


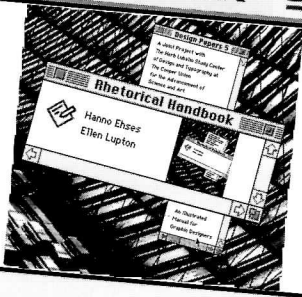
Design Papers 5

A Joint Project with
The Herb Lubalin Study Center
of Design and Typography at
The Cooper Union
for the Advancement of
Science and Art

Rhetorical Handbook



Hanno Ehses
Ellen Lupton



An Illustrated
Manual for
Graphic Designers

“The impact caused by the collapse of the Modern Movement and its doctrines confirms remarkably well an old wisdom: ‘There is nothing more practical than a good theory.’ The high energy of Modernism, released over many decades and energizing generations of designers, is declining. The resulting disorientation, together with the maturing of design as a profession, has led to a renewed interest in theoretical issues.” *Hanno Ehses*

**Rhetorical Handbook:
An Illustrated Manual for Graphic Designers**

This publication evolved out of the catalogue for the exhibition "Hanno Ehses: Innovative Teaching/ Experimental Typography," held by the Herb Lubalin Study Center at The Cooper Union, April 1987. This expanded version, published by the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, includes examples of rhetorical principles found in student work and in the general design environment, as well as a bibliography and a pair of essays by Hanno Ehses and Ellen Lupton.

Hanno Ehses is Head of the Department of Visual Communication at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. He has developed a method of teaching graphic design which uses rhetoric, the ancient art of persuasive language, as a tool for generating design concepts.

For Ehses, design theory should not give fixed stylistic rules, but should build an open conceptual vocabulary for confronting communication problems. His approach is innovative because it focuses on meaning over form. Whereas other teaching methods stress manual skills, personal style, and theories of perception, Ehses centers on the culturally determined, linguistic aspect of graphic communication.

The Herb Lubalin Study Center of Design and Typography was founded as a living memorial to one of The Cooper Union's greatest design alumni. The Center aims to elucidate the past and future of graphic design through exhibitions and publications on influential designers, like Lubalin, and on issues in design history and theory.

The Lubalin Center honors Hanno Ehses as a significant contributor to the design profession, whose work should be brought to the general attention of our community.

*Ellen Lupton, Curator
George Sadek, Director
The Herb Lubalin Study Center of Design and Typography*

Design Papers 5

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Published by
Department of
Visual Communication
Nova Scotia College
of Art and Design
5163 Duke Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 3J6
©1988, 1996 (2nd edition)

In connection with
The Herb Lubalin
Study Center of Design
and Typography at
The Cooper Union
7 East 7th Street
New York, NY 10003



1877



1946



1970



1980s

These logos use the Quakers, a religious group with liberal political beliefs, to symbolize American integrity and individualism. The concept is the same in all four marks, but the visualization has changed— and when form changes, so does meaning. All communication is rhetorical: the meaning of an idea can't be separated from the manner in which it is expressed.

The Modernist "International Quaker" of the 1970s is reduced to a minimum. This austere design style, which developed out of the avant-garde of the 20s and 30s, represents the effort to create a purely informative language, free of rhetoric. In tune with the neo-conservative 80s, the logo has reverted to traditional realism. The TV-shaped frame lingers on as the only sign of modernity.

Hanno Ehses

Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1987

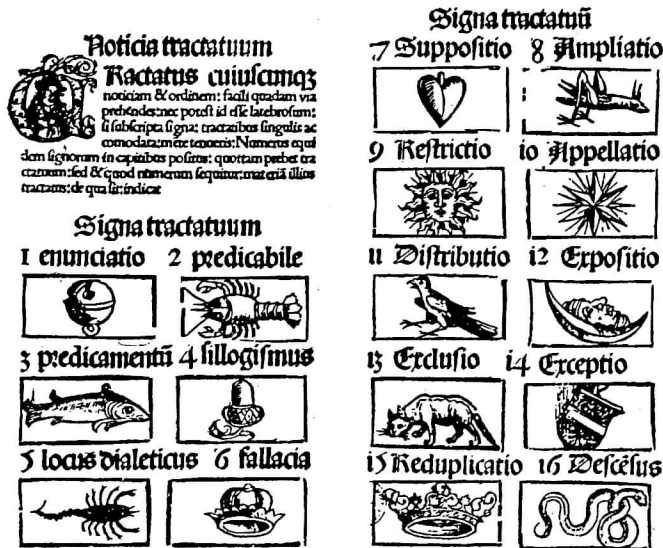


Figure 1
Diagram from a 15th century rhetorical primer for school boys. The table of logical terminology is coded with more or less arbitrary images. The pictures are a memory device: abstract verbal terms are recalled by means of a familiar image. They form a pictorial signage system distributed throughout the text.

The current disorientation in design caused by the collapse of the Modern Movement has sparked a renewed interest in theoretical issues. The Modernist approach to form-giving is based on the possibility of a universal language of abstract forms: for example, the theory and practice of Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, early Jan Tschichold, Max Bill, and the Swiss and Ulm schools of design. Since the 1960s, however, movements in the studies of literature, language, aesthetics, and architecture have brought into question all efforts to define a universal, rational, scientifically purified language. In this climate of search for a new common ground, I would like to encourage reassessment and serious discussion of rhetoric as a potential platform for the study and practice of graphic design.

The exhibition at the Herb Lubalin Study Center includes "work in progress" by my students, the result of studies in which a semiotically modified rhetorical framework has been applied to the teaching of graphic design. The aim of this exhibition is to demonstrate how rhetorical procedures and devices can be transferred to visual design.

2500 years ago the Greeks were already concerned with proficiency in communication. Having studied the practice of successful orators, and firmly believing that some of the skills involved in making a speech could be taught, they brought together a set of precepts to aid other people in acquiring those skills. They called this wholistic approach to communication *rhetoric*. Aristotle defined rhetoric as the "faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion," and he pointed out that all people have a share in rhetoric because they all attempt to persuade one another of various ideas and beliefs. To find the reasons behind successful efforts of communication is to discover the art behind persuasion.

For rhetoric, language is never simply a form of expression: it is a functional tool that is manipulated to achieve desired ends. A common prejudice and misunderstanding associates rhetoric with the bombastic and hollow, with fraud and seduction, with deceit and sheer ornamentation. The long history of this art, in contrast to popular assumptions, tells us that rhetoric has been concerned with imagination, with form-giving, and with the appropriate use of language to facilitate human affairs.

Figure 3
 18th century engravings by Gravelot personify both Nature and Truth as a naked woman: "That heavenly virtue is presented naked, because she has no need of ornaments."
 (Warner, 318)



Figure 4
 The international signs for "man" and "woman" aim, in their style, for the status of pure information stripped of persuasion. The image is ultimately culturally determined, however: "man" is naked; "woman" is signified by the addition of a customary feminine garment.



discussions about plain and ornamental style, stemming from the ancient distinctions between content and form, logic and style. Many designers believe that information can be presented without ever referring to modes of persuasion (Figure 4). Yet all communication, no matter how spare and simple, has meaningful stylistic qualities which exceed the stated "content" of a message. Consequently, the question that designers must face relates not to persuasion or the lack of it, but rather to the intentions behind it. In other words: designers cannot avoid discussing the moral issue; they must question the ends of design, to ensure that the work disseminated does not persuade its public for undesirable ends.

There have been some fruitful endeavors over the last thirty years to make rhetoric respectable again, to free it from the prejudice that regards it as a cunning and morally questionable technique. According to the Italian scholar and semiotician Umberto Eco, speaking for the "New Rhetoric":

almost all human reasoning about facts, decisions, opinions, beliefs, and values is no longer considered to be based on the authority of Absolute Reason, but instead is seen to be intertwined with emotional elements, historical evaluations, and pragmatic motivations. In this sense, the new rhetoric considers the persuasive discourse not as a subtle fraudulent procedure, but as a technique of 'reasonable' human interaction, controlled by doubt and explicitly subject to many extra-logical conditions .³

Since all human communication is, in one way or another, infiltrated rhetorically, design for visual/verbal communication cannot be exempt. The potential value of the rhetorical system within a semiotic framework was discussed by Gui Bonsiepe who published the article "Visual/Verbal Rhetoric" in 1965, probably inspired by Roland Barthes's essay "Rhetoric of the Image" which appeared the previous year.⁴ Bonsiepe demonstrated that a visual rhetoric is possible on the basis of verbal rhetoric by focusing on the relation between image and text in contemporary advertisements.

