

Semiotics and Idents

315CR



What we will cover today

- ▶ Introduction to Semiotics
- ▶ Examples
- ▶ Introduction to Idents
- ▶ Examples



Semiotics

- ▶ The study of signs. A sign is something that stands for something other than itself.
- ▶ “concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” (Umberto Eco 1976)
- ▶ Can take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects
- ▶ The discipline that studies the capacity of humans to make, disseminate, and understand these signs
- ▶ Involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but also of anything that 'stands for' something else...



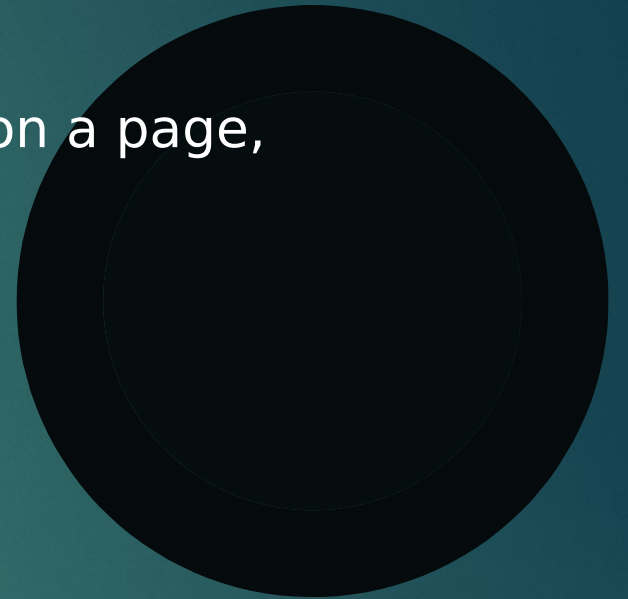
Example

An open sign hanging in the window of a business.



Semiotics

- ▶ Signifier: any material thing that signifies, e.g., words on a page, a facial expression, an image.
- ▶ Signified: the concept that a signifier refers to.
- ▶ Tree



Semiotics

- ▶ **Indexical Signs:** signs where the signifier is caused by the signified, e.g., smoke signifies fire



