Visual
Thinking

Theories & Practices

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Visual Thinking - Theories and Practices

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Contents

Foreword

Our book is inspired by the desire to bring together scholars, designers and artists to discuss visual culture and its interpretations through various media, such as photography art, graphic design, animation production and on-line journalism. In this book, we contemplate the multiple ways of seeing, sensing, creating and understanding visual phenomena in contemporary culture. The title *Visual thinking* refers, thus, to methodological approaches such as arts-based and design research as well as epistemological questions of producing knowledge of the world through visual materials and communication. We consider visual culture generally as varied practices, including art- and design-based understanding of issues relating to different social contexts and cultural meanings.

The growth of visual culture as a research field has demanded visual material to be examined, produced and interpreted in their own terms as complex and dynamic artefacts or the stimulants to visual experiences, as Martin Jay claims. It is necessary to focus on how visual culture works, what different visual materials do and what we as researchers and artists can do with visual data. In our book, theory and practice are interwoven in a manner that allows theoretical thinking and visual productions to shed light on each other by providing material, conceptual, sensuous and visual understandings of cultural and societal phenomena. Visual material is not only a way to produce meanings but also serves as a method of thinking, understanding and influencing our social life by creating material and sensuous understanding of the world. Visual thinking is, thus, a process that goes beyond words.

In the singular articles contained in this book, visual thinking is portrayed as relating to crucial visual components such as photographs, journalistic practices, illustration, advertising and animation that produce social reality, complex meanings of everyday life, politics and practices. In this sense, analysing and producing visual material demands contextual understanding. Visual culture, visual design and art works are always produced, analysed and interpreted in the specific societal and cultural settings of its era. The contextualisation means that different activities, such as art or visual design production and practices are culturally and socially produced. The idea of the book is to provide and explore with different theoretical approaches, cultural and social practices and visual expressions to understand visuals as compound and fluid phenomena. Therefore, visual thinking is formulated as a dialogue between researcher-artists and visual

designers. In addition, it is intertwined with academic discussions such as multimodality, queer-theories, semiotics and post-structuralism, in a manner that allows it to be constantly reinterpreted.

In our book, many of the authors are visual designers or artists themselves, bringing their practice-based perspectives in discussion with theoretical concepts. Visual thinking is linked with visual perception, including the understanding of human behaviour and human-centred methods.

In the first article of this book, *Jasso Lamberg* settles a number of essential questions, such as *Is design what designers do?* When talking about graphic design, we often talk about outcomes, such as layouts, typefaces or infographics. In design research, there has been a strong orientation towards practice and design processes; but how should we find theoretical concepts behind our practical processes? When examining design, building frameworks could provide a deeper understanding of the design process. Lamberg discusses this and clarifies essential terminological definitions in the field of visual communication.

In certain cases, the art-making process as opposed to the final outcome is the main point. Case studies can shed light on this, as happens in *Mari Mäkiranta's and Outi Ylitapio-Mäntylä's* article. The study draws on literature relating to the art-making process and feminist post-structural theories and presents a case analysis of how feminist knowledge can be produced. This article investigates social issues and pays particular attention to power, knowledge, gender and social meanings in art-making processes. The authors claim that visual designs and theoretical lenses provide equally important knowledge about the world and can induce possibilities for social change.

Harri Pälviranta uses photographic art and means in observing shared social reality. His visual essay is based on a photography project of North American gun cultures and legislation. In this essay, the pictures are offered up to us to be read and sensed. We can also interpret the artist's statements and its reflexive commentary through these photographs.

Finland is among the first countries to embrace online newspapers. The proliferation of new media challenged newspapers, and technological developments transformed reading habits. *Yiyun Zha's* article concerns online journalism. The author is interested in the graphic structures used when creating visual elements on news websites. In the creation of information salience, aesthetic inputs play an important role. The author adopts the multimodal perspective and contributes topically to the development of the multimodal paradigm. According to the multimodal approach within social semiotics, words, images, colours and so on are handled as modes that carry certain meaning.

Picture books that include interplay between verbal and visual storytelling represent a multimodal reading experience. *Leena Raappana-Luiro's* article explores Wilhelm Grimm's book *Dear Mili*. In Raappana-Luiro's work, multimodality is utilised as a theoretical framework and is combined with a range of picture book theories. The author explores, how modes work separately and in interaction with each other for creating meanings.

Saara Mäntylä analyses fashion design in Vogue magazine's editorial photography through resistant close reading. From a queer-feminist framework, the author focuses her interests on the border between the human and 'non-human'. The article aims to contest normative discourses and show the artificiality of the categories used in societal and cultural contexts. The author pays attention to the possible ways in which our culture feeds the design process and how cultural representations shape our reality.

Through our multidisciplinary *approach*, we encourage readers of our book to explore new repertoires of design and artistic practices as well as novel ways of analysing and seeing visual data and material around us.

The book is dedicated to professor emerita Riitta Brusila, whose work, insight and encouragement has inspired many of the authors of this book.

Mari Mäkiranta & Silja Nikula

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Debating Our Way Towards a Paradigm

Concentrating on What Matters and Learning from Other Fields

Jasso J.J. Lamberg

Abstract

For half a century there has been a search for theoretical grounding for research in visual communication and design. And for at least two decades it has been openly acknowledged that the field lacks a unified paradigm. Despite this design research has grown and diversified into a mature discipline. However, just as Kuhn described, without shared guiding principles the progress of the discipline is "arduous" and sometimes "nearly random". Energy and effort is wasted as every newcomer to the field encounters numerous competing approaches, frameworks, and theories, and must judge their reliability on their own. The approaches themselves are usually borrowed from other fields, which can lead to various problems. While diversity can be a richness, it can also easily hinder paradigm building. With so many options, but without clear principles guiding how to choose between them, the discipline suffers. One sign of this is how certain debates keep resurfacing over and over, although it can be questioned how much more can be said about these issues. I propose that in order to move on in our paradigm building we should consider which debates are worth spending energy on. I also suggest that we should examine other fields and engage in dialogue with them. Instead of directly borrowing their theories, we can learn from their paradigms and their paradigm building.

Keywords: design theory, design research, paradigm building, theoretical framework, triangulation, terminology

Introduction

Academic research in visual communication and design has a problem. It lacks a Kuhnian paradigm – meaning a unified and shared model which would guide research. As Hill (2009, p. 1002) points out, the field is demarcated by a more or less coherent and distinct target of study but not by a shared theoretical background. This target is defined by Sless (1981, p. 187) as "any form of communication that relies in part or whole on vision for its understanding". Similarly, Barry (2012, p. 3411) describes visual communication as "an umbrella concept" and "a horizontal discipline that cuts across a number of separate fields of study". In other words, we can relatively easily answer the question what are visual communication and design, but not how they should be studied.

To further complicate things, scholars and educators discussing visual communication use various different terms to describe their field. Perhaps the two most common ones are visual communication and design research[1]. This pairing of terms is hardly surprising as all human visual communication is always designed by someone, and thus visual communication can be seen as a sub-area of design (e.g. Sless, 1981, p. 179). Some authors even use these terms interchangeably, as is the case in the textbook by Baldwin and Roberts (2006, p. 14). But the issue of paradigm building is relevant to all areas of design research and not just visual communication. Therefore, even if my perspective is largely concentrated on visual media forms, I mostly use the term 'design research' in this article.

I will begin with a brief overview of what Kuhnian paradigms are and how it has been suggested that design research needs one. I will then proceed to examine some of the ongoing debates, which have been running for decades without any concrete outcomes. Specifically, I examine defining terminology and transparency about theoretical stances.

I propose that we should consider carefully which issues are truly worth spending energy on and which ones we might bypass. Furthermore, instead of (re)inventing the wheel on our own, I suggest we look to other fields – both paradigmatic and pre-paradigmatic – for ideas.

Case of Missing Paradigm

The field of visual communication, design, and design research has grown into what has been called a "mature discipline" (Chai & Xiao, 2012; Rodgers & Yee, 2015). However, this growth has been organic and unorganised bringing about a "proliferation of research communities" because of which "the picture of design research today is hard to compile" (Koskinen, 2015, p. 217). This diverse growth is further spurred on by "the myriad of shifts in visual media and its grammars" (Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2012, p. 1).

This has led to various debates about what the field actually is and what it should contain. Buchanan (1996, p. 74) summarised the situation in the mid-1990s, saying that despite the growing interest in the issue "no one seems to be sure what design research means". The topic has been discussed in conferences, articles and received special attention from journals (Findeli, 1999), but so far no agreement has been reached.

The diversity of the field can be considered a richness, but also a hinderance to research and teaching. As Moriarty and Kenney (1995) write "it would be easier to order a curriculum, as well as a graduate program of study, if there were some notion of at least the important theories and scholars from the various disciplines that need to be covered".[2] Similar hesitation can also be seen in textbooks such as Rose (2016) and van Leeuwen & Jewitt (2001). They catalogue different research methods, but leave decisions on what theoretical grounds these should be employed to the researchers themselves. For example, Rose (2016) gives only a brief overview of various theoretical approaches warning readers that these "are diverse and often complex" and "can also be rather abstract".[3]

This confusing state of design research fits well Kuhn's (1996) description of a field which does not yet have a shared paradigm. In order to avoid confusion, it is important to note that Kuhn's definition of paradigm differs from its every-day usage,[4] where paradigm refers to an example or a customary way of doing things and paradigm shifts are simply major changes in these ways. From this common perspective, design practice always has a paradigm (or several) which often undergoes shifts, for example, with the arrival of new technologies.

Kuhn defines paradigms as "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners" (1996, p. x) "from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research" (1996, p. 10). Essentially a paradigm can be thought of as a set of shared guidelines – both explicit and tacit – which inform how research is done. These paradigms stay relatively stable in periods which Kuhn calls normal science.

For example, consider the case of smart phones. They have altered the behaviour of consumers and methods used by designers. Thus, in common parlance we can talk of smart phones bringing about a paradigm shift in everyday life and design practice. But they have not changed

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[1]   Of course, other terms are used too. For example, a university department engaged with traditional two-dimensional design in some form might use labels such as graphic design, document design, communication design, typography, visual arts, communication arts, and so on. (Not to mention terms referring to various digital media forms.) This variety prompted Bonsiepe (1994, p. 51) to comment that "the content of the design discipline sometimes cannot be deduced from its name".

[2]   See also other articles on the subject by Moriarty and her colleagues: Moriarty, 1995; Moriarty & Barbatsis, 2005; Moriarty, 2016.

[3]   It should be said that while Rose leaves the final decision of theoretical stances to the reader ("whatever theoretical stance you prefer") she also promotes her own view which leans heavily on cultural studies.

[4]   Definitions given here are drawn from Merriam-Webster's online dictionary.

how a psychologist studies the people using them or designing for them. That is because the Kuhnian paradigm underlying psychology has stayed stable regardless of smart phones.[5]

Cross (1999) has noted that design research is still in the process of building its paradigm. He notes that this creates several problems, or "significant hurdles", as Love (2002, p. 246) calls them, especially for students and new researchers. Without guiding principles, each newcomer to the field has to spend more time on understanding and adopting theories than those in paradigmatic fields.