A similar interplay was central to the *emblem book*, a genre which proliferated during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Figure 5). The typical emblem is composed of three parts: the image (*pictura*), and two text elements, the motto/title (*inscriptio*) and the narrative text (*subscriptio*). The combination of image

Figure 5

This emblem is based on
Cesaro Ripa's 1603
Iconology, a catalogue of
allegorical symbols for use
by painters and writers.
The translation of the
allegory reads:

"The compass indicated that
design is based on measure,
and that it holds to single
proportions; the mirror
indicated that design
reproduces not the external
world, but the internal
organ of the soul. . ."
(Schöne)

D I S S E G N O .



diuersi costumi di tempi, è
Il compasso dimostra che
e nelle misure, le quali sono
, quando fra loro sono pro-
o le ragioni del doppio, niet-
to, che sono commensurabi-
e, & quarto, nel quale in-
uano tutte le proporzioni, e ce-
ll'Arithmetica, & nella Ma-
tanza tutto il disegno, oue-
tua perfetta, non maculata
oscuitata, ma netta, chiara,
te di tutte le cose facendo la
perche significa l'uomo be-
quella parte, dalla quale pe-
ra dell'intelletto, però i sagie
huomini che possiedono il di-
molta lode, & l'istessa lode
si cerca per questa via, co-
la natura ha poche cose per:

and narrative usually results in a riddle, the solution of which comes about through an explanatory third part, the narrative text. An emblematic image is not simply a mute representation but refers to didactic and moral meanings.⁵ Many modern advertisements have a similar three part structure: a picture and a motto are explained by a discursive text.⁶

The relationship between the image and text in a Baroque emblem book tends to be highly abstract: objects are linked to concepts by almost arbitrary associations, similar to the relationship between a word and the object to which it refers. The effectiveness of a rhetorical design methodology depends on the use of symbols and patterns which are familiar and alive for a given audience. When an image is able to communicate a message without the aid of a lengthy verbal key, its meaning is nonetheless socially determined. Thus, meaning is not an innate quality of visual forms: it is a matter of relationships. A legible message is one that succeeds in connecting with the habits and expectations of a particular culture. Insofar as design has wit or emotional impact, it surprises those expectations.

Shaping the appearance of any visual object involves rhetoric. To propose a rhetorical paradigm for graphic design is to suggest a new attitude of thinking about design, the way we see it, and consequently, the way it should be taught: it implies a shift away from a formalistic, aesthetic/stylistic imperative towards a functional, aesthetic/ethical imperative. The former tends to offer perfect models only to be imitated and technically refined: imitation instead of invention. The latter accepts that all design has social, moral, and political dimensions, that there is no sphere of pure information, and accepts the challenge to make designs that are conceptually, visually, and functionally appropriate for particular clients and audiences in particular environments. And this, in my opinion, requires designers who show more respect for visual symbolism than for aesthetic doctrines.

Notes

1. See Walter Ong, *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958, 1983).
2. R. Adolph, *The Rise of Modern Prose Style* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968), 209.
3. U. Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976) 277-288.
4. G. Bonsiepe, "Visual/Verbal Rhetoric," *Ulm 14-16*, 1965: 23-40. R. Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," in Barthes, *Image/Music/Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).
5. A. Schöne, *Emblematik und Drama im Zeitalter des Barock* (Munich, 1964).
6. P. J. Vinken, "The Modern Advertisement as an Emblem," *Gazette 5*, Number 2, 1959.

Rhetorical Handbook

Ellen Lupton, Curator
Herb Lubalin Study Center of Design and Typography
The Cooper Union



The human hand has furnished a flexible and convenient medium to innumerable social codes, from physical gestures to printed symbols. As Hanno Ehses has written, "A sign is not an empirical object." It is not a physical entity with an intrinsic, "natural" value, but only has meaning when backed by a larger system.

Rational appeal

Medieval and Renaissance preachers used hand gestures to make their orations more legible. The same gestures often recur in paintings; they cue the meaning of a scene. This sign, "to inform," is often used in annunciations, where the angel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary that she will bear a son.



Emotional appeal

The clenched fist inspired fear and passion. As defined in a 15th century preacher's manual: "whan thou spekest of any cruell mater...bende thy fyst and shake thyme arme."



Ethical appeal

The extended open hand, palm raised towards a vertical position and fingers fanning slightly downwards, was a sign of welcome which is commonly found in Renaissance paintings. It is an elegant precursor of the modern "hello." (Baxandall)



Q: What is rhetoric?

A: *Rhetoric* is a vocabulary which describes the effective, persuasive use of speech. Invented by the ancient Greeks, rhetoric is the oldest theory of language in the West. It is a theory, however, which is always directed towards practice: it describes the living, social function of language, not its abstract grammar. Rhetoric is theoretical *and* practical, a tool for describing existing statements and for designing new ones.

Rhetoric is not a set of fixed stylistic rules, but an open description of the patterns and processes of communication. The rhetorician chooses a style, or a mode of appeal, which will be powerful and appropriate in a given situation.

Q: What are rhetoric's "modes of appeal"?

A: *Logos*, or the appeal to reason, aims to instruct. The rational appeal often employs signs of intellectual authority— statistics, hard edges, scientific drawings, quotations— to promote a product, an idea, or a way of behaving.

B: *Pathos*, or the appeal to emotions, aims to move. It provokes non-rational, yet more or less predictable, responses from its audience. The "emotions" are at once deeply personal, and shared with a community.

C: *Ethos*, or the ethical appeal, aims to delight or win over. "Ethos" refers to the finer emotions of sensibility, taste, and philosophical belief, whereas "pathos" names violent feelings like love, hate, and revenge. The ethical appeal focuses on the decorum and aesthetic qualities of a design, often addressing the traditional values and moral tendencies of an audience.

D: *Some of the above.* Most persuasive discourse combines some or all of these appeals, usually stressing one over the other. Each mode encompasses many visual and verbal styles of argument.

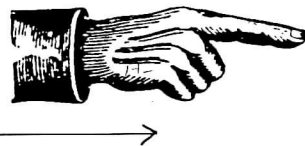
expression

content



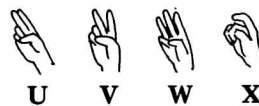
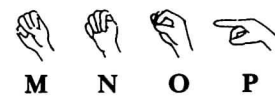
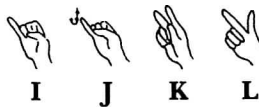
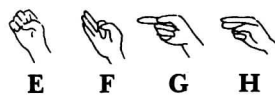
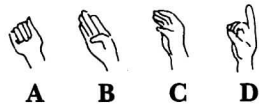
expression

content



expression

content



Q: Rhetoric sounds like a very underhanded art. Why not speak simply and directly, presenting the straight, unadorned facts?

A: The common prejudice against rhetoric stems from a tendency to associate it strictly with style. Since the birth of Western philosophy, some thinkers have defamed rhetoric as the mere “garb of thought,” a decorative coating for hard facts. Yet others have maintained that rhetoric is the vital and pragmatic condition of human experience. There is no “thought” unclothed by rhetoric. Thought takes form through signs, which are our only access to interior consciousness. All communication aims to direct the response of a particular audience in particular circumstances: even the most precise, scientific language has a rhetorical element. Any effort at representing an “idea” affects our understanding of it: vocabulary, style, viewpoint, the selection and arrangement of details, the choice of examples, illustrations, and parallels.

Twentieth century theories of language, notably semiotics, have integrated rhetoric into the center of communication, rather than relegating it to an ornamental exterior.

Q: What is semiotics?

A: *Semiotics* is a vocabulary for describing modes of communication; it has been used to describe cuisine, fashion, architecture, and visual imagery as systems which are similar to language. As a general theory of signs, semiotics is a kind of interface between visual and verbal discourse.