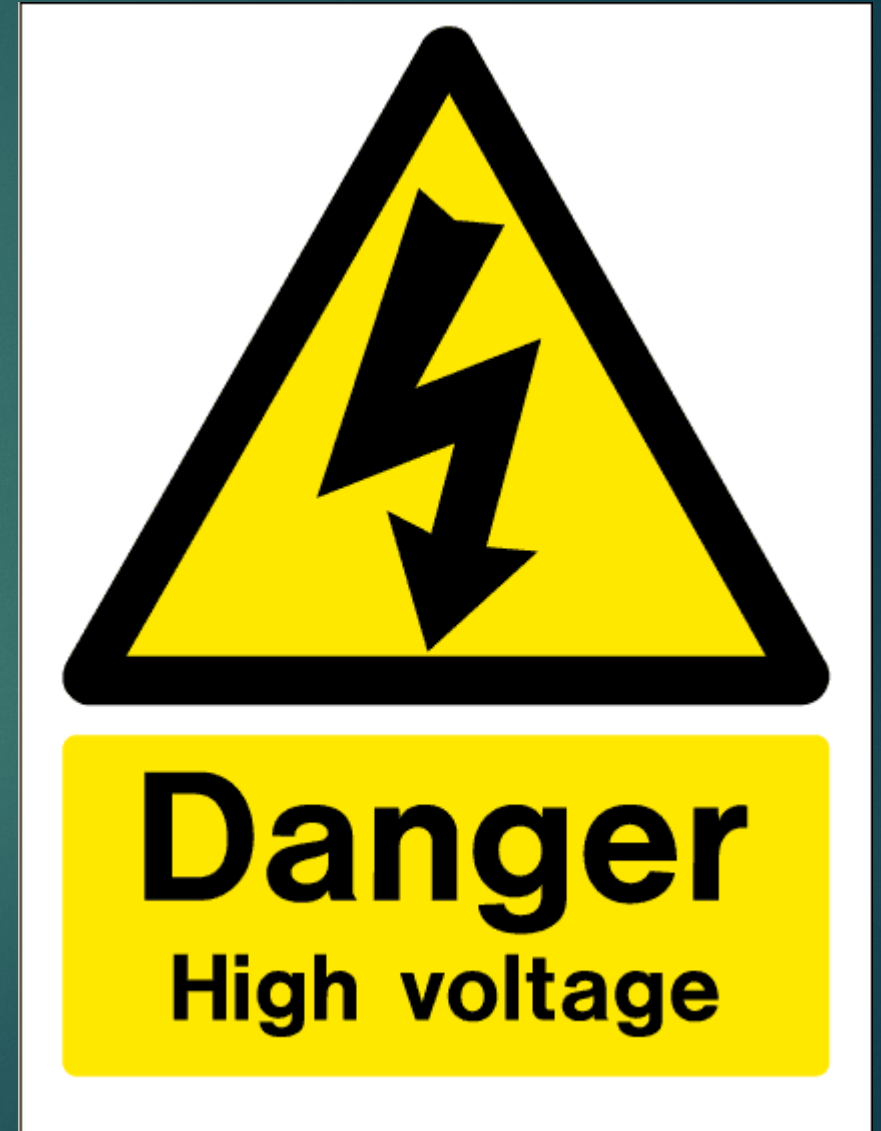
Semiotics

- ▶ **Denotation:** the most basic or literal meaning of a sign, e.g., the word "rose" signifies a particular kind of flower
- ▶ **Connotation:** the secondary, cultural meanings of signs; or "signifying signs," signs that are used as signifiers for a secondary meaning, e.g., the word "rose" signifies passion.



Semiotics

- ▶ **Metonymy:** a kind of connotation where in one sign is substituted for another with which it is closely associated,



