es sich handelt, ist die der Verkündung, des Dolmetschens, Erklärens und Auslegens und schliesst natürlich die ihr zugrunde liegende Kunst des Verstehens ein, die überall dort erfordert ist, wo der Sinn von etwas nicht offen und unzweideutig zutage liegt.” (Gadamer 1966, p. 32.) English translation by the author.

other cultural creations with the same goal. They have to unfold their own power of conviction, in order to be understood.” (Gadamer 1966, p. 56.)¹

He also mentions the dialogic conversation as the precondition of understanding and agreeing. He identifies the necessity for the partners involved in the dialog to be on the same level and to abandon any prejudice as a precondition of a true dialog (Gadamer 1966, p. 56). But how is it possible to leave behind preconception and convention in a socio-cultural context? According to Gadamer, it is language itself that controls its own convention and is a result of the exchange within a group:

“It is language itself that dictates what is the linguistic custom. This is not a matter of mythologizing language, but means the un-reducibility of the expression of language to an individual, subjective meaning. That it is we who are speaking here, none of us, and yet all of us, this is the being of ‘language’.” (Gadamer 1966, p. 76)²

Gadamer also debates the role of language in hermeneutics and declares that the concept that understanding can only happen in the realm of language is a challenging claim. In his discussion of examples that point to a silent understanding, he refers to phrases in language such as “a silent agreement” or “words fail me” and interprets these phrases as proof of the necessity to use language as a means of understanding (Gadamer 1966, pp. 71/72). This focus on language corresponds to the early fields of hermeneutics. The writings of Biblical texts and the interpretations of law are invariably related to language. From these aspects of translation briefly summarized above, we may conclude that hermeneutics is a philosophical methodology with the aim to assess the true condition of our existence by continuously interpreting texts and cultural achievements in general through their interpretation in an ongoing dialogic conversation. With a critical approach, we may ask if the necessity of a dialogic conversation is exclusively bound to language or if we can find aspects which relate to the above described approach of hermeneutics in the context of visual communication. In fact, we could claim that the exclusivity of language is just a consequence of a deeply rooted aversion to the senses and, therefore, is opposed to images. Is hermeneutics just another indication of the dominance of conceptual thinking over the sensuous, the inferiority of the sensuous in comparison with the super-sensuous, as Nietzsche called it in his brief overview of the development of Western philosophy (Nietzsche 1888)? In other words, do images and the processes of their creation have the potential to assess the conditions of our existence through a dialogical conversation between individuals? In the following part of the paper, the role of images in a dialogic conversation is critically assessed from the point of view of the practice in visual communication.

¹ “Doch enthält Hermeneutik stets ein Element, das über die bloße Rhetorik hinausgeht: Sie schließt stets eine Begegnung mit den Meinungen des anderen ein, die ihrerseits zu Worte kommen. Das gilt auch für zu verstehende Texte, wie für alle anderen kulturellen Schöpfungen dieser Art. Sie müssen ihre eigene Überzeugungskraft entfalten, um verstanden zu werden.” (Gadamer 1966, p. 56.) English translation by the author.

² “Die Sprache selber ist es, die vorschreibt, was sprachlicher Brauch ist. Darin liegt keine Mythologisierung der Sprache, sondern das meint einen nicht auf individuelles subjektives Meinen je reduzierbaren Ausdruck der Sprache. Daß wir es sind, die da sprechen, keiner von uns, und doch wir alle, das ist die Seinsweise der ‘Sprache’.” In addition he describes the natural transformation of language as an antagonism between convention and revolutionary awakening. (Gadamer 1966, p. 76.) English translation by the author.