One of its central principles holds that a sign is not an autonomous, self-contained entity— it is not a physical object— but only exists in relation to other signs. The material part of the sign is called the *form of expression*; its meaning is called the *form of content*. The expression is able to signify its content only because it belongs to a larger system. The material expression, taken out of its context, is only a mute, uncommunicating thing.

None of the images at the left means “hand.” Hands are the *expressions*, but not the *contents*, of these signs.

Q: Name a list of features you would need to include in a sign that means “hand.”

A: There are no absolutely necessary, unexpendable, universal, transhistorical features that must be included in every sign that means “hand.”

hand \ˈhænd\ *n.*, often attrib [ME, fr. OE; akin to OHG *hant* hand] (bef. 12c) **1 a** (1): the terminal part of the vertebrate forelimb when modified (as in humans) as a grasping organ (2): the forelimb segment (as the terminal section of a bird's wing) of a vertebrate higher than the fishes that corresponds to the hand irrespective of its form or functional specialization **b**: a part serving the function of or resembling a hand: as (1): the hind foot of an ape (2): the chela of a crustacean **c**: something resembling a hand: as (1): an indicator or pointer on a dial (2): a stylized figure of a hand with forefinger extended to point a direction or call attention to something (3): a cluster of bananas developed from a single flower group (4): a branched rootstock of ginger (5): a bunch of large leaves (as of tobacco) tied together usu. with another leaf **2 a**: personal possession — usu. used in pl. (the documents fell into the ~s of the enemy) **b**: CONTROL, SUPERVISION — usu. used in pl. (management of the estate is in the ~s of the executor) **3 a**: SIDE, DIRECTION (men fighting on either ~) **b**: one of two sides or aspects of an issue or argument (on the one ~ we can appeal for peace, and on the other, declare war) **4**: a pledge esp. of betrothal or bestowal in marriage **5 a**: style of penmanship; HANDWRITING **b**: SIGNATURE **6 a**: SKILL, ABILITY (tried her ~ at sailing) **b**: an instrumental part (had a ~ in the crime) **7**: a unit of measure equal to 4 inches used esp. for the height of horses **8 a**: assistance or aid esp. involving physical effort (lend a ~) **b**: PARTICIPATION, INTEREST **c**: a round of applause **9 a** (1): a player in a card game or board game (2): the cards or pieces held by a player **b**: a single round in a game **c**: the force or solidity of one's position (as in negotiations) **10 a**: one who performs or executes a particular work (two portraits by the same ~) **b** (1): one employed at manual labor or general tasks (a ranch ~) (2): WORKER, EMPLOYEE (employed over a hundred ~s) **c**: a member of a ship's crew (all ~s on deck) **d**: one skilled in a particular action or pursuit **e**: a specialist in a usu. designated activity or region (an old China ~) **11 a**: HANDIWORK **b**: style of execution; WORKMANSHIP (the ~ of a master) **c**: the feel of or tactile reaction to something (as silk or leather) — **at hand**: near in time or place; within reach — **at the hands of or at the hand of**: through the action or process of — **by hand** **1**: with the hands or a hand-worked implement (as a tool or pen) rather than with a machine **2**: from one individual directly to another (deliver the documents *by hand*) — **in hand** **1**: in one's possession or control **2**: in preparation — **on all hands or on every hand**: EVERYWHERE — **on hand** **1**: in present possession or readily available **2**: about to appear; PENDING **3**: in attendance; PRESENT — **out of hand** **1**: without delay or deliberation; also: in a summary or peremptory manner **2**: done with; FINISHED **3**: out of control

Q: But wouldn't a sign for "hand" absolutely need to have fingers, a palm and a wrist?

A: The word "hand" has none of the features you just described, but it is the most commonly used sign for "hand" in the English-speaking world. The word "hand" is able to signify its object only because it belongs to a larger linguistic system. It has no physical resemblance to actual hands.

It is impossible to list a set of absolute rules for making a sign that means "hand," based merely on the characteristics of physical hands; the relationship between a sign and the object it represents can only be explained in terms of other signs.

Q: All words are abstract. A universal sign, however, that could be understood by all people of all cultures, would have to be a picture, and it would need to have fingers, a palm, and a wrist.

A: The "hands" of the man at the left have no fingers, palms, or wrists. They are only legible as hands because they are part of a larger figure, which we agree to be a human body although it has many unusual qualities. These hands are only recognizable because of the larger figure which includes them.

And that overall sign is not universal, either, but is socially determined. Its rational style makes it look "universal," but we are able to read it correctly only because of our cultural training. Similarly, the hand signs below could be easily interpreted in several ways. A sign only exists as function, not as predetermined form.

When the verbal sign "hand" is deployed in a rhetorical *figure of speech*, it can take on secondary meanings, standing for other objects entirely.

Q: What is a figure of speech?

A: It is a departure from the ordinary use of language. *Tropes* are figures which alter the customary reference of signs, and *schemes* alter their normal arrangement. The following discussion focuses on tropes, because they more commonly occur in pictures.

The tropes described by Aristotle were primarily "dead metaphors," what we call clichés. Because classical culture had not thoroughly assimilated writing, it valued repetition as a form of social memory. Modern Western taste usually disdains clichés: the invention of printing opened a vast language warehouse with a constant supply of fresh stock.

hand



No Entry

(Intended Meaning)

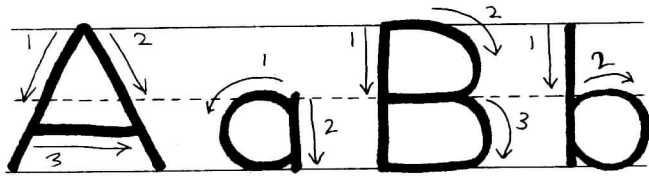


Please Wait
5 Minutes

(Possible interpretations)

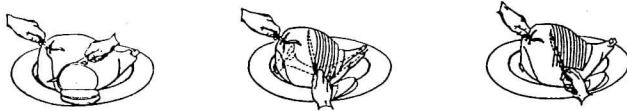


Hello



Metonymy

This drawing refers to the hand by describing its path, rather representing it pictorially.

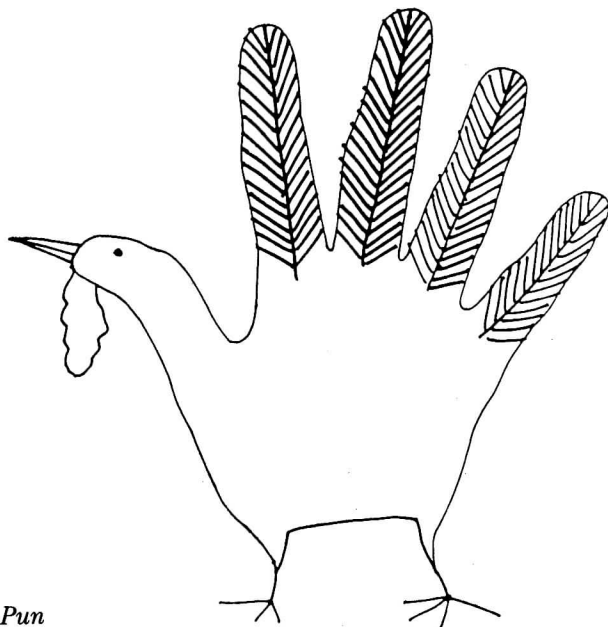


Synechdoche

A disembodied pair of hands represents an entire person. Unlike the diagram above, this image describes time cinematically, with separate images.



Amplification



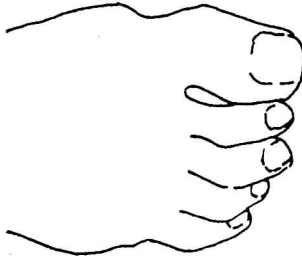
Pun

Q: Name some rhetorical figures.