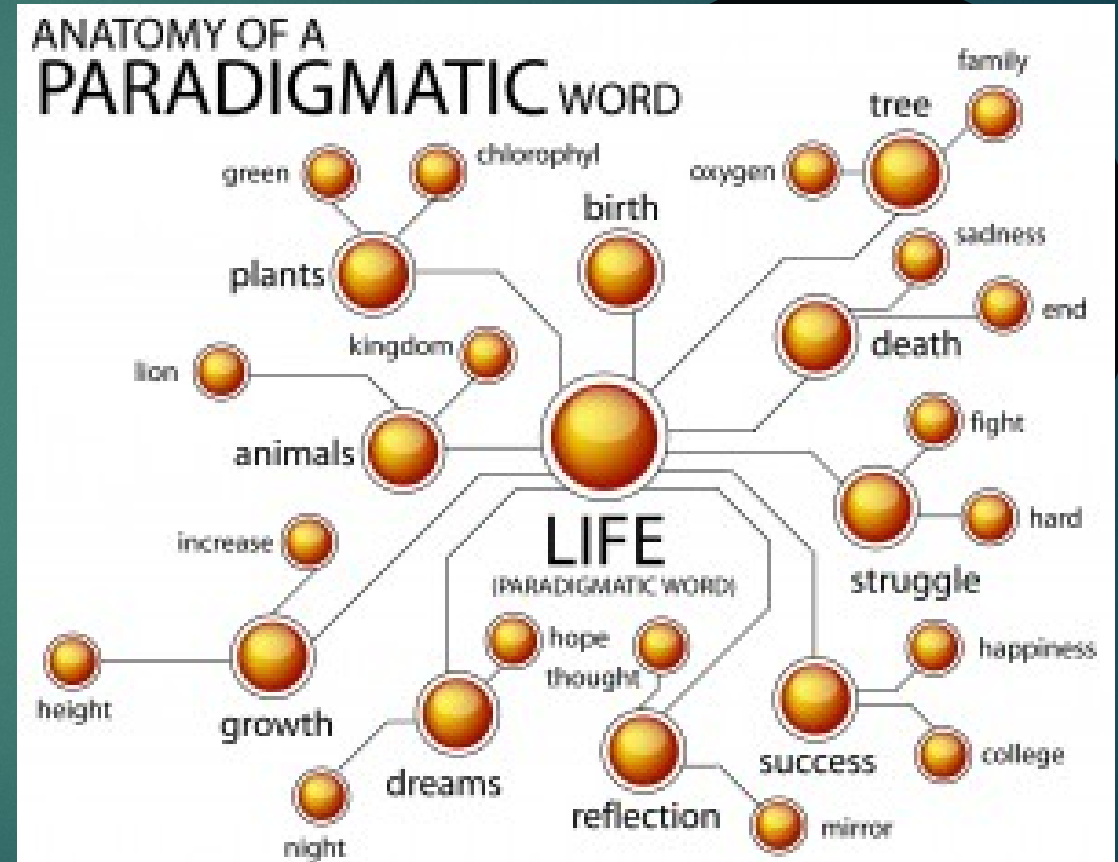
Semiotics

- ▶ **Synecdoche:** a kind of connotation in which a part is used for the whole
- ▶ "Check out my new set of wheels"



Semiotics

- **Paradigmatic relations:** where signs get meaning from their association with other signs

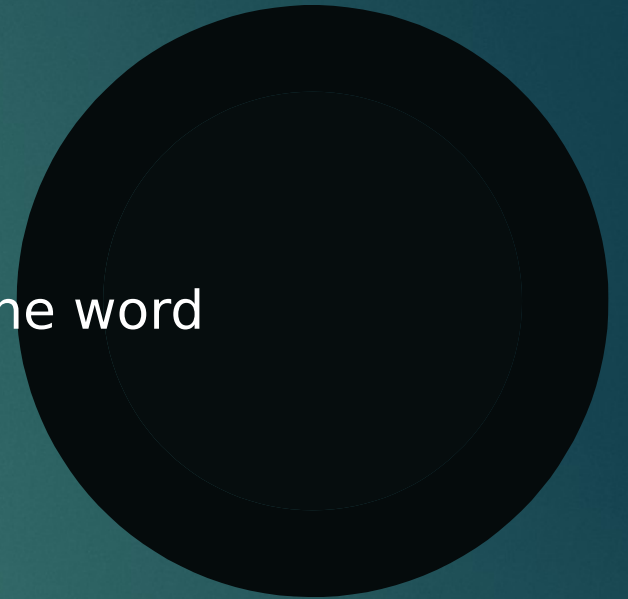


Ferdinand de Saussure 1857-1913



Saussure

- Signs are purely psychological.
- Signs only make sense in a formal abstract system. A one word language is an impossibility.
- A sign refers to what it is not.



Saussure

- ▶ Saussure believed that signs do not represent reality but construct it.
- ▶
 - We come to know the world through language.
 - Signs reflect the system they are found in.
 - The relationship between the sign/signifier is not a matter of personal choice. “It is because the sign is arbitrary that it knows no law other than tradition.”



Roland Barthes 1915 - 1980



Barthes

- ▶ Denotation: Refers to the common sense meaning of a sign. A photograph of a dog denotes a dog.
- ▶
- ▶ Connotation: Describes the interaction that occurs between the subjective user and their culture. The photograph of the dog is taken in a way to appear sad.
- ▶
- ▶ Myth: It is the dominate ideology of our time. It is when connotations become “naturalized” Hollywood cinema. The myth of the hero (destiny dependent on individuals) Happy Endings.