Drawing and Interpretation – Image to Image

We could make our inquiry into the relationship of hermeneutic practice in language and the practice of image generation in the context of visual communication, by defining what images are. To do so in-depth would however be beyond the scope of this short paper, but some of the aspects of the iconic may help us to develop a plausible connection between image generation and hermeneutic practice. Hans Jonas (1903 –1993) defined the creation of images as a unique ability of human beings (Jonas 1994 p. 106). In his definition, an image has to be similar to an object in our world. The qualities of the object represented in the image have to be similar to those of the real object, but they cannot be complete, otherwise we would perceive it as a copy or a clone of the original. An image emphasizes or neglects aspects of our experience through its selection of qualities. In this process, the designer realizes his or her interpretation of the world. A multisensory experience, with all its emotional reactions and socio-cultural indications, is transformed into an artifact, which is then (visually) perceived and allows its beholder to recall the experience. If we ask how this selection takes place in practice, we can refer to the processes of image generation and look at the most basic methodology – the process of drawing. The sequence of images taken in the process of creating a drawing shows a methodology of image creation in which many tentative lines are placed in a specific format before a definite form is found [Fig. 1].

If the format of the drawing is large (DIN A2) and the paper is attached to a board on an easel, a physical movement of the arm and the entire body is involved in the process of drawing. This process consists of a circular sequence of observing with the eye, putting a line on paper with a gesture, and aligning what we see on the paper with available records in our memory and the observed object. The intuitive phase of critical creation is interrupted at some point to evaluate the actual state of the drawing. One steps back and consciously decides if the drawing is



Figure 1: three selected steps in the creation of a drawing. Indre Grumbinaite, 2015, Archive of the Visual Communication Institute, The Basel School of Design, FHNW.

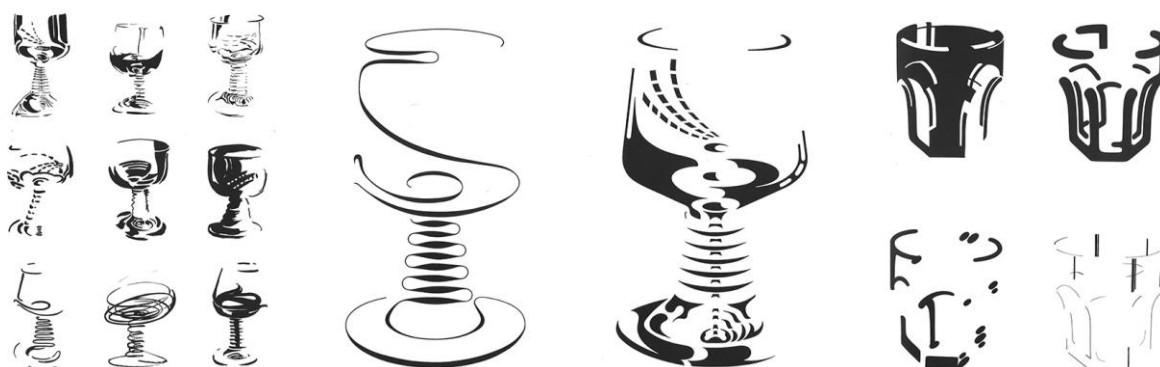


Figure 2: *Black and White Translations*. Results from the class of Kurt Hauert at the Basel School of Design taught between 1968 and 1988. Archive of the Visual Communication Institute, The Basel School of Design, FHNW Academy of Art and Design.

successful according to the criteria established before the drawing activity began.¹The analysis of the concrete example of drawing described above coincides with the generalized description of image-making by Hans Jonas. In addition, we can infer from the summarized process that the selection of qualities made in the process of drawing is an *intuitive* transformation of an observation leading to an interpretation. The decisions made during the actual placing of lines on paper are made below the threshold of consciousness (Lakoff/Johnson 1999, 508 – 509). They are guided by the condensed records of our experience and formed by our dispositions (Damasio 1999, 331 – 335; 2010, 151). If we let these dispositions create the actual interpretation, the drawing has the potential to present an individual point of view. With the gesture of the body, unique interpretations can occur, which go beyond preconceived conventions (Derrida 1993, 4; Barthes 1979, 177/178). The following exercise, which was a central part of the classic Graphic Design curriculum in the 1950s at the Basel School of Design, shows the variability of interpretations of one particular object [Fig. 2]. In the exercise called “Black and White Translation”, students were asked to develop high-contrast graphic representations of a drinking glass using black and white acrylic paint. With this task, the students experienced the possibilities of iconic interpretation. In the translation from the observation of reflection, transparency, materiality, and form to an image, clear decisions had to be made in order to represent essential aspects of the object. In the intuitive sketching process, different qualities were emphasized or omitted. What needs to be included in the interpretation of an image to represent it in a universally valid manner? Is it its material quality, or three-dimensional space, its lights and shadows, its transparency, the context of the object, or a sign-like or gestural quality?