- A:** *Antithesis* juxtaposes two unlike ideas, as in the proverbs "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" or "Don't bite the hand that feeds you."
- B:** *Irony* uses a sign to mean its opposite, as in a left-handed compliment.
- C:** *Metaphor* compares two unlike terms, elucidating one by what is familiar in the other, as in the expression "My hands are tied," which compares bureaucratic helplessness to physical bondage.
- D:** *Personification* is a metaphor which attributes human qualities to inanimate objects or institutions, as in the "hands of a clock" or the "hands of the law"
- E:** *Metonymy* represents one term with another which is related to it by temporal, spatial, or causal proximity, rather than by resemblance, as in the expression "a hand of cards" or a "ring finger."
- F:** *Synechdoche* substitutes a part for a whole, as in the phrase "helpful hand"; or a whole for a part, as in "hand in marriage," a phrase referring to the ring finger.
- G:** *Periphrasis*, or circumlocution, uses well-known attributes or euphemisms to talk *around* a subject rather than naming it directly, as when the phrase "it's in God's hands" substitutes for "there's nothing we can do."
- H:** *Pun* plays on two words or images that are similar in sound or shape, but different in meaning, as in the title "Rhetorical Handbook."
- I:** *Amplification* expands a topic by listing its particulars, for example to enumerate the parts of an argument, using the ten fingers to keep visual score.
- J:** *Hyperbole* is an incredible exaggeration or under-exaggeration, as in "a handful of students."
- K:** *Some of the above.* Many figurative phrases or images combine several different patterns at once.

Q: How can figurative speech be used?

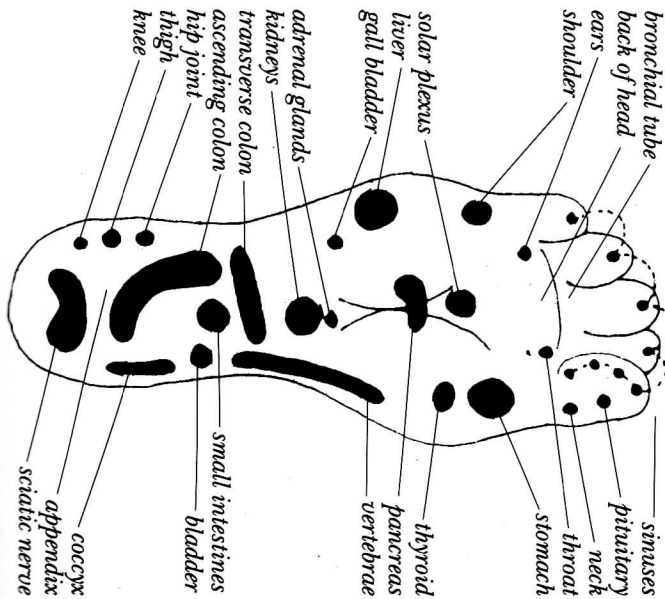
A: Rhetorical figures can serve any of the three modes of appeal: they can move, delight, or instruct. "Information" is commonly understood as a purified state of communication, stripped of figurative associations. But even information can be presented in figurative terms. In addition to producing wit, beauty, or emotional response, rhetorical figures can have an instructional, explanatory purpose, or they can be the basis of a mystical or scientific theory. Rhetoric infiltrates the language of everyday life, helping us to explain and create the world.



This little piggy went to market
 This little piggy stayed home
 This little piggy had roast beef
 This little piggy had none
 And this little piggy cried wee wee wee all the way home

Metaphor, periphrasis

Toes are compared to a family of piglets raised for slaughter: only the largest has market value. Like many "nursery rhymes," this verse has a violent content, referred to indirectly.



Metonymy

The medical art of chiropractic (from the Greek cheir, meaning hand) includes a theory which reads the foot as a microcosm of the entire body. The sole stands in a causal relation to other body parts: tensions elsewhere in the system are recorded in the feet.

Medicine often involves the interpretation of signs: the discipline of "medical semiotics" studies the relationship between symptoms and their causes.

R.1	R.2	R.3	R.4	R.5
L.5	L.4	L.3	L.2	L.1

Synechdoche

Dactyloscopy is the science of classifying fingerprints, used by organizations like the FBI to catalogue criminals and other civilians. The fingerprint, when documented as a mark of identity, represents an entire person with a fragmentary trace. A fingerprint that has not been made an object of investigation is called a smudge.



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A Selected Bibliography for Graphic Designers**

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- Morgan, John and Peter Welton. *See What I Mean*. London: Edward Arnold, 1986. An excellent introductory text about the way visual messages are produced and interpreted.
- Morris, Charles. *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938. Morris represents the American tradition of "semiotic," based on the writings of Charles S. Peirce; many graphic designers have related their work to this tradition.

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- Charles S. Peirce. *Collected Papers*, Volume II. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1941. Peirce founded the American tradition of "semiotic" in the late nineteenth century. Peirce, fascinated with the invention of new terms, is a difficult writer.
- Ripa, Cesare. *Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery*. The 1758-60 Hertel Edition of Ripa's *Iconologia*. Ed. Edward A. Maser. New York: Dover, 1971. Ripa's *Iconologia* is a sixteenth century dictionary of allegorical images used by numerous painters and writers through the eighteenth century. This is a particular artist's rendition of Ripa's formulas, with translated text.
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- Sless, David. *In Search of Semiotics*. London: Crown Helm, 1986. A concise, challenging introduction to the field without the usual jargon.
- Thompson, P. and P. Davenport. *The Dictionary of Visual Language*. London: Bergstrom and Boyle Books, 1980. Over 1700 examples illustrate the iconography and rhetoric of contemporary graphic design; some references to rhetorical figures.
- Vinken, P. J. "The Modern Advertisement as an Emblem," in *Gazette*, 5, No. 2: 1959. Compares the ad to the three-part structure of the traditional emblem: image, motto/title, and narrative text.
- Warner, Marina. *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*. New York: Atheneum, 1985. Charts the socially meaning female representations, from antiquity to Margaret Thatcher.
- Williamson, Judith. *Decoding Advertising*. London: Marion Boyars, 1978. Analyses underlying social and sexual messages of advertisements.

Publications by Hanno Ehse

- Appropriateness of Design: Studying Visual Communication Design at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design*. Halifax, Nova Scotia. Originally published in *Frankfurt Idea*, 1981.
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- "Design and Semiotics: Some Aspects Concerning the Design Process." *Icographic* 12, 1978.
- "Representing Macbeth: A Case Study in Visual Rhetoric." *Design Issues*, Spring 1984.
- "Rhetoric and Design." *Icographic* Vol.2, No.4, 1984.
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Model for a graphic design exhibition. The design of the exhibit was inspired by the rhetorical figure "hyperbole," which dramatizes the effect of the products.

Applying Rhetoric to Graphic Design

In the following pages, Ellen Lupton and Hanno Ehes relate various rhetorical principles to images from contemporary and historical design and to student projects.

1. The three modes of appeal in classical rhetoric

The rhetorical “modes of appeal” describe the way a speaker’s argument engages its audience: the speaker might accuse, flatter, offend, impress, anger, or amuse. A designer’s “mode of appeal” is expressed through the choice of words, images, format, style, color, type, and materials.

Modes of appeal

Their stylistic connotations

Ethos (Ethical appeal)

Aims to delight

morally appropriate, beautiful, ornate, tasteful, likeable

Pathos (Emotional appeal)

Aims to move

passionate, vehement, discordant

Logos (Rational appeal)

Aims to inform

factual, plain, logical

The ethical appeal addresses the moral and aesthetic values of an audience; it invokes trust and respect, asking one to identify with a product or idea. All design, unless it purposefully aims to offend, has an ethical dimension.

The ethical appeal dominated early designs for radios, which used recognizable furniture types to integrate new technology into the traditional home.



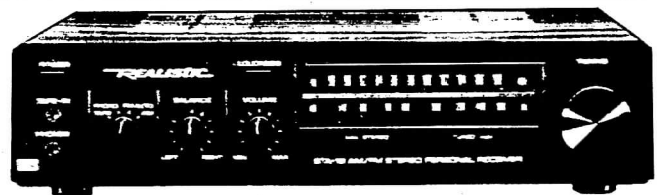
The emotional appeal attempts to provoke a passionate response (sensual, political, spiritual).

In the 1930s and 40s the emotional appeal made the machine a symbol for a glamorous future. Many radios from this period imitated shapes from a romanticized urban landscape.



The rational appeal addresses an audience’s respect for controlled, logical thinking. Beyond its stated content, “information” can have stylistic cues: hard edges, diagrammatic lines, authoritative language, numerical data.

The rational appeal suits the contemporary attitude towards technology which accepts the machine as a routine aspect of daily life. The many dials and displays of today’s radios enhance their “technological” image.