> As a result, the student in any one of these [pre-paradigmatic] disciplines is constantly made aware of the immense variety of problems that the members of his future group have, in the course of time, attempted to solve. Even more important, he has constantly before him a number of competing and incommensurable solutions to these problems, solutions that he must ultimately evaluate for himself. (Kuhn, 1996, p. 165)

Since every newcomer must judge the reliability of these competing approaches on their own, a lot of energy is wasted on the same issues time and again. Therefore, as Kuhn (1996, p. 15) writes, the progress of a pre-paradigmatic discipline is "arduous" and sometimes "nearly random". This continuous waste can be frustrating for individuals, as well taxing for the development of the field in general. As Cross (1999, p. 8) explains, without a common frame of reference, researchers are liable to "fail to reach common understanding" and thus "fail to create new knowledge and perceptions of design".

Furthermore, without a paradigm to guide the work, design researchers are obligated to borrow theories and methods from other fields. As thorough background research for each one of them takes so much effort, researchers sometimes proceed without. By doing so, Cross (1999, p. 10) explains, they also "adhere to underlying paradigms of which they are only vaguely aware", which can lead to significant problems. Cross goes on to argue that we need to enhance the "intellectual awareness within our community". The way forward, he believes, is through conscious paradigm building.

Dorst (2008) describes the field in a similar manner noting the lack of agreement on approaches, methods, and definitions. He sees design research as being on the verge of a revolutionary paradigm shift, writing that we need to reconsider and re-conceptualise "the very nature of the object of our studies".

According to him, one of the problems of design research is its strong orientation towards practice and the design process, especially aiming to enhance "efficiency and effectiveness". He continues that design research too often proceeds from observations and descriptions to prescription without stopping to conceptualise and build frameworks which could provide in-depth understanding.

Similar views, criticising the lack of shared approaches, concepts, methods, and protocols, have been expressed by Roth (1999), Storkerson (2008), Gero (2010), and others. At the same time, advances in technology give rise to new sub-areas of design, such as interaction design (Fallman,

5   Examples of paradigm shifts in psychological research could be something like Freud's theories in the early 20th century, their abandonment later in the same century, and the recent rise of evolutionary psychology.

2007; 2008), which can splinter the field, further complicating the development of a shared theoretical basis. As Friedman (2003, p. 519) writes, "most design theories involve clinical situations or micro-level grounded theories developed through induction". He advocates "developing a general theory of design", which requires a "significantly different mode of conceptualization and explicit knowledge management" than basing research solely on design practice.

Problems with Defining Terms

As design research has been slowly emerging as an independent discipline, many have emphasised that the field needs to define and agree upon terminology. There have been many attempts to define basic terms and concepts, such as design and design process. In this article I will concentrate on the term design. The discussion about defining design has repeatedly reminded us of basic facts, for example, that design is both a verb and a noun, as well as an adjective and an adverb (Love, 1998, p. 23). But beyond that no consensus on a single definition has been reached, and the debate continues to this day. In search of definitions, some have turned to dictionaries, some to Herbert Simon's (1996) work from the 1960s (Friedman, 2003). Others have discussed the issue at length and proposed their own definitions (Archer, 1979; Dilnot, 1982). The discussions have also led to debates about whether we really need to forge new precise definitions (Margolin, 1995b; 1995a), or we can rely on our existing "satisfactory" understanding of the subject matter (Forty, 1993). Love (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of terms used in about 400 sources, but this did not help in creating unified definitions. Later Love (2002, p. 355) commented that "most contained definitions […] that were both unique and insufficiently specific" and that "there are almost as many different definitions of design and design process as there are writers about design" (2000, p. 295). It is no wonder Buchanan (1990; 2001) and Galle (2008) described terminological debates as futile and a waste of time. However, both authors then proceeded to present their own definitions. There has also been empirical research which has aimed to extract definitions from practicing designers (Poggenpohl, Chayutsahakij, & Jeamsinkul, 2004; Bokil, 2015).

I agree with the view that terminological debates are often futile and we should concentrate on other issues in our paradigm building instead. There are several factors which make terminological definitions problematic. It might even be impossible to reach total agreements on terms. In general, while clarity of communication is important, I do not believe the terminological questions to be as important as has been suggested. We do not need a complete consensus on terms to proceed with building a paradigm for design research.

In his criticism of terminological debates Buchanan (2001, p. 8) writes that "definitions are critical" in order to "establish a new field of learning", but that there is "an unfortunate misunderstanding about the nature and use of definitions". He then proceeds to discuss different types of definitions including descriptive and formal. In his classification, descriptive definitions highlight singular aspects, sub-areas, or causes, and are often metaphorical. Formal definitions are the opposite, aiming to join several aspects together in an overall description of all design.

It is true that a field of research needs to delineate itself from the others, if it wishes to acquire its own standing. But I think the misunderstanding about definitions is not just about

different types of formulations, such as descriptive and formal. In my view, a much greater misunderstanding is the confusion between a conceptual definition and a terminological definition. Essentially, we need to distinguish between defining the field itself and defining the terminology used to describe it. A field can have a conceptual understanding of what it is doing without coining a perfect dictionary definition for it.

Many design researchers today, perhaps even most, have no problems with the fact that we lack a unifying dictionary definition for design, as it has no implications for their work. For them it is enough to have a conceptual understanding of design, which perhaps correlates roughly with something like "design is what designers do" (Dilnot, 1984; Hoffa, 1990; Tovey, 2015). This shows that absolute terminological agreement is not necessary for a field to function.

Pursuing absolute definitions, both conceptual and terminological, can also be a fool's errand in general. This is because the concepts involved in design and design research are fuzzy concepts. As Zadeh (1965), Rosch (1973; 1978), Lakoff (1973), and others, have noted, human concepts and perception often do not have precise boundaries but instead operate on the principle of graded membership. Lakoff's (1973) classic example talks about the fuzziness of the concept "bird":

Robins are typical of birds. Eagles, being predators, are less typical. Chickens, ducks, and geese somewhat less so. Penguins and pelicans less still. Bats hardly at all. And cows not at all. (Lakoff, 1973, p. 459)

We can easily see how this applies to design and design research as well. There are areas – say designing layouts, typefaces, or furniture – which are most definitely considered to be design. We can say that these areas are close to the core of the concept, or that they have high membership in the category of design – they are highly designy. For a researcher examining such areas, the dictionary definition of design is irrelevant. On the other hand, for the researcher looking at the difference between the work of laypeople and designers the question of what is design becomes more pertinent. They might be interested, for example, in how a design student transitions from layperson to designer. But even then the absolute dictionary definition matters little. This is because the very essence of their inquiry is based on exploring the fuzzy boundary and gradation of the concept of design. Even if we had an absolute definition for design, researchers engaged in this type of work would be constantly questioning and problematising that definition.

As another example, consider the concept of typography. Its most strict definition only refers to the printing of text by movable type (e.g. Southward, 2009, p. 135). However, by extension it also includes printing or displaying text by other technical means, such as with offset print and on electronic screens. Or as Bringhurst (2004, p. 11) writes "the craft of endowing human language with a durable visual form". Extended even further, it encompasses printed text as well as the overall layout, and so on. In its most generic sense, it is used to mean how a text looks even if in a purely technical sense it is not typography but calligraphy or inscription. It seems that even though a narrow definition exists, in practice it is often used as a fuzzy concept and its meaning depends on the context in each case.

There are also other problems in trying to define concepts like design purely theoretically and logically. As Dilnot (1982) remarks, sometimes definitions forget the actual activity of designers. Or if the definition concentrates on activity but takes on a highly generalised form,

it can lose the power to separate design from any other human activity. Consider, for example, Simon's (1996, p. 111) famous definition of design as devising "courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones". As Galle (2008, p. 272) points out, this also covers planning to pick one's "nose when no one looks".

Dilnot (1984) and others, have opposed the idea that design, and thereby also the topic of design research, should be defined simply through the activity of designers. But in the end, we cannot deny that whatever else design is, it will always be intrinsically connected to the practical activity and profession. Professions are not delineated in a neat theoretical manner, but rather arbitrarily because of their history. Consider fields like journalism, poetry, or painting. If these were invented today, we might designate them as sub-areas of design, calling them with terms such as verbal communication design, word design, and paint design. Similarly arranging, or "composing", elements of food into an aesthetically pleasing as well as functional whole, is considered cooking and not food design.

Thus, the division of what is and is not design is historical and conceptual, not natural or logical. Where design ends and other fields begin depends largely on arbitrary professional distinctions – designers and cooks are seen as distinct groups. Therefore, the simple idea that design is what designers do, is actually a much better definition than many of the proposed theoretical constructions. We do not have to take this as a literary definition which limits what we do, but instead as a fuzzy concept which merely points to the core of our field. It allows us to move on from terminological debates to more interesting matters.

Design research is not the only discipline that operates with and around fuzzy concepts. Consider, for example, journalism, which has existed for about a century as an scholarly discipline (Folkerts, 2014; Teel, 2006). Journalism research constantly deals with concepts such as "objectivity" which are multifaceted and resist simple definitions (Mindich, 1998; Maras, 2013). In journalism too, there are those who see the incoherence of terms and concepts as unhealthy (Deuze, 2005; Shapiro, 2014; Pihl-Thingvad, 2015). However, achieving a consensus remains an elusive goal because of the fuzzy nature of the concepts involved. This applies even to the term journalism itself, as Carlson (2015) writes:

Journalism is not a solid, stable thing to point to, but a constantly shifting denotation applied differently depending on context. Whatever is distinct about journalism must be continuously constructed. (Carlson, 2015, p. 2)

Also Nordenstreng (2009) has noted the fuzzy boundaries of journalism. He writes (2009, p. 514) that "it cannot be strictly separated from" other areas of communication research, and that the matter is further complicated by the dissolving "boundaries between different media as well as between media and the rest of the culture and economy".

Despite fuzzy concepts and terms, journalism research continues to thrive as a discipline. In fact, one can even argue that lot of classic journalism research is based on the very nature of fuzzy concepts. A good example is what happened in the 1960s and 1970s when sociological thinking entered journalism. The new way of looking at journalism and its history – for example in Schudson's (1978) social history of newspapers – created ripples that can still be felt today, not just in journalism but also in some areas of design research (e.g. Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, and their influence on other design research). Similarly Tuchman's (1972) fa-

mous observation that "objectivity" in journalism practice was better described as a strategic ritual, than a strict norm, has become a firm tenet for journalism research. These explorations which questioned old boundaries and definitions, did not help to narrow down what the key concepts meant. Instead they widened and enriched the discipline.

Theoretical Stance and Transparency

The discussion above shows that paradigm building can proceed even though there are ambiguities and fuzziness in terminology. Regardless of terminology we can have a rough shared understanding of what the field is about. The same, however, does not apply to theoretical choices. In a field without set guidelines about how to do research, lack of clarity and transparency about theoretical stances and underlying assumptions can be a major hindrance.