The intuitive process of evaluation and negotiation in the process of drawing and creating black-and-white translations can also be described as “thinking on paper”. But at first glance,

¹ For a more extensive analysis of the drawing process, see: Renner 2011.

the conversational aspect between individuals, which is emphasized by Gadamer in his description of hermeneutics, seems to be missing. If we compare the description of drawing to the anthropological hypothesis that human communication has developed out of the basic gesture of pointing at something (Tomasello 2008, p. 322), we can connect the gesture of drawing to the basic level of human communication. According to Michael Tomasello, the most basic form of human communication, the pointing gesture, was limited to address things in the immediate context in which the conversation took place (Tomasello 2008, p. 61). The aim to communicate with a more complex narration led to the iconic gesture, which entailed the imitation of objects and events that were remote in time and space (Tomasello 2008, pp. 66/67). But the iconic gesture was also dependent on the presence of a narrator. In the use of gestures to generate a trace – in the process of drawing – we can recognize a continuation of the iconic gesture. A drawing possesses the advantage of being independent from the presence of an individual and is, therefore, suited to serve as a tool of exchange and negotiation within a group. In the process of drawing and image-making, we can recognize an individual process of visually evaluating a field of options and the externalization of an individual point of view. This becomes the starting point for a discursive exchange in a small group.

The function of a drawing as an object supporting the process of negotiation in a group can be observed in the actual context of collaborative projects in research, development, or management. The power of visualization in the form of a spontaneous drawing on a flip chart becomes evident when shared in a group of people. At a single glance, the drawing shows all members of the group of what the organization, the structure, the outcome, or the goal of a process consists.

Every participant of the meeting can react, correct, or add to the drawing as long as there are no hierarchical structures preventing an involvement in the negotiation. If the group agrees on a drawing, it can provide orientation in a complex project for the individual activities of the participants. Since this kind of drawing goes beyond a representational interpretation, we can quite generally infer: the goal of drawing does not primarily focus on the representation of reality but rather on the provocation of thought, which leads to a dialogic conversation.

Identity Negotiation – Word to Image

If we go beyond the gestural aspect of drawing and its role in the context of communication and turn to the actual practice of visual communication, we can focus on one of the most prosperous fields in communication design: the visualization of identity. How do we arrive at images that represent a group of people? The process of defining a visual identity usually follows a complex and often unpredictable path (Olins 2002, p. 31). In order to conduct a goal-oriented project, distinguishing a number of phases is recommended (Abdullah/Hübner 2002, pp. 28 – 44). Usually, a briefing from the client is answered by a re-briefing of the design office after a first round of open questions was answered. This guarantees a mutual understanding of the client's expectations. In the following, analytical phase, the design