This stylistic analysis of radios is based on an essay by Adrian Forty in his book *Objects of Desire: Design and Society from Wedgwood to IBM* (NY: Pantheon, 1986).

2. Rhetorical operations

“Rhetorical operations” are a set of procedures that can be performed on a given structure. A speaker might begin with a familiar sentence pattern and alter the order of its elements for a special effect. Similarly a designer might take a familiar image and use it in a new way.

Standard
(an established norm that is altered for a new meaning)

X Y Z

Adiecto (Addition)

X Y Z (+K)

Detraetio (Subtraction)

X Y (-Z)

Transmutio (Inversion)

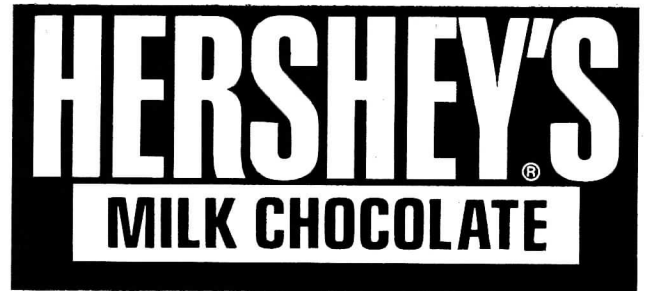
X Z Y

Immutatio (Substitution)

X Y Z'

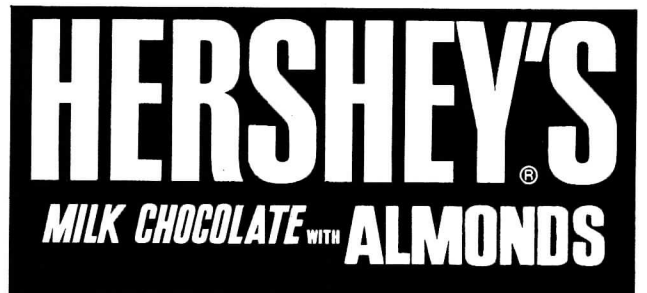
Standard

The original Hershey bar is a classic, recognizable norm.



Addition

Almonds produce a variation on the traditional theme.



Subtraction

The Hershey "miniature" is a reduced, toy version of a larger object.



Substitution, inversion

Here the traditional Hershey's graphics are wrapped around an entirely new product (chocolate milk), an example of substitution. This package also shifts the normal orientation of the graphics, an example of inversion.



3. Rhetorical Figures

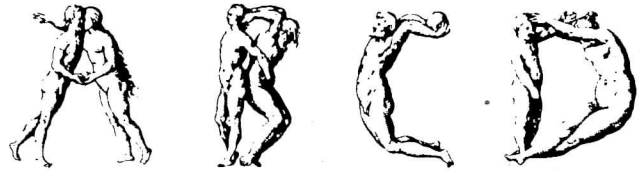
Tropes

Rhetorical figures fall into two groups: “schemes” and “tropes.” Schemes alter the normal order of elements in an expression; tropes alter the normal reference of the elements. The historic ornamental fonts below each add a secondary reference to traditional letterforms.

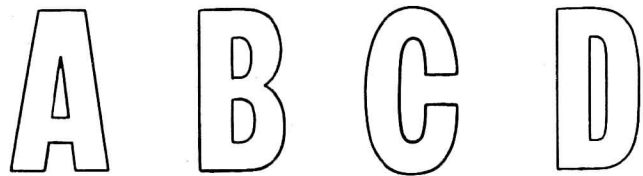
Metaphor is an implied comparison between two unlike objects that have some structural similarity. This rustic alphabet (Paris 1843) appears to have emerged from Nature like trees in a forest.



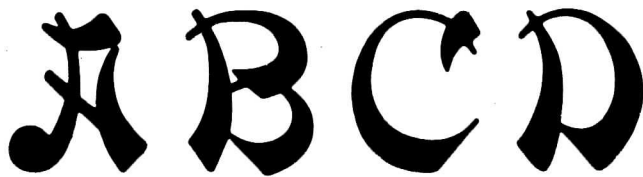
Personification is a kind of metaphor which assigns human characteristics to inanimate objects (human alphabet, Frankfurt 1596). Type terminology contains many personifications: face, character, body, arm, leg, the ear of the g, and the eye of the e.



Synechdoche uses a part of an object to represent the whole, as in outline characters, which look like “empty” letters.



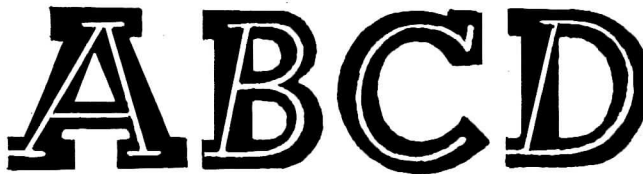
In this example of **synechdoche** a recognizable characteristic of Chinese writing, the ink brush stroke, has been attached to Roman characters. “Chineseness” is thus represented by a commonly known attribute.



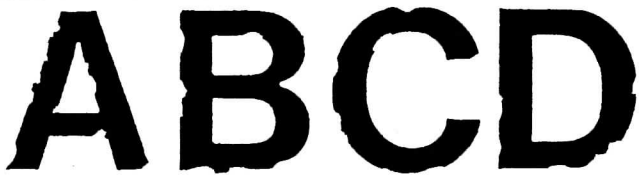
Metonymy represents one term with another which is close to it in time, space, or causation. The letters in this font are “invisible,” defined only by the shadows around them (Ombra, 1933).



Antithesis contrasts two opposing objects or ideas, as in this art deco alphabet, which layers a slim italic over a heavy roman.



The elements in this **antithesis** have radically different connotations as well as opposing formal characteristics, producing an ambiguous, ironic message (Helvetica Antique, J. Abbott Miller, 1985).



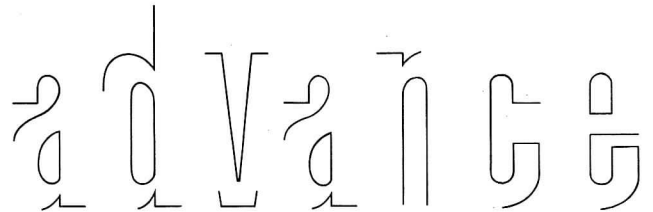
Amplification discusses in detail the parts of an object or argument, as in this calligraphic alphabet, which expands on and repeats the elements of each letter.



Schemes

These wordmark images are from a class project given by Hanno Ehses. Students altered a basic pattern according to rhetorical schemes.

Ellipses deliberately omits elements from a statement.
“Letters used in words are letters not wasted” instead of
“Letters that are used in words are letters that are not wasted.”



ADVANCE

ADVANCE

advance

ADVANCE

Alliteration repeats the initial parts of elements in a sequence.

“The loose use of language is lamentable.”



advance

ADVANCE

Polyptoton involves the repetition of elements from the same root.

"A word can become useless by overuse."

ADVANCE

ADVANCE

ADVANCE

AdvANCe

Climax and **anti-climax** arrange elements in order of intensity.

"Letters are the particles of language, which is the vehicle of knowledge, which is the opiate of the masses."

ADVANCE

advance

ADVANCE

Parallelism involves a similarity of structure in a series of related elements.

"She tried to find words that are clear, precise, and appropriate."

ADVANCE

vdvance

A D V A N C E

Chiasmus symmetrically arranges elements so that one side reverses the order of the other.

"Waste words before words waste you."

ADVANCE

ADVANCE

ADVANCE

Anaphora involves the repetition of an element or series of elements at the beginning of a sequence.

"Words, yes words, do ignite the imagination."

ADVANCE

Advance

Anastrophe inverts normal grammatical order.
“One letter does not a word make.”

VDVANOE
ad-vAnce

Apposition is a qualifying term inserted into a larger statement.
“Letters, the particles of language, can be quite entertaining when they are combined into words.”

AD→VANCE
ADVANG→E

Parenthesis inserts an element which is independent of the grammar of the whole statement.
“The ‘Scarlet Letter’ (in Hawthorne’s novel) was embroidered in a typeface which has never been identified.”

ADVANCE
AD/ANCE
V

ADVANCE

Tropes

The wordmark images on this page are altered according to rhetorical "tropes" (see page 10 for definitions).