Several terms are used to describe assumptions made by researchers. Some talk about philosophical – ontological and epistemological – questions, while others refer to positions, stances, approaches, traditions, schools of thought, frameworks (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2014), or ideologies, as Archer (1995) calls them. Regardless of the terms used, these refer to the beliefs and assumptions upon which researchers build their work:

> *The author's ideology and framework of values will have coloured his or her view of events, and will be embodied in his or her expression of them. (Archer, 1995, p. 8)*

Conceptual or theoretical frameworks[6] and paradigms provide holistic answers to questions about the nature of the world and how to do research (Maxwell, 2013, Chapter 3). Thus, researchers in fields where these have been established, can proceed without stopping to consider such questions in detail. Naturally, if they want to, they can do this, exploring and questioning the very basis of their field. But for many the existing framework will be enough.

As Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, and Snape (2014, p. 11) write, the number of different existing frameworks, or "isms", and the debates between their proponents can be bewildering for new researchers. And tackling the philosophical questions underlying the isms might be even more daunting. Therefore, it is understandable that a newcomer might prefer to use an existing framework for their research without fully researching its background. Students might also be tempted to simply use approaches used by their teachers or predecessors uncritically. This leads to the danger Cross (1999, p. 10) warned about, where design researchers borrow methods and approaches, without realising that by doing so they also adhere to the assumptions underlying these.

In cases where no single approach is suitable for the project, researchers might also wish to combine methods and concepts into a new framework better suited for the work at hand. As Jabareen (2009, p. 51) explains, this "qualitative theorisation" creates a "a network, or 'a plane,' of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phe-

nomena". Such frameworks, he continues, do not provide causal predictive power, but rather an "interpretative approach to social reality" (2009, p. 51).

Combining elements and methods from several approaches can also be called triangulation. As Hammersley (2008) explains, apart from trigonometry, the term triangulation originally meant using two or more data sets in validating interpretations, but today the term has several different meanings. Triangulation can mean taking "different perspectives on an issue under study […] in answering research questions", as Flick (2009, p. 445) writes. Often design research employs what Denzin (1970, p. 310) has called "multiple triangulation", meaning that it combines "multiple theoretical perspectives, sources of data, and methodology" in a single project.

However, without proper background research, a triangulated approach can be even more problematic than borrowing whole frameworks. This is because now each concept and method joined to the framework can carry assumptions about the very nature of reality and knowledge.

The problems are compounded if researchers do not explain openly what choices they have made and why. As Archer (1995) writes, it might not even be possible to understand a work if the author's ideological or theoretical stance is unknown. Even more important for academic culture is that understanding the author's stance is a prerequisite for putting the work into context and judging it:

> *Witnesses may or may not share a particular author's ideology in their hearts when confronted by an Arts work, but if they know what the author's position is, they can at least appreciate what the author was expressing. (Archer, 1995, p. 9)*

So far I have mostly talked about newcomers to the field but experienced researchers are not immune to problems either when it comes to choosing theoretical stances. For example, many design researchers seem to hold an assumption that social constructivism, or at least some variant of it, is the only suitable stance for design research. In order to fully understand this stance, we need to place it in a historical context.

In the footsteps of the rationalisation of design by Bauhaus and the early modernists, after the Second World War many design researchers looked to communication theory and semiotics for guidance. Design was seen mainly as a communication process, which could be examined using empiricist methods (Cross, 2007b; 2007a). For example, the famous Ulm Design School explored this approach until its closure in 1968 (Betts, 1998; Bonsiepe & Cullars, 1995). This early phase of design research is sometimes described as positivist. But despite their promises, communication theory and semiotics could not solve the basic problem of how exactly meanings in design are communicated, as Kinross (1986) and Frascara (1997, p. 38) have noted.

A counter-movement to empiricism and positivism started roughly in the late 1970s. One can see this trend reflected, for example, in the articles published in Design Issues and Design Studies in the following decades.[7] The new wave of design researchers proclaimed that design is not, and cannot be, scientific. Therefore, they argued, it cannot be examined with purely empiricist approaches and a new perspective was needed. As Findeli (1999, p. 2) writes, many

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6   I am aware that the interchangeability of theoretical and conceptual frameworks can be debated, but in this paper I am following Maxwell (2013) and using them as synonyms.

7   It is difficult to pinpoint one or two articles but see for example Archer (1979), Batty (1980), and collections of articles like Margolin (1989) and Margolin (2002).

then turned towards social constructivism, because it was seen as being "the most adequate to describe design's complex epistemological status". For example, Roth (1999, p. 22) asserted that constructivism was demanded by the human-centred nature of design. While these approaches abandoned semiotics, they were nevertheless inspired by it, as well as by linguistics in general.

The rise of constructivism in design research is understandable against the historical backdrop. It was a reaction to what were seen as mistakes of the preceding era. However, it seems that today, decades later, there are many who still believe constructivism to the be only way to conduct design research. One sign of this is the popularity of approaches like multimodalism (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) and product semantics (Krippendorff, 2006), despite the criticism towards them (e.g. Forceville, 1999; Guldberg, 2010). Also the Design Dictionary (Erlhoff & Marshall, 2008) embraces constructivism and postmodernism so strongly, that it occasionally comes close to sounding more like a manifesto than a reference work.[8] While it is understandable that academic works adhere to theoretical stances, I do think it is rather questionable if strong advocacy is not stated openly but left for the reader to discover – especially in a reference work. Oddly the foreword (p. 5) states that the book's purpose is to "provoke contradiction … emphasize the diversity and heterogeneity of existing positions" and to stimulate discussion amongst researchers. The partisanship of the content, together with its contradiction with the stated intent of the book, suggest that the authors truly believe constructivism to be the only option and that other stances would not even be of interest to anyone in design research.

This one-sided view is in contrast with developments and debates in other fields, where strict interpretations of constructivism have been questioned (Pinker, 2002). In its place, new approaches and compromises between constructivism and positivism have been suggested (Barkow, Cosmides, & Tooby, 1992; Bhaskar, 2008) and adopted by, for example, some social scientists (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014).

My purpose here is not to engage in a debate about individual theoretical stances. I merely wish to point out that the history of design research supports an interpretation where the field swings from one assumption to the opposite. And after the change, researchers cling to the new approach, possibly accepting assertions, such as the one made by Roth (1999), uncritically.[9]

There are no quick solutions to the lack of paradigms, theoretical frameworks, and the need to borrow from other fields. But as Love (2002) writes, the current "neglect of epistemological and ontological issues in theory-making" hinders the development of a unified field. Therefore, we should take conscious steps to alleviate the problems while moving towards shared frameworks. In order to enhance the salience of theoretical issues as well as to facilitate discussion

about the various stances, we should always aim to maximise transparency in writing. As Archer (1995, p. 9) states, "it is the duty of a scholar in the Arts to make clear the standpoint from which he or she may be offering opinion or discoursing upon the content". Also Reich (2010) displays the same sentiment, although in a more focused manner, encouraging an open debate about the prevailing stances and assumptions in engineering design.

Design research is not the only discipline wrestling with this issue. The fact that lack of transparency complicates debates between approaches has also been noted in other pre-paradigmatic fields. For example, Charmaz (2000) discusses the ambiguities between stances in grounded theory and advocates researchers taking more explicit stands. Similar views have been expressed by Locke (2001) and Partington (2002). Nursing research has been searching for a shared paradigm for decades, during which there have been repeated comments on the importance of understanding and clear communication of theoretical stances (Orr, 1979; Weaver & Olson, 2006).

The internet and digital media have given birth to numerous new pre-paradigmatic fields, such as the study of digital culture. Jaakko Suominen, a professor of digital culture at the University of Turku, has discussed their paradigm building in his personal blog. For example, he has noted how postgraduate students often resort to triangulation (Suominen, 2010).[10] Thus, they – just like design researchers – are faced with the problems that can arise from using theories from other fields. Suominen writes that one obvious reason for borrowing from others is the lack of a paradigm. However, he continues, the students can also have other, rather questionable, motivations. He warns that the use of triangulation might indicate a lack of skill. It could be that the researcher is unable to sufficiently limit their research project and questions, and the triangulation is merely a form of bouncing from one approach to the next. He calls this the searching approach. An even worse possibility is what Suominen describes as the dilettante candy-snapper approach. By this he refers to young researchers who do not have the patience to learn theories in depth, but still want to try a bit of everything. In order to expose and avoid such problems, Suominen writes, the use of triangulation should be more systematic and it should be justified explicitly. For this task he proposes constructing what he calls a triangulation matrix. This is a table displaying the theories and methods used, as well as explaining briefly their backgrounds and how they will contribute to the project. Examples of using this meta method can be seen in recent doctoral theses. Haverinen (2014) shows an example of using the triangulation matrix in a work with multiple overlapping studies containing different types of research material. In contrast, Lamberg (2015) uses the matrix mainly as a theoretical tool, to position theories and concepts from a variety of fields into a single framework for the research.

The triangulation matrix can be used as a tool by young researchers for considering their methods carefully and also for discussing the research project with supervisors. The matrix is also useful to the reader of the work as it offers a quick summary of the concepts and methods used. Experienced researchers could benefit from using it as well, to explain their views and justify the choices they have made.

The key issue is not the matrix itself but the principle behind it. The choices made, the assumptions, and the theoretical stances of the researcher should be explained as clearly as

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8   The dictionary continuously mentions constructivism and postmodernism, which both have long entries. Deconstruction has its own entry. The dictionary seems to contrast these only with modernity (not the -ism). Other theoretical stances do not get their own entries and are barely mentioned at all. Empirical methods and positivist thinkers are mentioned in passing. There are no mentions, for example, of common stances like realism, naturalism, etc. For comparison, see Ormston et al. (2014) for a compact list of selected major theoretical stances and their differences.

9   Someone might argue that the position of the constructivists shows that design research does have a paradigm after all. I disagree. I think the strong adherence to constructivism is not a sign of a paradigm but rather of the uncertainty caused by lack of one. It seems like another example of the unhealthy and uncritical borrowing from other fields mentioned by Cross (1999).

10   Original article in Finnish, terms used here are my translations.

possible. Too often the reader has to read between the lines to interpret the stance of the writer. But especially in a young field that is slowly progressing towards a paradigm, clarity is needed to facilitate debates and also to allow newcomers to join the discussion more easily.

Conclusion

Design research has indeed grown into a diverse field. In this article I have presented rather sweeping generalisations to describe historical movements and schools of thought, although the reality is much more varied and less tidy. For example, although some have abandoned semiotics, others have kept using it or have proposed new ways of applying it (Guldberg, 2010). The use of triangulation also means that we keep seeing new combinations of theories and ideas. For example, some have combined semiotic or constructivist ideas with quantitative methods, joining together intersubjectivity and interpretivism (Vihma, 2007). However, I believe the kind of generalisations I have made to be necessary in order to gain a perspective of all the various approaches used in the field.

As Guldberg (2010) has noted, despite the diversity of suggested approaches, many of the basic questions in our field remain unsolved. A central one among these is what I call the problem of meanings: how artefacts and their design gives rise to meanings, and how these meanings are communicated between producers and users. The approaches borrowed from other fields, like semiotics and multimodalism, have each promised to solve such questions, but so far they have all failed. Therefore, instead of simply borrowing one theoretical extreme after another, I think we should encourage more meta-level discussion. We should question how and with what tools we are conducting design research, and also whether all inquiries are worth pursuing.[11]

In this article I have aimed to contribute to such discussion by examining two issues. Of course, there are many others which could also benefit from critical reviews and ideas from other fields. For example, we might consider whether the relationship between practice and research truly needs to be problematised (Glanville, 2015). We could also engage in dialogues with other pre-paradigmatic fields, like digital culture. They are dealing with issues, like borrowing theories and using triangulation, that are very similar to those seen in design research.