office develops a conceptual framework in co-operation with the client. In workshops, the self-image and the external perception of the institution are assessed. An analysis of competitors is conducted as well, and strategic steps on how to proceed are evaluated. All these issues are summarized in a written concept. Approved by the client, this paper serves as the basis for a first phase of visualization in the form of rough sketches. In many cases, the presentation of the first visualizations of key elements leads to a controversy. What has been agreed on in the medium of language was not directly translated into a visual materialization. This shift, which can be observed in many projects, lets us infer that sketches show aspects of identity which cannot be addressed by words. The translation from language into images is even more difficult than the translation from one language to another. In the design phase, the negotiation of identity shifts to a concrete and material level. After the first presentation, reactions to the proposed visual sketches are carefully examined and reconsidered for the next phase of the design process. Eventually, after several presentations, the process is narrowed down to a single solution or the project stalls. In the concrete example of the visual identity of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, which was developed in 2005 by our internal office, we can closely follow the steps of negotiation. Three smaller regional universities supported by one or two cantons merged due to a Federal master plan to establish seven larger areas of Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts¹. The merger was a long process of negotiation between the educational departments of the four cantons and the Federal government, before a corporate design process could be initiated. Prior to the resolution of the political processes, the internal design office of our university was commissioned by one of the cantons (the one who hesitated the most to join in for financial reasons) to develop a corporate design for the merging institutions. An entire corporate design was developed over a period of months using the afore-mentioned phases. A major goal was to convey the message of a cost-conscious educational institution with a broad portfolio of application-oriented Bachelor and Master educations with a regional focus. The corporate design was implemented at the commissioning institution before it was presented to the two other partner institutions [Fig. 3]. The newly developed design was rejected by the other two institutions because their self-image and the proposal were not congruent. There was no possibility to negotiate the identity of the proposal with all the parties involved. As a result of this conflict, the corporate design was rejected and the development of the identity visualization process started anew. This time, the process was conducted in close co-operation with the newly appointed Director of the merged universities [Fig. 4]. The process of negotiation focusing on who we are and who we would like to become still continues. From our involvement in this process, we could infer that identity visualization can be elusive if it is only conducted on a verbal level. Images are more specific, and this specificity is crucial for the visual experience of an identity. This example can be used to support the idea that images have their own, unique logic, which is only partially accessible through

¹ All the disciplines of art and design are exclusively situated as Schools at the Universities of Applied Science and Art in Switzerland.

words. In this sense, identity design points to the unique status of images from another perspective as that of the experimentations conducted in the field of modern art (Boehm 2004). On a larger scale, the process of defining the design of the Swiss banknotes can be analyzed under the aspect of negotiating a national identity. The results of the competition, which was held years before the new Swiss banknotes will be printed, present an interpretation of the future of the country. These proposals, developed for the competition and their dissemination in the media, provoked a series of public debates on the future development of the nation. The process of translating an individual vision into a group vision that can be accepted by a majority, often persists for many years and, as a result, ends in an unspectacular compromise (Renner 2013). The design of the Euro bills is one such example as it lacks any individual interpretation and, therefore, is quite conventional. What Gadamer calls the “being of language” can be applied to describe the process of identity design. “It is we, who are showing the identity of a nation.” We can continue the transposition from Gadamer’s quote: “That it is we who are presenting images, none of us, and yet all of us, this is the being of a ‘collective visual identity’”. In opposition to the idea of images being a result of mere convention, François Lyotard (1924 – 1998) describes, in his essay *The Paradox on the Graphic Artist*,

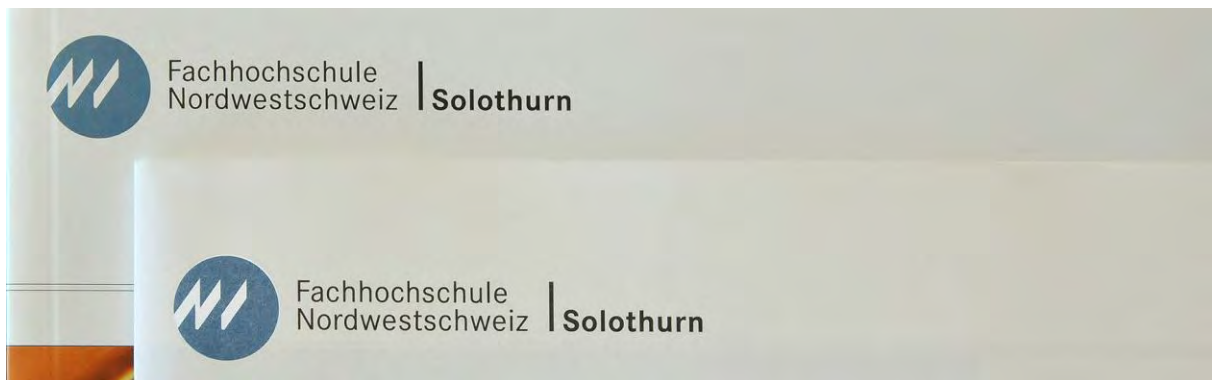


Figure 3: first corporate design for the University of Applied Science and Art Northwestern Switzerland, Internal Office for Communication Design, 2004.