Pun

ADVE

+VANCE

Amplification

ADVANCEE

Metaphor

ADVANCE

Irony

ADVANCE

Advance

ADVA
ANCE

Oxymoron

ADVANCE

Antithesis

ADVANCE

Metonymy

advE

AD,VAN.ⓈE

Hyperbole

ADVANCE

ADVANCE

Student Projects

Schedule for Anna Leonowens Gallery

Point of departure was a written schedule.

Addition:

Torn paper edge devices, rules, tilted photo with drop shadow, and triangular shapes are introduced.

Subtraction:

Rules, triangles, photo, and one torn paper edge device were omitted; reference to affiliation with College has been removed, as this can be inferred from other information present.

Inversion:

Exhibit information has been rearranged from monthly dates to gallery space; remaining copy is reversed out.

Substitution:

Concept of autonomous gallery is substituted for gallery as an integral part of the College. The facades are shown in a lighter tone, while the gallery is left solid to aid in location.

Anna Leonowens Gallery
1891 Granville Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia

1986 SEPTEMBER

- ALG I** 9 - 27 Summer Ceramics '86 will feature the work of Dale Periera, Paul Naccarato, Julie Davidson, Angela Dipetta, Sarah Coole, Jim Etzkorn, Paul Rozman, Katrina Chaytor, Michael Lamar, Tom Supensky, Chris Staley, summer faculty and visiting artists to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.
- ALG II** 9 - 20 Glen MacKinnon, Sculpture, new sculpture and prints
- ALG III** 9 - 13 Ken Robinson, *May Not Appear Exactly As Illustrated*
- ALG III** 16 - 20 TBA
- ALG II** 23 - Oct 4 By Process will include the work of ten senior design students in the Visual Communications program at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.
- ALG I** 30 - Oct 4 installation week

• Unless otherwise indicated, openings take place on the Monday preceding the above dates of exhibition at 8pm. When this falls on a holiday, the opening will be on the Tuesday at 8pm.

Every fourth week when installation takes place in gallery I, entrance to galleries II and III is at 1889 Granville St.

Gallery hours:
Tuesday - Saturday 11-5
Thursday evenings 'til 9
The Gallery is open to the public year-round.

affiliated with
Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
1163 Duke Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3J6
902 422-7381 ext. 184

Anna Leonowens Gallery
1891 Granville Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia

September 1986

- ALG I** 9 - 27 Summer Ceramics '86 will feature the work of Dale Periera, Paul Naccarato, Julie Davidson, Angela Dipetta, Sarah Coole, Jim Etzkorn, Paul Rozman, Katrina Chaytor, Michael Lamar, Tom Supensky, Chris Staley, summer faculty and visiting artists to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.
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Exhibitions on display at the Anna Leonowens Gallery (ALG) include the work of student, faculty and visiting artists to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. In addition, the Gallery exhibits work selected from proposals to the College's Exhibition Committee. Occasionally the Gallery hosts guest curated and traveling exhibitions.

Anna Leonowens Gallery
1891 Granville Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SEPT 86

- Gallery I** 9 - 27 Summer Ceramics '86 will feature the work of Dale Periera, Paul Naccarato, Julie Davidson, Angela Dipetta, Sarah Coole, Jim Etzkorn, Paul Rozman, Katrina Chaytor, Michael Lamar, Tom Supensky, Chris Staley, summer faculty and visiting artists to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.
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Halifax, Nova Scotia
902 422-7381 ext. 184

The Rhetorical Operations

The following four pages give an overview as to how rhetorical operations can be used to alter the meaning of a given body of information.

Rhetorical Appeals

Using the same information given in the previous project, the three "modes of appeal" are employed, addressing different attitudes and imaginative experiences.

Set A: (left to right)

Rational appeal:

Facts are presented in a straightforward, logical manner.

Ethical appeal:

Acclaimed printing and a formal layout are used to establish respect and induce interest in the program.

Emotional appeal:

Dynamic image is used to invoke and to reinforce excitement and desire to go on exchange.

Set B:

Rational appeal:

The Centre's past accomplishments are listed as facts.

Ethical appeal:

A well-known saying, addressing indirectly "We make things happen, check out the results."

Emotional appeal:

The plausible analogy plays on the reader's emotion arousing fear by spelling out a warning.

STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

PARTICIPANTS: Alberta College of Art, Calgary, Alberta
Cooper Union School of Art and Architecture, New York, New York
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, Scotland
Emily Carr College of Art, Vancouver, British Columbia
Fachhochschule fur Gestaltung, Pforzheim, West Germany
Kent State University, Kent, Ohio
Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, Massachusetts
Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland
Minnesota College of Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Montserrat College of Art, Beverly, Massachusetts
Ontario College of Art, Toronto, Ontario
Otis Art Institute of Parsons, Los Angeles, California
Parsons School of Design, New York, New York
Philadelphia College of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island
School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut

REQUIREMENTS: Application
Portfolio or slides of recent work
Statement of intent
Two faculty recommendations
Verified financial sufficiency
Completion of Surveys 1 & 2
Completion of some academic
Committee approval

Students are expected to return to NSCAD for at least one term and give a public presentation. Tuition paid to NSCAD and credits earned apply toward the student's degree.
For more information, calendars, and course descriptions call Extension 137.

OFF CAMPUS SERVICES OFFICE, Administration Building, second floor



STUDENT EXCHANGE

Alberta College of Art, Calgary, Alberta
Cooper Union School of Art and Architecture, New York, NY
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, Scotland
Emily Carr College of Art, Vancouver, British Columbia
Fachhochschule fur Gestaltung, Pforzheim, West Germany
Kent State University, Kent, Ohio
Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, Massachusetts
Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland
Minnesota College of Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Montserrat College of Art, Beverly, Massachusetts
Ontario College of Art, Toronto, Ontario
Otis Art Institute of Parsons, Los Angeles, California
Parsons School of Design, New York, NY
Philadelphia College of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island
School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
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REQUIREMENTS: Application
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Two faculty recommendations
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Completion of Surveys 1 & 2
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Committee approval

OFF CAMPUS SERVICES OFFICE, Administration Building

Public Law 89-234
● Clean Water Act 1966

Public Law 89-272
● Solid Waste Disposal Act 1977

Public Law 90-148
● Air Quality Act 1967

Public Law 90-224
● Tightens control of pollution of water.

⊕ Ecology Action Centre

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

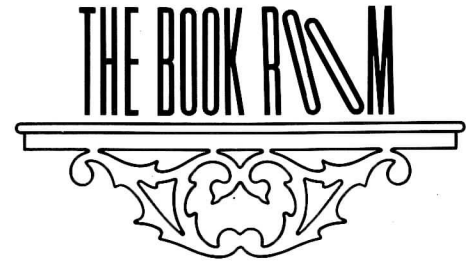
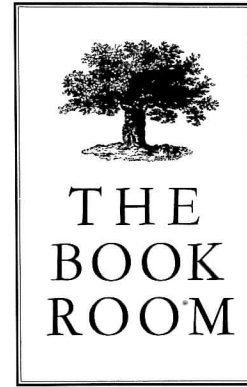
⊕ Ecology Action Centre

We are only one species.
We are no more important
than other species.
Three species become
extinct each day.

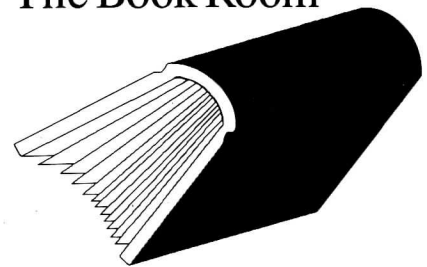
⊕ Ecology Action Centre

Logotypes

The design of these logotypes was aided by the use of rhetorical "tropes." Top to bottom: left — oxymoron, amplification, amplification, metonymy; right — metaphor, metonymy, metaphor, hyperbole.