Of the two items that I have examined, I consider transparency paramount. In order to develop the field and build a paradigm we need to have open debates. Disagreements and different views should not be avoided but embraced. But researchers should take clear stands for and against various approaches, and not hide their advocacy between the lines. Such debates could give rise to an unforeseen synthesis of ideas, sparking a true paradigm of our own.

Looking at the decades of discussion so far, it is clear that building a paradigm and shared frameworks will take time. However, the search for the guiding principles will be in itself rewarding – just as it has been so far.

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11   I do not mean that design research should be limited, for example, only to applied research as some have suggested. I think theoretical research should to be valued on its own. But I do think there are questions, like the dictionary definition of design discussed in this paper, which do not yield interesting results even from a purely theoretical perspective.

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Art-making Process as a Tool
for Social Change

A Case Study of an Animation
"A Short Story about Feminism in Russia"

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Abstract

This article explores the possibilities for social change in the art-making process, focusing on one case: the animation A short story about feminism in Russia, produced by a participant in the Cultural Sustainability and Photography Workshop organised by the Iceland Academy of the Arts, University of Lapland and Cirrus—the Nordic and Baltic Network of Art and Design Education in 2012. Drawing on the literature on art-making processes and feminist post-structural theories, this article presents a case analysis of what feminist knowledge can be produced in art-making processes. This post-structural analysis of how artists investigate social issues pays attention to power, knowledge, gender and social meanings in art-making processes. The analysis is also autobiographical in nature as the workshop was based on this methodology.

We explain how that multiple voices are involved in art-making processes and have varied emphases, primarily attributed to the voices that have power and embrace critical thinking. We claim that art-making processes stress critical perspectives of society and that promoting new ways of thinking, visualising and designing through arts demands practice-based skills, theorising and self-reflection. The visual designs, theoretical lenses, personal stories and artistic intentions in art-making situations provide equally important knowledge about the world and can induce possibilities for social change.

Keywords: art-making, animation, biographical study, social change, post-structuralism

Introduction

In 2012, an international arts-based workshop was held in Iceland and Finland, collaboratively organised by the University of Lapland, the Iceland Academy of the Arts and Cirrus—the Nordic and Baltic Network of Art and Design Education.[1] The workshop involved international collaboration by teachers and students. Fourteen students in the field of art and design education from seven countries participated in the workshop. The basic intent of the workshop was for the participants to reflect on their personal memories and photo archives and to think about what visual histories, values and ideas they have fostered and want to share with later generations. The workshop included face-to-face meetings over six days in Reykjavik, Iceland, and four days in Rovaniemi, Finland. In the face-to-face meetings, the participants shared their memories and personal photo archives and planned and designed their artworks. Between the face-to-face meetings, they worked online to conceptualise their art pieces and artistic statements.

The challenge in the workshop was to create a space for internationally and culturally diverse learners that supported critical thinking and consciousness, art-making and creativity across national and cultural boundaries. In a nutshell, the purpose of the workshop was to generate thinking about what visual narratives, values and ideas the participants fostered in their artwork and wanted to share with succeeding generations. Another aim was to make the art-making process more transparent through oral, audio and visual narratives (Hurst, 2014, p. 335). After the workshop, the participants held the Sincerely Mine gallery exhibition, which made public the workshop outcomes, such as photography installations, short films and animations.

In this article, we focus on one case: an animation produced in the workshop entitled A short story about feminism in Russia. Artist Alexandra Shpiro visualises historical aspects of religion, education, family structures and working life, as well as media representations of Russian culture. In this article, we do not focus merely on the contents of the animation but, moreover, ask what kinds of feminist knowledge can be produced in art-making processes, specifically, in this animation and the Cultural Sustainability and Photography workshop. The production of the animation in the workshop can be defined as an opportunity to share experiences and participate in collective art-making (see Hayes, 2000, pp. 80–81). Art-making, therefore, is connected in the workshop and can be understood as a participatory action, doing and reflecting together.

Critical perspectives guide our reading of the animation. Our case study draws on feminist epistemologies, which provide practices to address art-making processes in multi-voiced ways (Hastings, 2008). We find inspiration in feminist epistemologies and post-structural thinking as we are interested in the complex dynamics of power, gender and knowledge, which are intertwined and constantly shape and reshape each other. We try to hear the different voices that arose during the workshop during planning of the artworks and discussions of the self and society. Integrally related, knowledge and power constantly play out in social relations; this relationship is actualised as we constantly represent, visualise and design from the viewpoints that combine our own ideas related to societal norms, values and expectations. We also consider that

in art-making situations, power makes us see and hear in preconceived ways and from certain perspectives (e.g. institutional, cultural and educational) (see Davies, Flemman, Gannon, Laws, & Watson, 2006, pp. 147–150).

In the workshop, the feminist post-structural approaches were grounded in our aim to teach, learn and design together from critical perspectives. We encouraged the participants to be open to a multiplicity of explanations and interpretations of the world. Our workshop involved the use of art and design as a form of self-expression and a means to form personal narratives. The workshop opened up possibilities to resist cultural stereotypes and to create new kinds of visual representations and artworks challenging conventional presentations self and society.

The epistemological questions based on feminist post-structural approaches focus on how different activities and practices, such as art-making and workshop, are culturally and socially produced and reproduced. An objective of feminist post-structuralism is to develop different understandings of the cultural and social practices in life and to understand everyday activities as discursively inscribed, multiple and shifting (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 14). Accordingly, we view social meanings as a way to discuss individuals' conscious and unconscious thoughts, practices and reactions and their ways of understanding people's relations in society.

The feminist post-structural approaches can explain how our experiences of gender, power and knowledge are produced and offer a way to understand the significance of socialisation in subjects' lives. In this context, the viewpoint means that we focus on identity construction through art-making, that is, how power and visual works produce us as subjects. Focusing on art-making processes and identity construction reveals the influence of discursive regimes on how we become gendered subjects. The question for post-structural feminism then becomes what possibilities there are for subjects and agencies (Cannon & Davies, 2012, p. 81). This approach considers how gender, power and knowledge are constructed, produced and re-produced in everyday practices (Lather, 1992). The art-making processes, pictures, autobiographical stories and knowledge produced during the workshop, therefore, can be seen as floating and constantly reformulated rather than permanent and fixed (Kontturi, 2012).

Feminist post-structural approaches adopt a Foucauldian conceptualisation of power as interactive, intertwined with subjects' social life in all situations. Even amid concrete power relations, power is dispersed and used in different ways in varied situations (Foucault, 1977). Power is viewed in this study as pervasive, productive, repressive, enabling and constraining. It is connected to resistance and operates through social and disciplinary practices (English, 2008). Power is represented through terms such as refusal, limitation and obstruction. Despite the negative connotations of these terms, power offers possibilities for action. Integrally related, power and knowledge constantly play out in social relations. Power makes us see and hear in preconceived ways and from certain perspectives (Davies et al., 2006, pp. 147–150).

First, we explain our aims in combining art-making in our workshop and analyse the process of the workshop and the animation within the framework of feminist post-structural theories and biographical research. Second, we explain the artist's process of becoming conscious of socialisation and gender inequalities when designing the animation and participating in the workshop. Finally, we explain how art-making can be combined to generate critical thinking and new visualisations of society.

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1   The article authors and Assistant Professor Asta Jónsdottir from the Iceland Academy of the Arts organised the workshop.

Autobiographical Elements in the Art-making Process and the Workshop

The animation is an autobiographical story, integrating artist Alexandra Shpiro's personal ideas and views on politics and wider societal issues. It is a unique description of Russian culture, focusing on gender equality and inequality. In front of the camera, the artist draws pictures related, for instance, to domestic violence, educational opportunities and gendered bodies and appearances. The animation is edited so that the final version represents particular parts of the drawings and written stories. The music reflects the depicted scenes and features famous Russian songs. The technique recalls still-picture animation, except that the animation is realised in a way that the artist herself and her drawing arm can be seen in the pictures.

Shpiro produced her animation at the end of the workshop; however, the animation was not the end product of the workshop. Instead, all the stages of the workshop and the independent working periods informed her knowledge of the social and cultural meanings attached to her personal and societal life. Moreover, the animation depicts how she became aware of the gendered practices of her motherland. An autobiographical story, as we understand it, is intended to help understand not only subjective descriptions of a person's life but also their positioning within social and collective narratives. An autobiography can reveal the personal feelings and experiences that arise in the interplay of subjective and collective elements (Davies & Gannon, 2006; Roberts, 2002, p. 88; Stanley, 1995).

An autobiographical story is always connected to the historical events in a person's own culture and life. In the participant's essay written during our workshop, she describes her situation:

> Before the training course, we were given several research papers to read. The research papers had been written by our teachers.[2] I understood nothing when I read the research. I thought it was nonsense. After reading it, I became interested in the topic of feminism. I experienced a shock. I had never thought about this. I had never heard about feminism on the radio, on TV, in literature, in my school, or in my university in Russia. This topic is completely closed off and comes in last place in my country. I was blind. I did not see what was going on around me concerning this topic and how people are not interested in it. I began to notice the relationships in women's social lives in my country. Before participating in the project, I would have never thought that something was wrong.

This essay excerpt shows how this narrated life was immersed in dialogue with the historical and cultural events in the close and distant contexts in which it was rooted discursively and temporally (Burgess-Proctor, 2015; Evans, 2013). The excerpt also testifies to how powerful an experience the workshop was for the artist. The key theme in the excerpt is transformation, seeing one's life history differently and starting to tell a different story about what one's place in gendered power structures has been and is.[3]

2   Here, the teachers are we, the article authors.

3   We thank our other peer reviewer for this notion and interpretation.

Given our engagement with feminist knowledge production, we organised the workshop and talked about feminist theories and autobiographical methods with the participants. During the workshop, we held several discussions to facilitate their deeper understandings of feminist themes, such as post-structural feminist thinking and the constructed nature of knowledge. With the participants, we read and discussed articles related to narrative, autobiographical and visual studies, considering how the concepts of gender, power and knowledge materialised in their lives and visual productions. The workshop discussions can be regarded as political, aiming to provide a space where voices were equally heard and valued (see Brookfield, 2005).

The shared participation by the teachers, researchers, students, designers and artists in the workshop sustained the feminist idea of multi-voiced knowledge (see Mäkiranta & Ylitapio-Mäntylä, 2011). The goal of facilitating multi-voiced knowledge in art-making situations was to hear different voices and to give every participant the opportunity to speak, create and design from particular, even contradictory perspectives. All the participants had opportunities to decide what stories to tell, how to tell them to others and what themes to address in their artworks. Despite our efforts to create an equal, multi-voiced space, the art-making situation could not be completely egalitarian because the teachers had power conferred on them by the institution. However, by sharing experiences, we built openness and trust among the participants (Burgess-Proctor, 2015) and helped form their identities as artists.