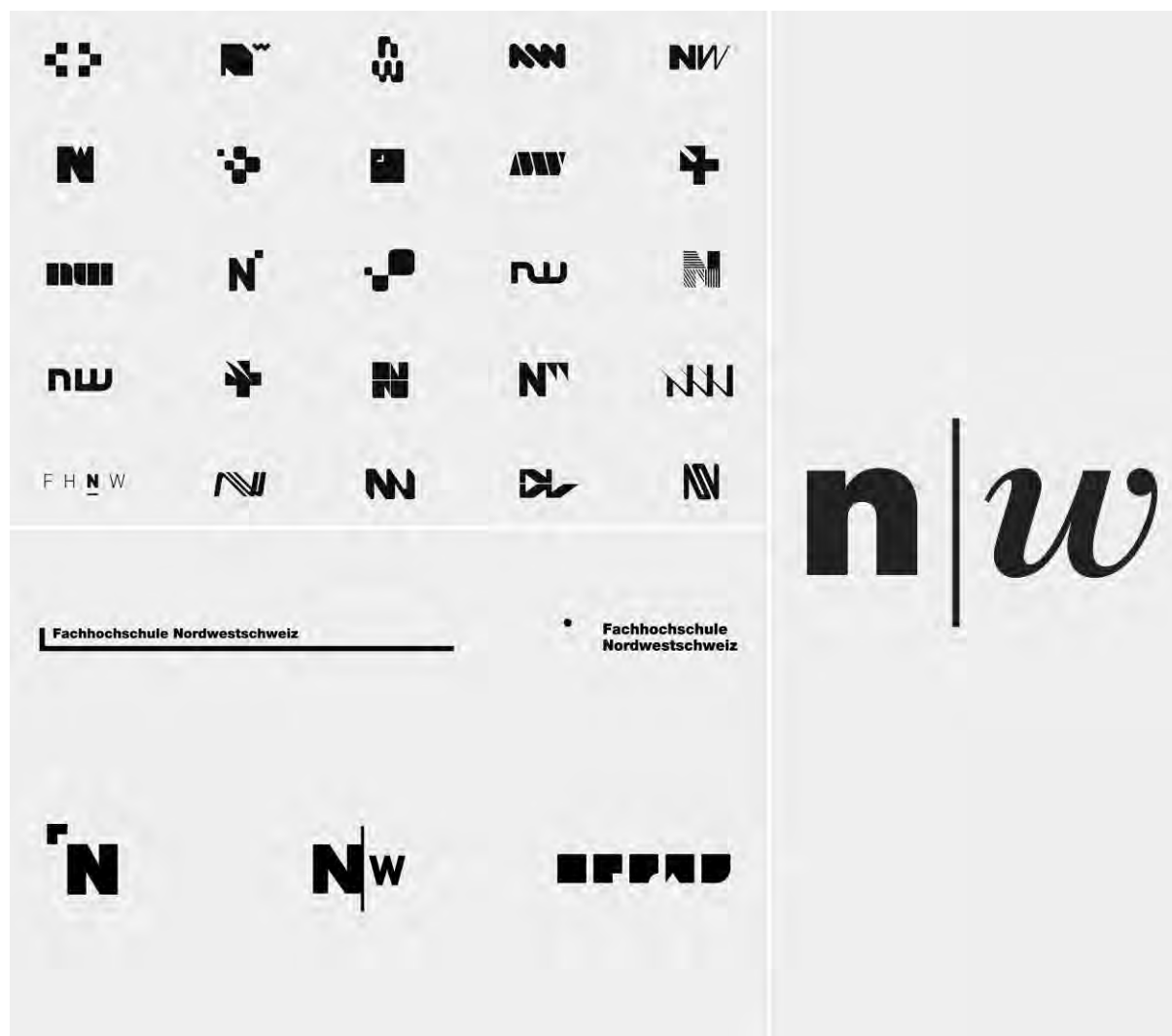


Figure 4: sketches of an idea (top left), intermediate proposals (bottom left) and final logo (right) for the University of Applied Science and Art Northwestern Switzerland Internal Office for Communication Design, 2005.