The Book Room



**Visual Rhetoric:
Old ideas, strange figures, and new perspectives**

Hanno H.J. Ebses
Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1995

A few years ago I came across a rather revealing proverb. It reads: "If you want to get new ideas, read old books: read new books if you want to find old ideas." There are two reasons for quoting the proverb in this context. My first is that the issues addressed in this article draw substantially on ideas found in old books, from rhetoric, the practice of persuasive communication and the formal art of studying such communication. My second reason is to draw attention to the figuration of meaning or the construction pattern of the proverb, which is something that copywriters are very aware of. The proverb has a distinct word order, phrase linkage, and focus; a concise configuration or a *marked pattern*. Rhetoric refers to patterns with distinct characteristics as figures of speech, or simply, figures. Figures either affect the meaning of expressions or affect the word order.

To better exemplify what is meant by a rhetorical figure and to illustrate the difference between a marked and an unmarked pattern, let's rewrite this proverb in plain language: "If you want to get new ideas, I suggest you read old books because you'll find that new books are full of old ideas." We have expressed the same idea in a normal, grammatically correct way. The normality of this *unmarked pattern* is such that, at first glance, anyone unaccustomed to playing grammatical games might suppose its structure to be inescapable. However, as the proverb shows, we can certainly escape from it. There is choice, there are options. What marked patterns do is to change the structure and shift the perspective of the sequence, which in our case amounts to revealing and intensifying the antithetical old/new and the criss-cross patterning of the proverb as well as adding rhythm and colour. The construction itself is an example of a figure called chiasmus, which describes a two-clause structure in which the order of a first phrase or clause is reversed in the second, as in "Waste words before words waste you." The ordering and shaping of connections between words, clauses, sentences and larger units create the condition of rhetorical choice and for other rhetorical figures. Having thus exposed the specific figure of speech underlying the proverb it would also be helpful to address the difference between the marked and unmarked version in a more general way, namely as one between 'effective' and 'logically correct' expression. Correctness is the concern of grammar, which is occupied with how a particular language works; with morphemes,

phonemes, and how words are formed and chained. Effectiveness, on the other hand, was and still is the concern of rhetoric, dealing with the choice of the most suited from a number of possible arrangements and expressions in a composition or in spoken language.

So far, we have considered rhetorical figures only as devices concerned with speaking and writing. However, to see their application limited to language discourse would be to ignore their potential transfer to other media, neglecting a long tradition of involvement with the fields of painting, architecture, and music.

Strange figures unfigured

Before demonstrating the potential of rhetorical figures to generate visual order and ideas, we should briefly locate them within the phases that constitute the classical system of rhetoric. The three main parts addressing discourse production are invention, disposition, and elocution (expression or stylization), respectively dealing with finding what to say, organizing what has been found, and how to say it. Each part is treated in a comprehensive manner, dealing with the principles, guiding the most judicious choices from among the available means for configuring an effective speech or text. The last phase covers the figuration of meaning and other stylistic features of discourse production (i.e. rational, ethical, emotional appeal).

The rhetorical figure is a marked pattern, artfully varied from mere minimum communication requirements to give greater vitality, conciseness and impact to the expression of ideas and to present a message more vividly and effectively. All figures of speech fall into two groups: schemes and tropes. Whereas schemes alter the normal order of elements in an expression (e.g. chiasmus), tropes alter the normal reference of the elements, addressing an issue indirectly (e.g. metaphor).

To disclose both figurative characteristics at work in contemporary graphic design we should have a closer look at a poster (fig. 1) designed by Nisan Levinger, Israel (1987), giving visual expression to genuine desire for peace among the Israeli public. First, let us look at the poster title. The single word 'Peace' is a deliberately incomplete statement which in full may read 'Stop the war-like hostilities, we want peace!' The underlying rhetorical figure used is called ellipsis, defined as 'deliberate omission of elements from a statement.'

Secondly, we should pay attention to the image itself and its graphic treatment. We see the profile of a shattered dove, patched-up and held together only by some coloured bands. To disclose the significance of the image the reader must supply additional knowledge, a situation anticipated by the designer. For example, the reader has to know that the dove stands as a personified symbol for peace (personification); that the shattered dove symbol is likely to indicate broken peace or war, and that the coloured bands may read as repairing and caring for peace which draws on an actual relationship (metonymy), to aiding and health care.

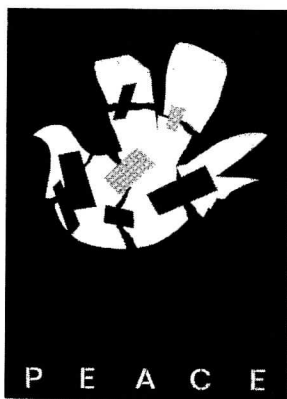


Figure 1

Thirdly, we look at the text-image relationship. There is only an indirect linkage between the title and the imagery. The concept that relates the two parts together is based on a metaphor, a rhetorical figure that compares two unlike things, elucidating one by what is familiar in the other, as in this poster, which compares the yearning for peace to a patched-up dove.

The image interprets the subject-matter and gives the media-mix another dimension: in addressing a moral issue and by asking one to identify with the yearning for peace, its author establishes credit and respect and exerts an ethical appeal. Furthermore, the indirect discourse seems to strengthen the positive outlook for a peaceful future: the vivid dove symbolism distracts yet actually increases the association potential for diversified public opinions and thus efficacy.

We should analyze another example of a 'figured configuration', this time with reference to an example in the book *Typographic Design: Form and Communication* (1985). Under the heading 'ABA form' its authors discuss principles of repetition and contrast to create typographic order. They suggest, that musical structure follows similar patterns of order and illustrate this by referring to the three-part ABA pattern found in music; statement-departure-return. They paraphrase the marked pattern for typographic purposes as the unifying components (the two As) function as repetition, while the middle component (the B) functions as contrast. If we compare the word pattern

of the proverb with this typographic pattern we can detect a correlation: both patterns draw on the chiasmus figure, only this time wearing different clothes (fig. 2).

Playing with figures, discovering similarities amongst differences, can be an enlightening experience since it leads to better understanding and expertise, to freedom of choice and to new possibilities. By contrast, set patterns are static and uniform and do not count as figures. Therefore, it is suggested that if we really understood this particular figure we would be able to discover its pattern in situations as diverse as, for example, an image column between two text columns; the front-to-back, back-to-front and upside-down configuration of bilingual publications; pull-out quotes in the centre of two text columns, or in a wordmark (fig. 3). All figures have boundaries to shape and constrain meaning, but they are not rigidly fixed and determinate.

<p>Oboe Peggy Pearson Raymond Toubman</p> <p>Bass Thomas Coleman Anthony Beadle</p> <p>Clarinet William Wrzesien Andre Lizotte</p> <p>Flute Elinor Preble</p>	<p>S Y M P H O N Y H A L L</p>	<p>A</p> <p>B</p> <p>A</p>
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Figure 2

Halifax Festival



Figure 3

Figures are devices of style affecting the tenor of visual discourse, the “tone of voice”, and they have semantic implications. To increase the range of options we should look at more patterns which alter sequences, for example, ellipsis, alliteration, anaphora and climax. However, this time we will superimpose these patterns on the word ‘advance’ to give it image qualities we commonly associate with wordmark design.

The point of departure for this exercise was the representation of the word in a typeface selected by each student and the use of a specific figure. Offering both stimulus and guidance for designing, the selected figures aided students in the production of distinct workmarks (fig. 4). We can see how these figures remain infinitely flexible and resourceful because, unlike abstract geometric patterns, they reach deeply inside the envelope of human experience and make us see matters in a different posture, a new light, an intriguingly new costume.¹ (To find out more about, rhetorical figures, see, for example, Richard A. Lanham’s *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (1968) or Willard R. Espy’s *The Garden of Eloquence* (1983).

In the writings of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, the inherited concept of figures of speech undergoes a decisive reinterpretation: the figures were no longer only devices of expression that adorned and presented the thoughts of the speaker, but became mobile, shifting categories that were always at work in every encounter with the world.

From the viewpoint of a graphic designer are there any contemporary marked patterns, or a place for new ones, beside the classic language imports like alliteration and ellipsis, metaphor and personification? My answer would be an emphatic, yet reserved, yes. If we look at figures as a set of characteristics which are not exclusive to the domain of language, we could expand the list in the following way: advertisements, posters, brochures, logos, invitations, packages, labels, product manuals, calendars, bus transfer tickets, orientation signs, books, magazines, interactive and visual identity programs. All the design products listed have marked patterns which are independent of the subject matter and can wear a large number of different costumes.