Producing artworks in our workshop encouraged shared knowledge, which allowed the participants to express their perspectives and emotions and clarify their thinking (see Tennant, McMullen, & Kaczynski, 2010). The discussions sometimes provoked emotional outbursts among the participants. For example, some participants from Nordic countries with rather long traditions of gender equality perceived the Russian situation represented in the animation as quite frustrating as 'feminist interaction is geopolitically hierarchic within East/West divisions' (Liljeström, 2016, p. 173). In our workshop, we noticed hierarchies and dichotomies between 'eastern' and 'western' participants, and the participants from Russia might have had difficulty attaining the position of proper feminist knowing subjects (see Liljeström 2016, p. 134). As said, sharing stories often evokes various emotions, from positive feelings to resistance (see Lempiäinen & Naskali, 2011; Markowitz, 2005). The workshop participants shared their feelings but were never sure about the effect of emotions in art-making situations or the complexity of an emotional situation for others.

A pertinent question was how to encourage the collaborative co-construction of knowledge and non-hierarchical work based on an appreciation for diverse experiences, design styles and know-how (Sharp, Bermudez, Watson, & Fitzpatrick, 2007). A second emergent question was how to reflect on issues of diversity and difference in art-making processes (Markowitz, 2005). Our workshop, therefore, incorporated the idea of shared knowledge and know-how so that all the participants shared their experiences, ideas, thoughts and techniques. This approach drew on Grace and Gouthro's (2000) proposal to discuss feminist epistemologies as positional, including using personal histories, knowledge, locations and experiences in the design processes.

During the workshop, we considered questions of power, gender and the social meanings of experiences in both educational and design practices (see English, 2008; Weiler, 2001). As teachers and workshop organisers, we could interpret the layers of stories, artworks and art projects only after gaining personal and situated knowledge of the countless contexts surrounding these words, pictures and designs (see Willemse, 2014). Autobiographical elements in the design processes thus could be incorporated into an interpretive, critical communicative methodology (Suárez-Ortega, 2013, p. 190).

Designing the Content of the Animation and Challenging Inequalities in Artwork

During the autobiographical discussions in the workshop, Shpiro, the artist who made the animation, became aware of her own background and the gender inequalities of Russian society that have affected her quite deeply. Gaining awareness of these social inequalities marked a turning point in her art-making processes: she started to investigate, illustrate and protest through animated drawings how gender inequalities materialised in everyday situations. In the animation, she, for instance, explores and visualises the hierarchy between women and men in Russian family life and society.

Shpiro's animation states 'the nasty man is better than [the] perfect woman' *(Figure 1)*[4] and describes husbands as 'heavy drinkers and lazy' while portraying women as those who support and maintain the family and the entire household. Another statement mentions the Russian word domostroy *(Figure 2)*, explaining that it means 'to beat a wife and not give her any power'. During the workshop, we discussed how Russian society and families often pressure beaten women to stay in violent relationships to keep the families together (see Jäppinen, 2008, pp. 226–229). Women are also often assigned the role of peacemakers at home and in the public sphere (Salmenniemi, 2005, p. 745). By visualising the cultural taboos of domestic violence and gender roles, the artist responds to both political and social dimensions, and her artwork investigates possibilities for social change.

While designing the animation, Shpiro became familiar with the feminist literature on the cultural history of Russian women. She observed that the traditionally dominant representations of femininity in Russian culture are rooted in gendered ethical qualities, such as motherhood, self-sacrifice and the conventional roles of women embedded with Orthodox Christianity and the Soviet period. Dominant cultural discourses represent women as morally superior and responsible for educating not only individual men but also the nation as a whole (Salmenniemi & Adamson, 2014, p. 7; Temkina & Zdravomyslova, 2014). The animation *(Figures 1–4)* visualises femininity in relation to masculinity and shows perceptions of women's role in life as caretakers for others. Furthermore, the animation depicts how women's economic and emotional strains centre on heterosexual marriage. For women complying with heterosexual marriage, power relations are always and by definition built into other, especially gender-related power relations, as the animation demonstrates.

The animation depicts the community's social space, the status of women and men and gender and place within the community and emphasises the internal solidarity within homes. The animation illustrates the complex mixture of patriarchal traditional stereotypes in Russian culture (see Zdravomyslova, 1996, p. 46). The artist, who was learning about cultural history and gender-related topics, visualises an understanding of gender destiny that sees no changes in women's stereotypical social position even as Russian society has drastically changed over the past 20 years. Notably, post-Soviet gendered labour patterns persist in the animation. The

artist suggests that even today, many women work in the low-paid economic sectors or stay in the home as housewives. In the animation, the private sphere appears to hinder women's agency even as their voices are commonly dismissed in the public sphere.

Later in the animation, the artist depicts educational challenges that girls and women face in Russia. She illustrates how women are often placed in opposition to rationalism and reason and viewed as 'shopping blondes' who only care about their appearance *(Figure 3)*. The text accompanying the illustration in the animation states, 'Nowadays, highly paid jobs are available only for good-looking/sexy girls'. Doors remain closed to fat or less attractive girls, even top-quality specialists with red diplomas *(Figure 3)*. The animation visualises the body and the mind as intimately interconnected in the aesthetic labour of femininity. Appearance and stylish clothing are taken to reflect and improve the post-feminist and neoliberal capitalist qualities of self-confidence and sexual agency (see Salmenniemi & Adamson, 2014, pp. 7–13).

The animation shows that historically, women and men have not had equal opportunities to access higher education, and social class and family income have strongly influenced these opportunities *(Figure 4)* (see Proteskina, 1996, p. 128). In addition, when considering gender and education, boy and girls do not have equal educational possibilities because, as the animation laments, '95% of Russian men consider women a little bit dull by nature' *(Figure 5)*. In this artwork, Shpiro demonstrates the established structures of gender and knowing: appearance and dullness are associated with femininity, in contrast to the enlightened ideals of the rational, masculine knower.

In designing this animation of Russian culture and cultural history, Shpiro takes part in activism for women's rights. Doing so is not easy in Russia, where feminism is viewed as a threat to the moral foundations and security of society (Temkina & Zdravomyslova, 2014, p. 264), and the official post-Soviet discourse still denies gender hierarchies and asymmetric power relations (Salmenniemi, 2008, p. 55). Shpiro's art-making process and art-work materialise this reality. She visualises the official discourses that declare that women and men have the same rights yet also define women and men as inherently different citizens with varying identities, rights and obligations due to their biological and psychological characteristics. She depicts these asymmetrical power relations in a realistic, critical, even resisting way. Social meanings and power are produced within historical and cultural perspectives, and the artist is as an agent of change challenging existing power relations and gendered practises. Designing this animation on questions of gender equality in Russian culture may empower the artist herself *(Figure 6)* and even the audience, give examples encouraging participation in designing 'new societies' and imply possibilities for social change that benefits women and girls (see Burges-Proctor, 2015, p. 134).

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4   The figures are the screen shots and still pictures from the artist's animation. Consequently, the movement, sound and texts cannot be represented fully in the figures.
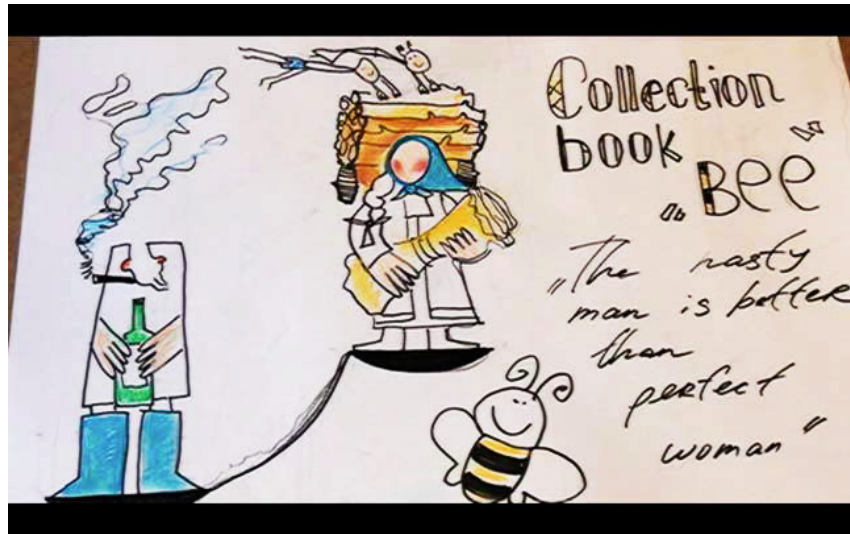
Figure 1. Alexandra Shpiro (2012): The nasty man is better than [the] perfect woman, *Short story about feminism in Russia.*

Figure 2. Alexandra Shpiro (2012): Domotrstroy, *Short story about feminism in Russia.*
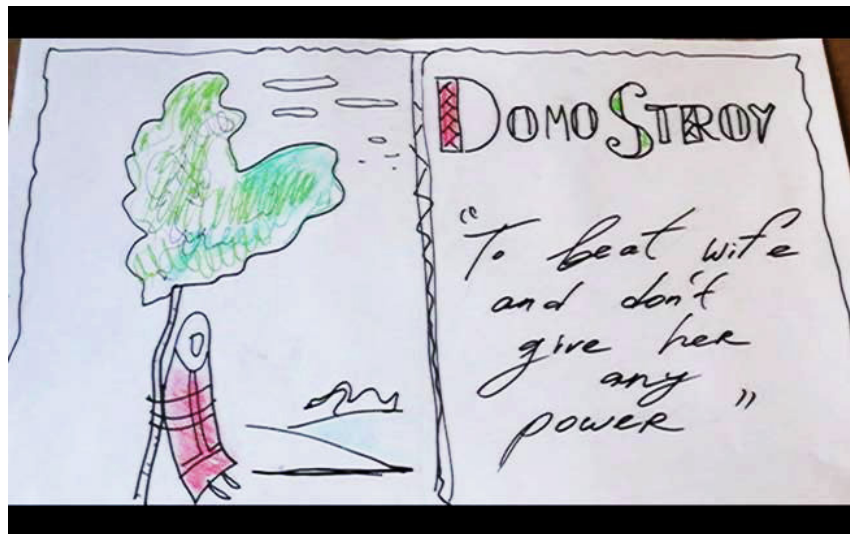

Figure 3. Alexandra Shpiro (2012): Red diplomas, *Short story about feminism in Russia.*
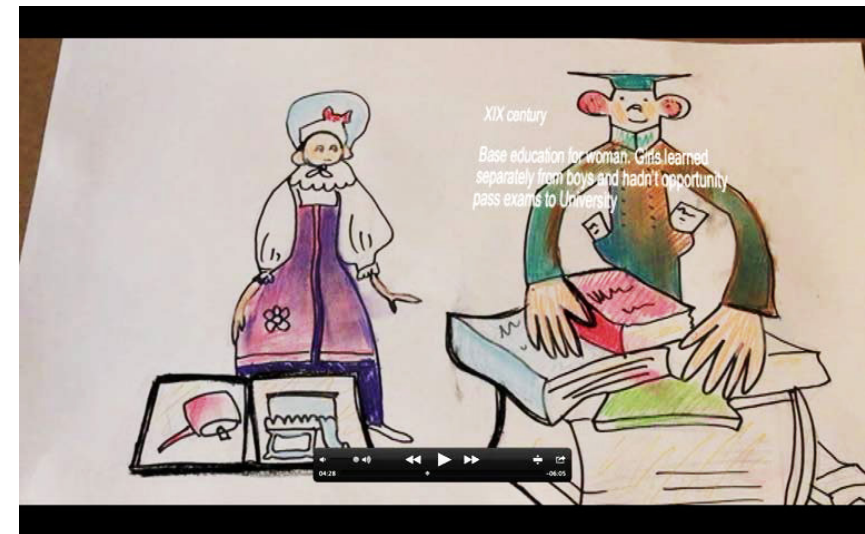

