

VISUAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Brief Notes

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READINGS

- Young, Lynne & Fitzgerald, Brigid. 2006. *The Power of Language: How Discourse Influences Society*. London: Equinox. (Chapter 6)
 - Kress, Gunther & van Leeuwen, Theo. 2006. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

BASICS

- ‘Constructed’ images are just like texts.
 - Representational ~ *Ideational*
Modal ~ *Interpersonal*
Compositional ~ *Textual*
 - Some adjustments to the following:

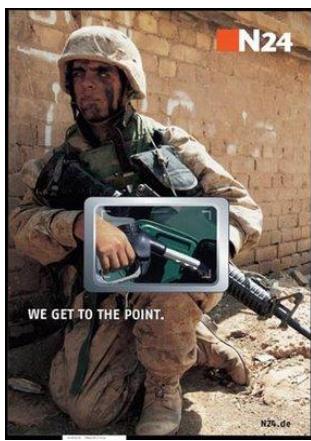
| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <u><i>Representational</i></u> <i>Narrative themes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Actions, events, agents, patients, etc.▪ Act, stance, gesture, clothing | <u><i>Modal</i></u> Rhythm, gaze, perspective, prominence, characterization | <u><i>Compositional</i></u> <i>Gestalt:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Framing▪ Horizontals▪ Verticals▪ Diagonals▪ Relative position of object(s) or people▪ Parallelism or opposition |
|---|--|---|

Ideational meaning

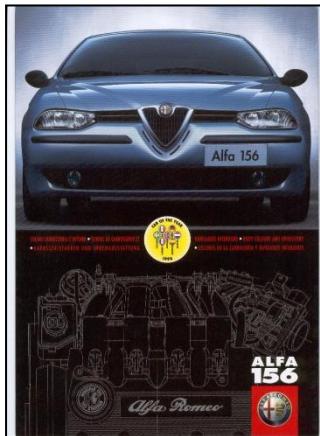
- Processes, participants, and circumstances.
 - *Transactional* action — where action is directed at another participant.
 - *Non-transactional* action — where action is not directed at any participant.



Mixture:



- *Portrait* — conceptual and timeless.
- *Snapshot* — specific moment in time.



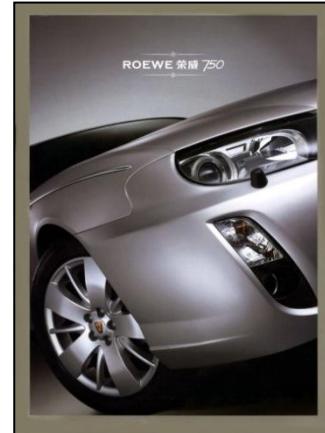
Interpersonal meaning

- *Gaze (towards the reader)*:
 - *Demand* — gaze is established.
 - *Offer* — no gaze.



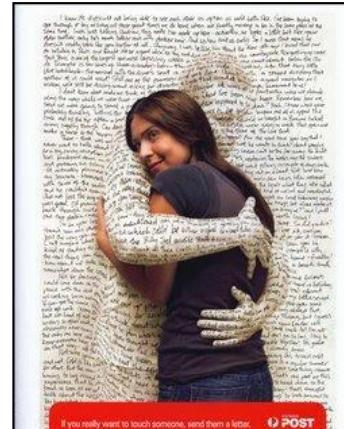
- Prominence

- Close-up
- Medium
- Long-shot
- Distance



Prominence also achieved through:

- Focus
- Colour



- Perspective

- Frontal shot
- Oblique-angle shot



Angle

- High angle — reader looks down
- Low angle — reader looks up
- Eye-level angle
- Power



- Modality — how committed?
 - Realism (*contextualization*) vs. Abstraction (*generic*)



Textual meaning

- Framing — (vector) lines (*horizontals, verticals, diagonals, etc.*).



- Information flow

- Given
- New

- Ideal
- Real

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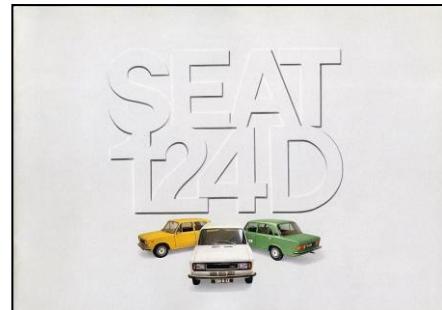
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- Parallelism vs. opposition



FOR DISCUSSION



SO, BASICALLY, WHAT ALVIN IS SAYING IS ...

Ideational

- Look at the participant in the picture and determine his/her/its action or state, and by extension his/her/its transactional or non-transactional status. Is the represented participant or event captured as a portrait or a snapshot?

Interpersonal

- Check if the participant is looking directly at you, and so determine if the image is a demand or an offer.
- Assess the way the participant is represented and angled in the image, and so determine its prominence and perspective.
- Determine if the participant or event is represented as 'real' or 'abstract', and so assess its modality.

Textual

- Search for lines that either divide up the image into various portions or serve a rhetorical purpose (i.e., pointing you in a certain direction).
- Assess if there are *given* and *new* components in the image.
- Assess if there are *ideal* and *real* components in the image.
- Search for all forms of parallelism and opposition in the image. These may involve positioning, color, size, race, gender, etc.

And finally ...

- Ask yourself what all these imply. In other words, *interpret* the features of the image; show how these features allow you to say something sensible about the meaning of the image.