that graphic design is art encountered in the street. Only through the contrast to what has been seen before and is stored in our collective memory can attention be captured and an object of visual communication be intriguing, confronting, or surprising (Lyotard 1994). Lyotard states that through a new interpretation of a familiar experience, a graphic object enables the beholder to see something from a new perspective (Lyotard 1994, p. 44). We can confirm this observation with successful examples of drawing and identity visualization. The examples that are compromised lack exactly this effect of providing a new perspective of a familiar experience. They only repeat what we know. If we come back to Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics and his insisting on the role of language, we can refer to Gottfried Boehm, who has analyzed the "misinterpretation" of Gadamer's hermeneutics being limited to language as a problem of German philosophy (Boehm 1996, pp. 243/244). Therefore, it is no surprise that there are links between the above described division of images (those that are compromised as opposed to those that are unconventional) developed in the context of

visual communication and Gadamer's categorization of images in "presentations" and "copies". In *Truth and Method*, he explains the image category of "presentations" as consisting of pictures that maintain a relationship to the original but develop their independent status through a deviation from the original. In contrast, he distinguishes the "copy" as entirely dependent on the original. He infers a one-directional dependence of the "copy" on the original, whereas the original is also influenced by its "presentation" (Gadamer 1960, p. 135). Following this line of thought, we can transpose Gadamer's idea of the two image categories onto the communicative image and free it from being exclusively bound to a mimetic role of showing the world. Thus we can say that the processes of negotiation with images in the context of visual communication either leads to images entirely dependent on the original formed by the collective memory of a society (copy) or to a result which changes the collective perception (presentation) and, therefore, reality (the original). This may be considered a central argument if we are distinguishing word and image in the context of communication. If we are negotiating an identity with language it is agreeable, but the first sketches of a corporate design address a possible reality and influence the perception of an identity through visual means in a more direct and powerful way.

Practice-Led Iconic Research and Hermeneutics – Image to Word

The comparative inquiry into hermeneutics and visual communication could be continued through an analysis of pictographic images or diagrammatic images. Their advantage over language can be seen in their universality and their ability to present data at a glance. As exemplified by corporate design, the negotiating process in the making of images could also be discussed in other fields of visual communication. How are decisions made and how much is a beholder part of the negotiation when data is selectively transformed into an image presenting a set reality?

In addition, we can determine the conversational aspect in the multiplicity of interpretations that a beholder can encounter regarding a specific depiction. In a comparative and critical viewing of these interpretations, a conversation and an evaluation could be possible. But then, how many people are conceivably able to conduct this kind of analysis today?

This is where the project of "iconic research" (Bildwissenschaft) began to take hold. The claim of the Iconic Turn (Boehm 1994, Mitchell 1995) led to the observation that there is a lack of scientific and, therefore, also wide-spread knowledge concerning how images generate meaning. This becomes especially evident if we consider the long history of scientific reflection about language. Thus, the lack of awareness of how images affect a beholder and the increasing communication through images caused by digital technology are a threat to any democratic society. In fact, we may ask if we are at all

able to develop an independent opinion or if images are creating our reality in a manipulative manner such as described by Gadamer's term of "presentation".