Figure 4. Alexandra Shpiro (2012). Girls learned separately from boys, *Short story about feminism in Russia.*
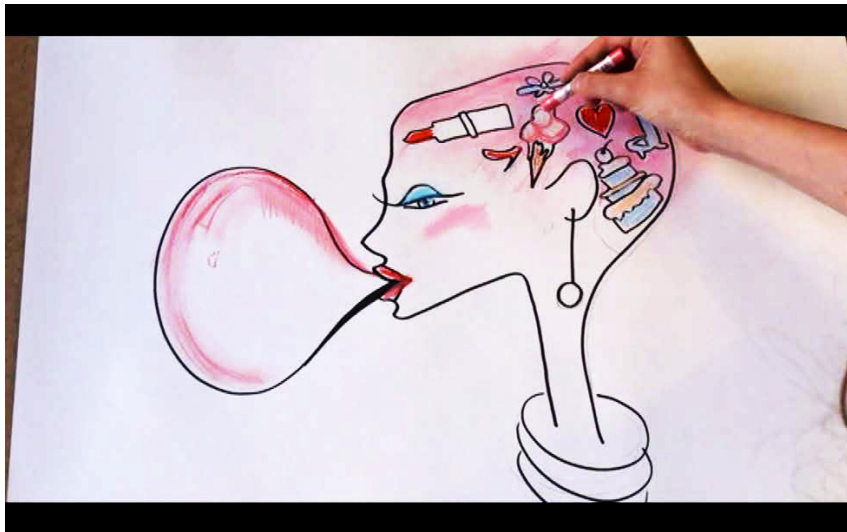
Figure 5. Alexandra Shpiro (2012): Blonde', *Short story about feminism in Russia.*
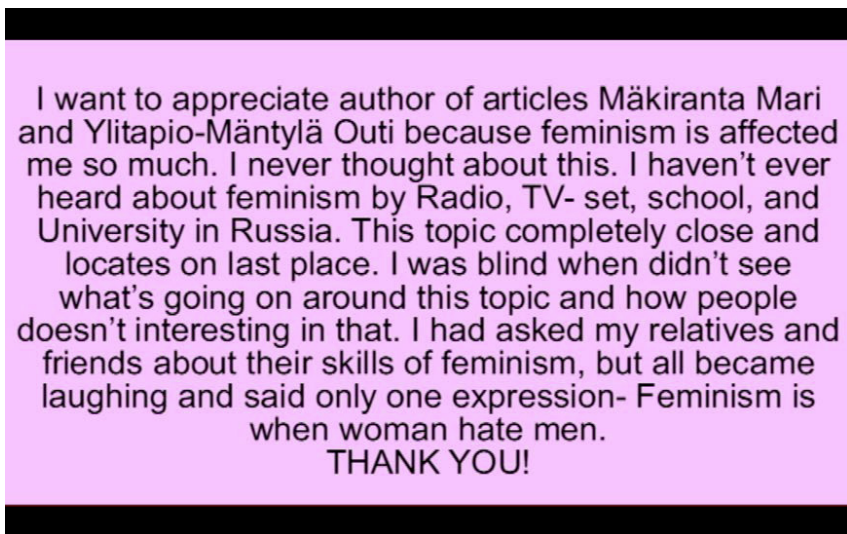

Figure 6. Alexandra Shpiro (2012): Last picture, *Short story about feminism in Russia.*

Discussion

The animation served as a means of resisting women's traditional position and making societal inequalities visible. Arguably, the practical purposes of art-making were to strengthen the workshop participants' feminist knowledge and to make wider audiences aware of women's positions. The animation also points out ways in which such positions are promoted and challenged in Russian culture, history, educational practices and contemporary cultures. The artworks produced in our workshop were constructed collaboratively and collectively, so they cannot be interpreted as value neutral; rather, they should be understood as political (see also Lempiäinen & Naskali, 2011). Some people, especially those whose voices are heard and recognised, hold stronger positions from which they can shape political outcomes and political visual representations (DeLaet, 2012).

Through producing the animation, the artist developed her critical thinking skills, connected her knowledge to her experiences and skills as resources and understood the social and political aspects of everyday activities (see Vogel, 2002; Weiler, 2001). Reading and perceiving the artist's animation, we, the researchers, became more aware of art-making situations as spaces where personal stories, politics, differences and conflicts are intrinsic to critical thinking. The animation and the workshop examined here provide empirical evidence for the potential to build a space for dialogical educational and art-making practices where the voices of the others can be heard (see Merrill, 2005). The transformative feminist aspirations of the cooperation enabled interactions between the participants and the teachers. We the teachers and the artist changed feminist ideas and learned from each other.

The production of the animation suggested the importance of subjective experience and artistic self-expression in art-making processes. The art-making process examined here reflected larger social and cultural contexts, as well as historical, economic and political dimensions (Grace & Gouthro, 2000; Weiler, 2001). The post-structural approach of our analysis also incorporated feminist values (e.g. the social constructions of knowing subjects), challenged traditional patriarchal thinking on family ties, education and embodied experiences and gave the participants voices.

The animation offered one way to understand the cultural and social elements of the lived practices and experiences of everyday life (see Hahna, 2013; Jansson, Wendt, & Åse, 2008). Producing the animation made it possible to obtain new knowledge and forms of understanding reaching beyond established discourses. The artist gained new knowledge about feminist theories in our workshop and, inspired by the feminist discussions, articulated her knowledge through the visual form of the animation. The animation served as a powerful tool to visualise feminist knowledge and to challenge and view the established discourses critically. As Shpiro examined her personal and societal history, she opened up an understanding of the process of socialisation, enabling her (and all the workshop participants and the audience of her animation) to recognise how all participation in societal and traditional practices (see Berg, 2008; Haug, 1987). Workshops with art-making aims are one possible path to introduce and develop feminist epistemologies of situated knowledge. This approach draws attention to alternative ways of learning about socialisation and exposes how we construct meaning out of the continuing moments of our lives and various historical events (Kaufman et al., 2001, pp. 371–373).

Conclusions

In this article, we ask what feminist knowledge can be produced in art-making processes, specifically in the animation A short story about feminism and the Cultural Sustainability and Photography workshop. Our analysis also shares a contemporary account of the use of feminist ideas to facilitate a process of practical consciousness rising. We argue first that visual representations are powerful tools to reveal and examine cultural and societal inequalities and taboos. Artwork and images make visible the processes of knowledge and add value to understanding the gender structures and inequalities of society. Producing feminist knowledge, however, is never divorced from power and free of problems. Uncomfortable power relations between feminist women in Eastern and Western contexts can highlight differences between feminist subjects. In addition, the collective process of story-telling and art-making can reveal the cultural differences and similarities in societies and personal lives. Visualised inequalities can be seen as personal and private but also as common and recognisable in different cultural contexts. Art-making situations always contain different voices: restraining, creative, challenging, oppressive and empowering. These voices have varied emphases and are primarily attributed to those who have power.

Moreover, we claim that personal life stories and visual representations provide knowledge of the world that is equally important as knowledge from theories. To enhance critical thinking in art-making situations, we need to theorise, reflect and build links between personal experiences and practical skills, on one hand, and theoretical approaches, on the other. Feminist epistemologies emphasise the multiplicative, inverse relation between theory and practice. Art-making processes and art education, therefore, should be positioned so that participants can learn how various practices of knowing, theories and visual productions are formulated (see Lempiäinen & Naskali, 2011).

The dominant way of thinking can lock us into certain places and situations and settled ways of thinking and seeing every day practises (Gannon & Davies, 2012, 85). The art-making process of the animation is one way to find one's own voice and the social meanings of life and to see gendered practices and power relations between subjects in society—though it is not an answer or an absolute truth but, rather, a way to see life in another way and to find new perspectives.

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guns.doc

Image–based, Text–extended
Approach to Practical Shooting

Harri Pälviranta

Abstract

This visual essay rests on a practice of observing and interpreting shared social reality through photographic means. It stems from the situation where art making precede theoretical conceptualising and analysis. Photographic project guns.doc is an independent exercise lasting several years, yet here it receives alternative treatment as it is observed with text-based tools. Rather than aiming at analysing the guns.doc project, this self-reflexive cross-commentary opens possible trails on pondering the underlying premises of the project, potential of post-documentary practice and ethical challenges this type of project is burdened with.

Keywords: art, artistic research, documentary photography, ethics, guns, post-documentary, practice-as-research, shooting

Artist Statement for the *guns.doc* Photography Project

guns.doc stems from the general idea that, in the private realm, guns and firearms are objects that both fascinate and frighten people. For some, guns and shooting generate emotional and corporeal sensations, sometimes even highly luscious ones. Guns bring joy and feeling of safety to their lives. Another lot of people is afraid of guns and shooting. Due to the potential of guns to damage and kill, these people find them daunting and dubious.

Following this duality in approach, shooting and guns constitute an affair that provokes profoundly polarized opinions and debate on the sensibleness of guns and shooting. Each country has its own debates, yet they seem to follow similar trails.

For a person observing gun cultures and debates relating to them, it seems that there isn't any consensus to be found. National politics can regulate guns and shooting but it can't resolve individual desires or daunts. Dissonance remains.

With gun.doc I am touching this ambiguity and ambivalence with photographic means. I am photographing people who are engaged in a hobby called 'practical shooting'. It is a sport that combines precision, tactical movements, power and speed. The aim is to score as many points as possible in a minimum time. Practical shooting combines real-world shooting and self-defense techniques into sport shooting.