- ▶ Denotative level: a photograph of the movie star
- ▶
- ▶ Connotative level: associations with glamour, sexuality, beauty or depression or drug-taking and untimely death
- ▶
- ▶ Myth: the dream factory can produce glamour, but also can crush it



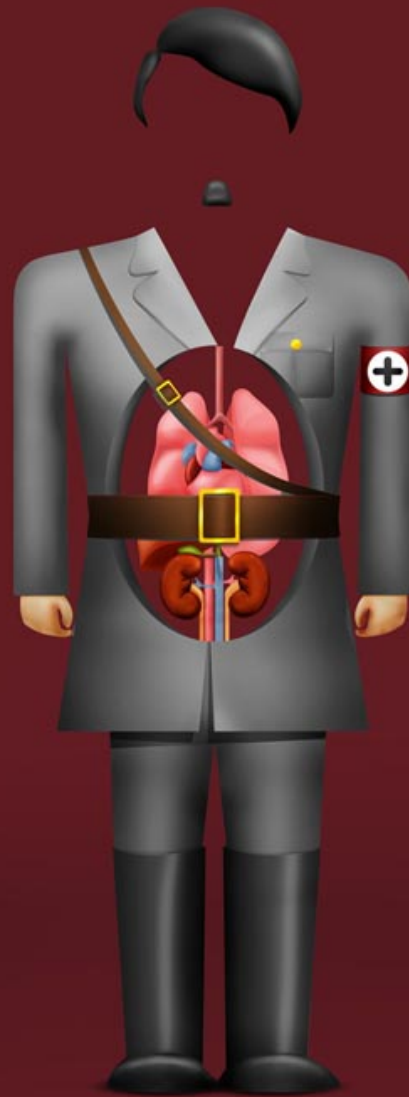
Stuart Hall Encoding/Decoding model

- ▶ A message is encoded with one meaning but may be decoded as another.
- ▶
- ▶ This draws from Gramsci's theory of Hegemony. The reading of a text may be read (decoded) in three different ways: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional



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Idents

- ▶ Idents first started in the early 1950's. BBC was the first channel to start displaying a logo in between programmes to identify it's channel.
- ▶ The theme of the globe was used throughout all the idents produced by the BBC up until idents used for the BBC today.
- ▶ today a lot of channels have a complete set of idents based on a theme or branding element, mostly building the base for the rest of the channels appearance.



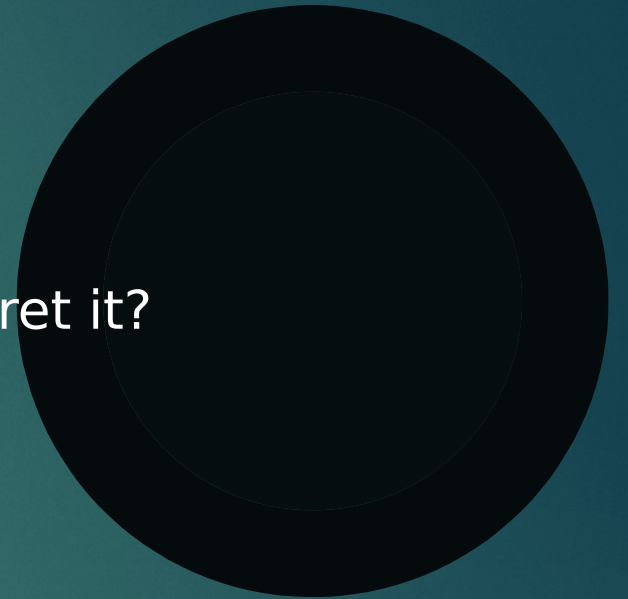
Purpose of an Ident

- ▶ Identity of the channel
- ▶ Break up Schedule
- ▶ Branding
- ▶ Marketing
- ▶ Rebranding



Ident Design

- ▶ Setting – Where is it?
- ▶ Tempo – Speed
- ▶ Audience interaction – How should the audience interpret it?
- ▶ Branding



History of BBC idents



Idents

- ▶ <http://mvsm.com/>
- ▶ <http://www.creativebloq.com/search?term=idents>
- ▶ http://theident.gallery/menu_section_bbc.php
- ▶



Reference

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- ▶ <https://jessiemay93.wordpress.com/2009/12/08/brief-history-of-idents/>
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