If we take the idea developed above, namely that images draw upon a unique logic and that they carry their own intrinsic meaning, we can infer that it is misleading if we approach images as a mere transposition from language. How can we approach the meaning of images through the means of language? And how can we avoid the bias of language in a scientific discourse about images? Many disciplines such as art history, philosophy, the history of science, psychology or sociology are participating in "iconic research". Their methodology is usually determined by their discipline as historical, hermeneutic, or empirical. What connects them is the contribution of the disciplinary findings by language. Since a scientific discourse is based on the exchange of a finding in order to share, support, or contest it, the use of language seems to be inevitable. Thus, we may ask: is it possible to translate the effect an image has on an audience into language? We consider the use of any existing imagery and a detailed "reading" of these images with language as an approach of the humanities. The practical field of visual communication uses the singularity of images and the problem of their translation into language as a basis for its contributions to iconic research. What we call "practice-led iconic research" can be interpreted as a methodology to create images in order to differentiate their meaning through images as opposed to through language (Renner 2010). By leaving the field of analyzing existing images, practice-led iconic research either focuses on the processes of image creation or uses the creation of images as a methodology to inquire into a specific category of images such as a documentary image, an ornamental image, a diagrammatic image, or a portrait. If we conduct an inquiry into the image category of the portrait, a sequence of variations can be created in search of the common denominator between a physical image of a face and an image-schema of a face held in the memory of the be-holder. In other words, how general can a visual constellation be while still triggering the recognition of a face in a frontal representation? In the experimental approach shown in a set of 42 variations, a reduction to black and white in a frontal view of a face was chosen in order to create an overview in a field of potentialities [Fig. 5].