Observed from outside, despite being a fascinating sport, it has connections to heroic shooting endeavours and first person shooter video games such as Doom or Anti-Terrorist and to other idealizing ways to use guns. As such it constitutes a contradictory practice that I have tried to visualise. I have focused on people, their hands, guns, additional items, the actual moments of shooting, in the shooting grounds and resting points. I have also photographed various marks in the nature and different sorts of leftovers.
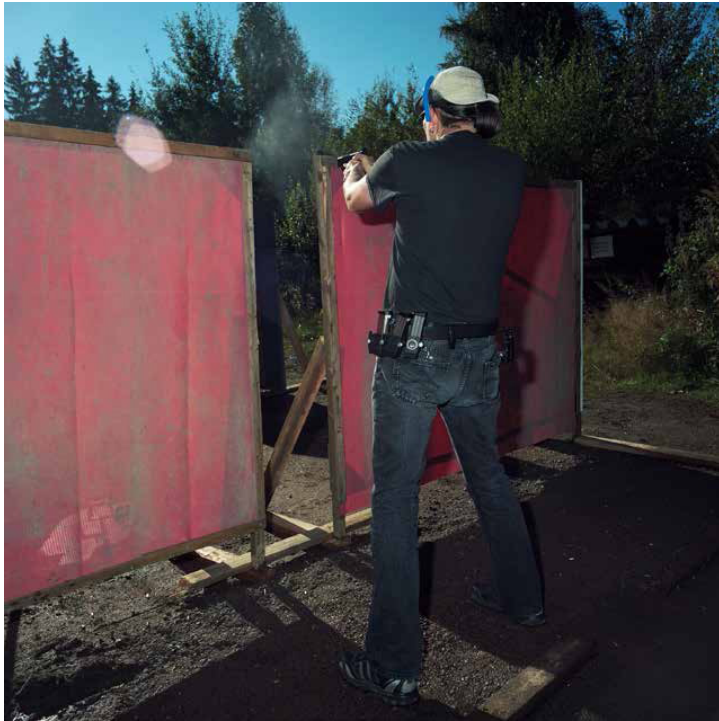
All the photographs are made between 2012 and 2016 in practical shooting matches in Estonia, Finland, Sweden and the USA.
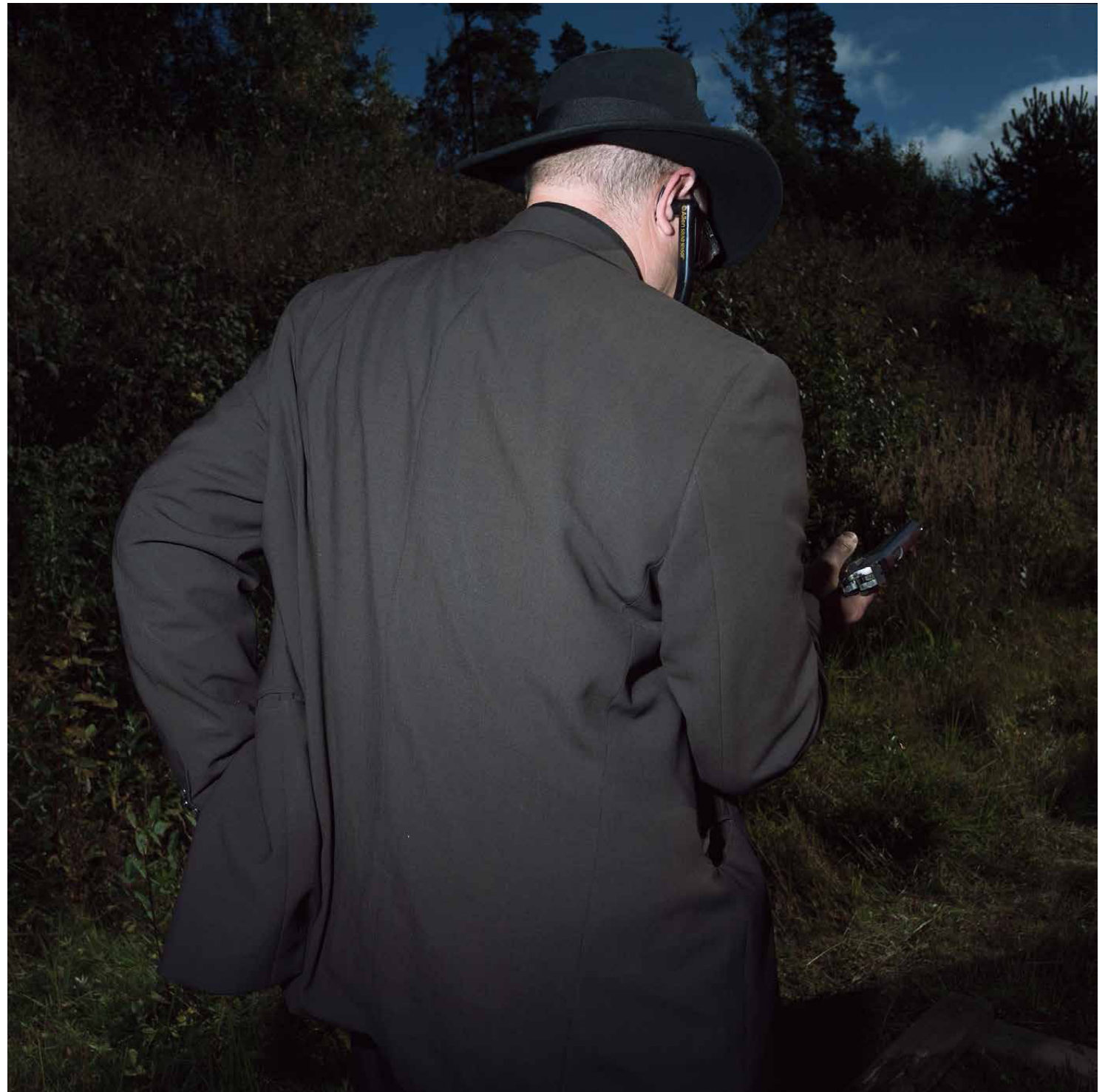
Reflexive Commentary

For an urban pacifist like myself, entering a rural shooting range full of men with loaded firearms produces an emotional turmoil. Prejudices surface and ungrounded opinions become projected to people occupying the range. The feeling of foreignness arises. However, after having visited shooting ranges tens of times since 2009, what in the beginning appeared alien to me has now become familiar enough to appear even attracting. Photographing a project that I have named *guns.doc* has not made me a shooter, yet I now possess more thorough comprehension on shooting as a practice and social field.

It is worth recognizing that my immersion with the issue of guns and shooting has not been limited to *guns.doc*. Simultaneously with this project I made a video work focusing on the discourses around guns and shooting in Finland. A 37-minute long *The Great Gun Debate* explores and analyses a discussion about guns and weapons bearing. Prior to these projects, I have touched issues such as school shootings (News portraits, 2014), places of shooting (Shooting ranges, 2010) and illegal guns in Albania (Guns at home, 2007). I am interested in guns and shooting because of their incongruous role in contemporary society. Fascinating is also guns explicit connection to issues of violence, be it subjective or objective, symbolic or systemic, direct or indirect.

Regarding the project at hand, *guns.doc* constructs a representation of shooting as a leisure time activity. The countries[1] where it has been photographed constitute a diverse set of case examples of gun cultures: the USA ranks the first in gun ownership rates per capita in the world (101 - 120,5 guns per 100 people), whereas Estonia is listed to the bottom end in Europe (5 - 9.2 guns per 100 people). Finland (27,5 - 32,4 guns per 100 people) is nicely within top ten globally and Sweden (23,1 - 31.6 guns per 100 people) is within top 20. With this type of multinational approach I am trying to take distance to country-specific circumstances and focus on corporeality and affectual issues connected to guns and shooting rather than national differences.

The finished *guns.doc* project is not a document of the world of practical shooting, it rather participates in reshaping the image of shooting in general through documentary expression. Yet argued from

1 Statistics about the accurate gun ownership rates are difficult to acquire. Different countries use varied methods on listing registered civilian firearms and the existing statistics are therefore incommensurate. The percentages mentioned in this article are based on Small Arms Survey 2017. Some of the percentages are corrected based on criticism the survey received and updated according to more recent information. For more info, please see i.e. www.gunpolicy.org or https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estimated_number_of_guns_per_capita_by_country.

the perspective of the author, contrary to the tradition of social documentary photography, the series aims at taking no clear sides in gun debates – it is not against or for guns and shooting. However, what is worth recognising when the works are exposed to public, in interpretation it easily becomes signified in a biased manner. Based on the findings on my previous research (Pälviranta, 2012), in reception, generally speaking, the images or artworks underlining social issues become interpreted as a voice for or against something. This suggestion is grounded on the historically constructed way of reading social documentary photography but also to the idea that whenever polarized issues are debated, cognitive dissonance arises within involved individuals (Pälviranta, 2012, p. 157–159). The viewer adapts the pictures to coincide his/her previous opinions, whether the pictures are made or not with such motives. In this sense, documentary photographs are good meat for verifying one's preconceptions. Therefore, whether it is in the interests of the artist of not, also *guns.doc* reaches the domain of the political.

Nevertheless, *guns.doc* is political because of the context. At the time of photographing the series and constructing this visual essay, the existence and use of firearms in the private realm is hotly debated in the USA and European Union, and in Finland.[2] After the school massacres in Finland in 2007 and 2008 and, further, terror attacks in Paris in November 2015, in Europe arouse a need to tighten the gun laws to prevent similar massacres happening in the future. School shooting in Florida in February 2018 sparked an unseen phenomenon against guns in the USA. Such debates themselves demonstrate that firearms are political, that there exist no guns without several discourses, both for and against, circling around them. Guns generate and nurture political debate. This debate focuses on the ownership and use of guns in the private, non-official realm. It is a heated conversation on the usefulness of guns, and further, about their safety or perilousness.

In Finland, this discussion also connects with issues related to national defence (Puolustusvaliokunnan lausunto PuVl 4/2015 vp). In relation to EU policy, Finland is doing the best it can to have an effect on European Union's firearms legislation. Finland wants to have national mitigations on the new possible restrictions due to the importance of private firearms in its national defence policy. Importance of hunting is also underlined in the petitions. Finland's role in this policy making can be seen as bizarre because Finland ranks very high in the death by guns rates when compared with its European neighbours (Duquet & Van Alstein, 2015, p. 22).

Even though *guns.doc* specifically focus on shooting as a hobby, it nevertheless also connects with this larger question of gun use. It is therefore possible to ask which perspective it visually takes to firearms and shooting? When working with this type of topic in above described discursive atmosphere, how independent and pure in heart the photographer can be in his actions? To respond to these questions, it is necessary to turn to the premises behind the series but also to the pictures themselves. This is because, as it is maintained in documentary film research (Korhonen, 2013, p. 27), the morals of the artist can be derived by analysing the film itself – the film always carries the morals of its makers with it. This can be expanded to maintain that the political commitments of the photographer can be deducted from the set of pictures.

When photographing at the shooting grounds, shooters were very much interested in my motives. Even though I didn't have a clear political standpoint, in order to gain access and permission to photograph at the shooting grounds I had to verbalize my photographic interest towards guns and shooting. I clarified my approach as mentioned in my statement (printed above). By unfolding my interests in this manner, I earned so called 'informed consent' (i.e. Gross, Katz & Ruby, 1988, p. 14–15) from the shooters. This principle is very much used in documentary filmmaking and photography. However, even though its purpose is to establish mutual agreement based on informing the subjects on the author's motives, aspirations and objectives, it mainly protects author's rights. In my case, even though my motives can be described and elaborated, at the moment of photography there hasn't been any clear script on what I am doing and thus it has been impossible to reveal my stand fully to the subjects. The same abstention is underlined in my photographic practice: I have chosen a technique that is visually strong and that underlines ambiguity and oddity but the photos cannot be shown to the subjects at the event of photography. I use a medium format film camera (Hasselblad) with a flash attached to the camera, and the flash is so strong that it overruns daylight. The subjects were very much aware of my photography, accepted my presence and discussed with me thoroughly about their practice. All this was allowed without possibility for them to see any photographs or an opportunity to comment on the end results. Regarding the visual quality and nature of photography and the connotations this type of photography produces, I left all the decisions to myself.