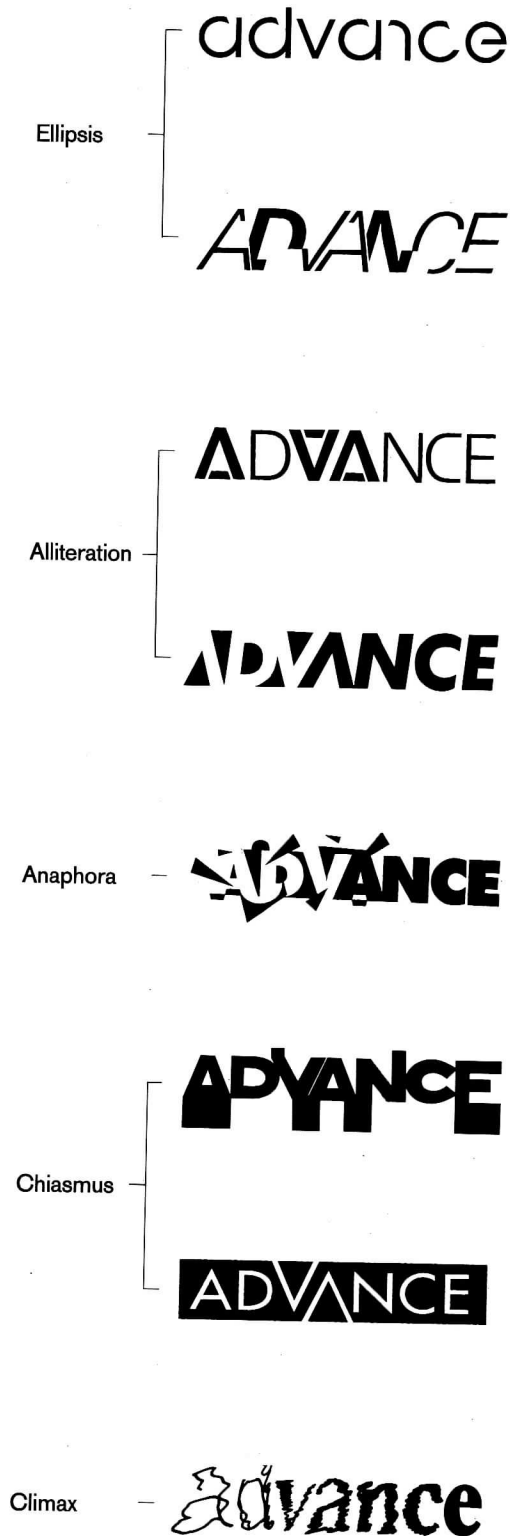
The number of figures is only limited by our imagination and the current list of recurring patterns could be expanded to include new places of professional engagement and new opportunities in concrete circumstances.² However, before referencing them as visual figures of visual communication we must unfigure their semantic-syntactic-pragmatic structure and, through case studies, describe them so that we may answer the following question: “What is it that makes an annual report an annual report and what purposes do annual reports serve?” Annual reports for corporations do not only have a visual grammar and an internal logic but have also a rhetoric of use which adds meaning through the ways they are used and experienced.³

All disciplines are engaged in activities marked by patterns which are repeatable and by emerging new ones. Visual communication design is certainly not an exception. By approaching design education from a rhetorical point of view we would be able to strike a balance between skills training, aesthetic concerns, and a general understanding that would benefit the field of design, the working professionals, and the students alike. It is also a way to develop public awareness and general interest, not just a professional interest, for visual communication design. Like a coin that has two sides, a true discipline serves as an instrument while, at the same time, making knowledge available to the general public for validation of this service. In more figurative language: to harvest more apples one can’t ignore the planting of more trees.

New perspective: design as rhetoric

Although rhetoric has been widened to explain not only speech making and persuasive writing but also the entire range of artistic expression, it can be much more than simply an art of expression. Richard McKeon (1900-1985), an American philosopher fascinated by the rhetoric operating in the social world of our technological age, opens up a new perspective by pointing out that it is also an art of discovery and organization which leads to the creation of new forms, new expressions in words and things, and new ways of thinking. Moreover he insists that rhetoric has its end in action, not knowledge, providing “a framework within which we can reveal and arrange significant parts of any human undertaking.”

Figure 4



For practitioners engaged in design for visual communication, the rhetorical approach carries a particular significance when we want to talk about objects made for human use. When we look at recent books such as Adrian Forty's *Objects of Desire* or Stuart Ewen's *All Consuming Images*, and realize that they deal with the influence of designers and the effect of design on an audience of users, we find that they address issues that belong within the realm of rhetoric. When we consider recent literature that addresses the process of design innovation, or designers attitudes and values, the way clients participate in the design process, or discussion that includes comments about appropriateness and shaping of the appearance of an object, all these exchanges carry a rhetorical component because they treat design as a mediating influence between designers and their intended audience.

Persuasive communication is usually thought of as being the way a speaker discovers and organizes arguments and presents them in appropriate words and gestures to an audience. The goal is to shape consent and to induce in the audience some belief about an issue of concern. The speaker tries to provide the audience with reasons, dressed in arguments, for adopting a new attitude or taking a different course of action. In this sense "rhetoric is an art of shaping society, changing the course of individuals and communities, and setting patterns for new actions (R. Buchanan, 1984). However, with the rise of technology in this century the persuasiveness of man-made objects in our product culture has become increasingly important. Visual communication designers, by the ways in which they represent brochures, identity programs, packages, exhibitions, and other visual communication materials to an audience of potential users, are involved in the vivid expression of competing ideas about social life. They directly influence the actions of individuals and communities. They change attitudes, values, and behavior.

By placing design for visual communication into the wider context of persuasive communication we are able to argue that the persuasive power of designed objects comes through arguments presented in the form of things rather than words. They represent ideas in a manipulation of materials and technical processes, not in language. What is suggested here is that the designer, in addition to making an object, is actually creating a persuasive argument, that comes to life

whenever a user uses a product as a means to some ends. How is the argument developed that is embodied in every product? By making connections among many bodies of knowledge, designers synthesize and produce arguments in their sketches, visuals, and prototypes. In doing so, they strike a delicate communicative balance which engages a wide range of inner human concerns.

This then points toward a persistent misunderstanding about the role of appearance and visual form in design. Instead of regarding the appearance of products as the central concern of design thinking, it is important to recognize that the appearance of designed objects carries a deeper, integrative argument about the nature of designed objects within the envelope of human experience. With reference to R. Buchanan (1992), this argument, contained within each plan for a product and subsequently contained within the manufactured products themselves, integrates the following three dimensions:

Invention or Discovery:

The ideas of designers, allied with the concerns of the clients about their product.

Disposition or Arrangement:

The internal organization and operational logic of products.

Elocution or Expression:

The desire and ability of human beings to use products in everyday life in ways that reflect personal and social values.

Designers may be more or less conscious about these dimensions in their professional work but if the exploration of visual form lacks even an intuitive grasp of the deeper issues the result will be 'visual sophistry'—banalities that appear professional because they display stylistic properties and dexterity, but are really the equivalent of playing with words that have no meaning or value.

Old ideas and strange figures are undergoing a new development at the end of the twentieth century. The return of rhetoric is a return with a difference that resonates to the foundations of discourse practice and opens up new design perspectives. The skillful practice of visual communication design involves a skillful practice of rhetoric, not only in formulating the thought or plan of a product or service but also in persuasively presenting that thought in the products and services

themselves. It can guide the practice of design at every stage and can help us understand the ways in which designed objects, of all kinds, attest the values and structures of society.

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Notes

1. For other illustrations of rhetorical figures, see Mary Ann Maruska's article "Take a Detour Around Designer's Block," *Graphic Design Journal*, Issue 2, 1994. Ottawa: Society of Graphic Designers of Canada.
2. See Jorge Frascara's suggestions in: "Visual Communications Design: A possible direction," *Graphic Design Journal*, Issue 1, 1993. Ottawa: Society of Graphic Designers of Canada.
3. See for example, Allyson Vanstone's case study of "Annual Report Design for the Campeau Corporation." ADD Centre, Emily Carr College of Art and Design, Vancouver, BC, 1993.