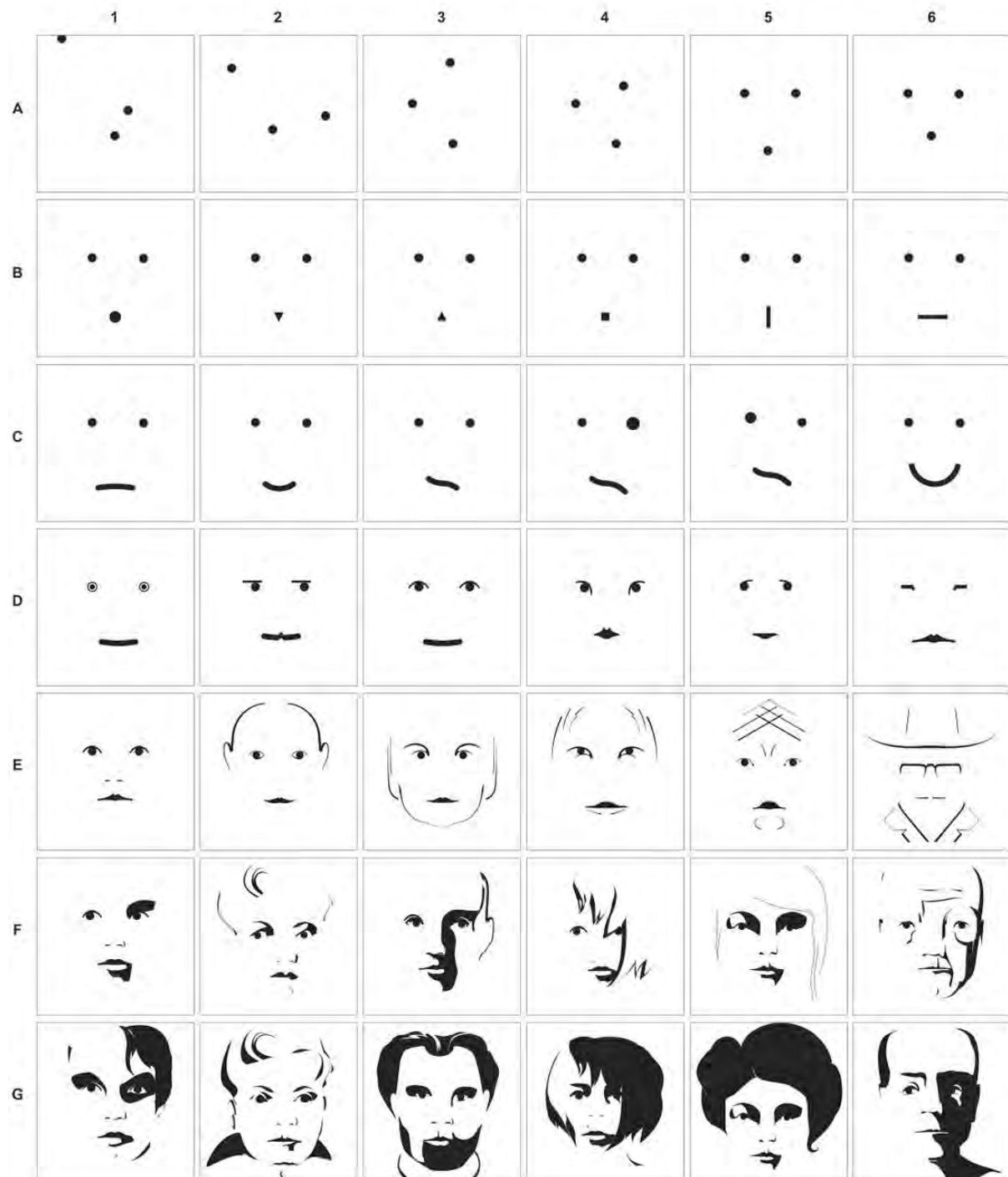


Figure 5: variations on the frontal representation of a face with the restriction to a high contrast black-and-white translation by the author, 2013.

Within this framework, each row was designed with a set of criteria, ranging from the composition of three circles in a square in the first row to the observation of light and shadow in the row at the bottom. Based on the variations, we can evaluate how the compositions recall the image of a face as a starting point for a stereotypical representation and as a final representation showing a living individual. In view of the variations, we can

verbally describe, e.g., in which constellation of the three dots of the first row it is plausible to imagine a face (A5/A6) or to what extent any symmetry in the representation of the face inhibits the reading of an individual (row E and F). Thus, we can use this example to claim that we need a variety of images to verbalize the effect of a single image in comparison to the others. The verbal inference is pointing to the effect the image causes and, therefore, word and image complement each other in this approach to iconic research. The following example also lets us infer an aspect of portrait images. The series of image pairs was generated by taking two photographic portraits with two different emotional expressions of the same person. In a second step, the top and the bottom part of the images were exchanged and reassembled so as to render the manipulation invisible. Even though we cannot express by words what is wrong with the portraits, we are irritated by the problem of reading the emotional state in the anatomically impossible depictions [Fig. 6]. From this photographic image series, we can deduce the high level of sensitivity which is employed in the process of interpreting faces and their representations in portraits. Based on the shared idea that the photographic image represents a real situation, the beholder's irritation appears through a slight deviation from the memorized schema of a face formed by experience. We are irritated but we are unable to put the reason of this reaction into words. Thus, the series lets the beholder experience an emotion which does not cross the threshold of consciousness. And even though we do not know how the images were created, we intuitively sense that something is wrong.



Figure 6: in these image pairs, the areas of the eyes and the mouth were exchanged, Axel Öland and Efa Mühlethaler, 2009. Archive of the Visual Communication Institute, The Basel School of Design, FHNW Academy of Art and Design.

After this brief description of an experimental approach¹ to image creation in the context of “practice-led iconic research”, we can assess the role of the visual and the role of language in the scientific inquiry into images. In comparison to an approach that is based on an analysis of existing images, “practice-led iconic research” employs a *strategic creation* of

¹ These examples of practice-led iconic research and more experimental approaches to the image category of the portrait were published in: Renner (2015).

images as a basis for their differentiation. In opposition to what is called artistic research, where the paintings exhibited in a gallery space are considered the result, the proposed approach of an experimental creation of images is bound to a hermeneutic interpretation in language (Elkins 2009). The role of the images is to provide an experience. With an overview of visual options, we are able to define the meaning of one image in a comparison with other images (Boehm/Pfotenhauer 1995). We can say that a methodology of “practice-led iconic research” goes beyond a language-based hermeneutic approach and allows an approach where the relationship of the sensuous and the conceptual has to be continuously re-evaluated. On the one hand, we were able to put Gadamer’s idea of a hermeneutics purely bound to language into perspective with this approach. On the other one, we have provided a small example of his claim that the arts have their own approach and are equal to the humanities and science in their aim to assess the true being of our existence (Gadamer 1992).

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