Defined from the perspective of the author, *guns.doc* can be connected with a practice that can be defined as post-documentary. The term was established academically by Martha Rosler (2004) in her famous essay Post-Documentary, originally written in 1999. Rosler's initial idea was that traditional social documentary is teetering, even dying away. After the post-documentary turn, it is not possible to trust photographs as documents. In relation to this, Rosler talks about the partial melding of subjects and audience on the one hand and postmodern doubt on the other as initiatives that breaks the ground beneath the traditional documentary. Rosler also sees that digitalization has an effect on the transparency of photography. But then Rosler states that the world still needs documentary photography. Following this, visual narratives based on the transparency of documentary photography needs to be reconsidered also from the photographer's perspective.

Even though Rosler's essay was widely read and it found its position among the classical essays on photography, the precise meaning of post-documentary is still negotiated. Very polarized perspectives appear. Jong Choi (2012), for instance, sees post-documentary merely as a practice that seeks "… to incorporate documentary's conventional values (close engagement with reality, political consciousness, objectivity, etc.) with various aesthetic sensibilities (large scale picture planes, vivid color, theatrical narratives, etc.) in order to produce more provocative and more engaging visual testimonies of recent histories" (Choi, 2012, p. 7). Many others see post-documentary meaning simply photography after the digital turn. If used in this manner, the term can be changed to post-photography (see i.e. Shore, 2014).

The way I use the term post-documentary, in connection with *guns.doc*, is that it is a documentary approach within a broader documentary discourse that doesn't aim at 'telling the truth' but rather offers perspectives to shared social reality. However, it is not about the 'personal' but its focus is the 'social scene' (Rosler, 2004, p. 229). It aims at providing "… a frame of unity, even if fractured and fractious one" (Rosler, 2004, p. 229). But it, in an elementary manner, reflects it-

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2   In Finland, the debate is practiced in all the levels of society, from Ministry of Defence to social media sites. See i.e. https://www.mtv.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/artikkeli/suomi-lobbaa-poikkeusta-eu-n-asedirektiiviin/5613804#gs. Ji5oL1w, http://simonelo.puheenvuoro.uusisuomi.fi/208520-suomi-vaatii-poikkeusta-eun-asedirektiiviin, http://jukkakopra.puheenvuoro.uusisuomi.fi/254845-esitys-ampuma-aselaiksi-huomioi-maanpuolustuksen-tarpeet, http://intermin.fi/ampuma-asedirektiivi/usein-kysytyt-kysymykset, https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10191258,

self and re-evaluates its premises in a constant basis. It is self-assertive and recognizes its nature as a constructive force. Also risks are inbuilt into the post-documentary practice: in addition in offering thoughtful insights to various societal issues, it has ability to do damage. Even though post-documentary practice recognises its premises and reconsiders its methods and functions on a constant basis"… documentary will continue to negotiate between sensationalism on the one hand and instrumentalism on the other" (Rosler, 2004, p. 240).

What really interests me in the post-documentary approach is that it constantly negotiates its possibilities of mediating information and taking ethically clear stand. This is reflected also in the visualisation.[3] When working along this ethos, visual narration is not built to simply transmit knowledge, rather, it is about mediating impressions, appearances and viewpoints. What is admitted in the very first instance is that the truth can never be told – neither at court nor in visual narrative. Ethical dilemmas are inbuilt in the practice. An artist may simultaneously possess a clearly defined ethical stand and intentionally work in a manner that is not ethically neutral. For instance, the potential harm to the subjects that follow the publication of the pictures cannot be eliminated, and sometimes it is already counted in as a possibility. The project can also be doing harm to some of the parties the project discusses. Observed from the photographer's viewpoint, unethical potential is a condition that needs to be accepted if one wants to touch issues that are ambivalent and biased in their very nature. However, when for instance trying to achieve 'informed consent', this potential is not discussed with the subjects. In this sense, achieved consent can also be grounded on a position that can later appear as unethical. Regardless of this, in the post-documentary approach, unethical is never a desired state of affairs. Rather, it is a latent condition that can't be negotiated away beforehand. It is an attribute that pricks the practitioner.

If approached from a different angle and discussed in more method-oriented terms, photographing *guns.doc* appears similar to gathering research material. During this phase, focus is in the involvement itself and the analysis remains at the backdrops. After the data is collected, final framing and theoretical anchoring can be done, and only after that, analysis can begin, which may, further, lead back to re-evaluating the theoretical basis, and to re-photography. Based on my experiences on working with qualitative research materials, such as questionnaires and interviews focusing on the reception of artworks by actual audiences, data suggests the paths to follow. In this respect, the way I have photographed *guns.doc* reminds grounded research. However, as I am working in the field of visual arts, my approach could be named as artistic research or practice-as-research though I need to state that my motives on working as an artist does not really aim at traditional knowledge production, rather I am more interested in understanding people and society through art practice. In this respect, I follow, for instance, Craeme Sullivan's elaborations on the value of art practice as research (Sullivan, 2006, p. 96-98). In my use, art practice as research means gathering and constructing comprehension via art making. Public presentations, be they visual, literal, performative or a combination of these, are part of this making. What is relevant to this approach is its capacity both to work as visualized

'affective knowledge' (Shapiro, 2011) and to generate affective responses with visual materials.

To conclude, from the artist's point of view, *guns.doc* is a body of work that constructs a narrative about practical shooting and as such sheds light on contemporary gun culture. Simultaneously, following the nature of post-documentary expression, its fundamentals are discussed and re-evaluated within the project. As this commentary exposes, the post-documentary approach connects well to artistic inquiry and research-as-art through its elementary communion with affectual and corporeal understanding. Making is a relationship and negotiation between different bodies. Language is a particle in this relationship but making doesn't transform itself fully into language. Knowing and understanding withdraws itself from the literal and transforms itself to visual appearances. Therefore also *guns.doc* can be seen as an affectual and corporeal visual response to social issue that cannot be emptied with verbal suggestions. Herein, I wish, lies its value, as art and artistic research.

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3   There are an uncountable number of documentary projects that could be used as examples. To name one very recent one, Mathieu Asselin's Monsanto could be mentioned. It is a multiperspective, five-year long investigative project that considers an influence of a publicly traded multinational agrochemical corporation. For further information, please visit https://www.mathieuasselin.com/monsanto/.

Shaping Information Structure
of Graphics in Online Journalism

Yiyun Zha

Abstract

A principal focal point of communication design in online journalism concerns graphic structure when creating visual elements on news websites. This paper proposes a framework focused on developing knowledge on how aesthetic inputs create information salience, with implications that rely on visualisation from a multimodal perspective, now that combinations of modes have become commonplace in online journalism. I set theoretical distinctions with information designs to clarify the ways in which visual composition gives rise to information salience, thereby enhancing the meanings embedded in graphics. Following a multimodal perspective, I begin at a fundamental level concerning the reliable relationship between visual components, then systematically approach the visuals on three levels: nodal point, articulation, and communication environment. I will show that this is a basic step toward understanding the focus of design as a constructive engagement in visual-journalism analyses, rather than a developed form of craft.

Keywords: graphic structure, visual journalism, graphic representation, multimodality, news websites

Introduction

Notions of Information Structure in Graphics

This chapter is concerned with the application and usage of the functional concept of graphics nowadays in online journalism. It aims to analyse the total meaning constructed out of combinations of text, visuals, and layout. For some time, communicative modes, media, and situations have been discussed with respect to multimodality (Bateman, Delin, & Henschel, 2007; Kress, 2010; Bateman, Wildfeuer, & Hiippala, 2017). Here, I relate multimodal thinking to the notions of information structure of graphics in terms of functional and practical graphic usage in online journalism compared with traditional newspapers.[1] I show how the phenomenon of information structure of graphics requires an extension of multimodality, not only over and above traditional usages of graphics, but also with respect to the more aesthetic constructs employed on the online newspapers that are trying to comprehend both printing and digital.

My particular motivation in attempting this extension of the meaning of graphics' information structure is as follows:

For a long time, we have been experiencing the web's impact on newspapers and their newsrooms, as well as the interrelations between news audiences and online media. The change has been labelled Journalism 2.0 (Muhammad, 2008), a meta-medium of digital computers (Manovich, 2001) and multimodal characteristics (Pulkkinen, 2008; Thiel, 1998). During this media revolution, communication design often has been viewed as craftsmanship, but the influence of graphic design on media has been recognised, i.e., this regime has begun to shift, albeit slowly.

Especially in the journalism field, the relationship between journalism and design is a difficult path to chart. On one hand, journalists respect the eyewitness approach to the truth, using an objective tone to share what has happened to readers (Harcup, 2009). On the other hand, the expertise of "crafting" visual representations has undergone revolutionary development (Alfredo, 2009). Visual journalists have become familiar with visual-information representation in terms of its functionality, rather than its content (e.g., photos, videos, and graphics). This includes mediated ideation from visual practitioners, as well as newsrooms.

This article mainly talks about two forms of communication design, respectively layout design and navigation design. The discussion on the link between journalism and these two design practices has elicited an important consequence, in that "craft" graphics are not made up of discrete or unrelated instances. Both the textual-visual relationship and cultural context must be considered as varying continuously and simultaneously along a variety of dimensions during the visualisation process. Therefore, in moving to multimodal thinking in online journalism, I began to consider the system with respect to how such graphics vary and the consequences for realising the information structure of graphics – in navigation and layout – that multimodality elicits. It is only when we can place individual graphic elements against the general background

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1   According to Merriam-Webster, it is important to notice that in English the "newspaper" refers only to a paper version or the organization behind it. But I wish to separate newspaper and online newspaper, so the term "traditional newspapers" here refers to printed newspapers, as opposed to online newspapers.

that we can go on to discuss the emerging relationship between visual components, and even the constructive function of design in online journalism.

Similar ideas were concerned by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) when they made research in visual communication from a social semiotic perspective. Yet what visual journalists do is closely in relation to journalistic values. They must move within a spectrum that involves news values at one end and communication design principles at the other, as they shall not either supplying a plethora of figures and facts without aesthetic values or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, employing aesthetics regardless of facts and numbers. Consciously situating their work ensures that we would not be confused with the border between communication design and visual journalism.

Why Visual Journalism?

Journalism – as a coded, professional practice – establishes a cultural and social order. Although the new media environment has eroded the distinction between news and entertainment (Williams & Delli Carpini, 2000), optimistically its emergence provides new opportunities for the public to multiple axes of information as well as alterations of news representations. In practice, the journalistic attitude is applied not only to information, but also in multiple areas outside the journalistic field. For example, data analysis has gained increasing prominence over the past few years in news representation (Appelgren & Nygren, 2014). In addition, scientific knowledge and social events rely on information visualisation to be accepted by the public (Anderson, 2017).

For the purposes of this article, we can see visual journalism as a hybrid form of a journalistic practice, one that was once unconsciously fused with other disciplines in the newsroom. It includes multiple creative practices, such as information design, layout design, and photography. Taking this as a starting point, my understanding of "visual journalism" consists of aesthetics instead of a discussion within a realm of written words. Visual journalism considers readers' sensibility and maps multimodal genres in digital newspapers instead of being an art form, which evokes its communicative effectiveness compared with traditional newspapers. Understanding what goes into visual composition is critical in determining how efficiently the practice will be executed, as Ware states:

> *Design graphic representations of data by taking into account human sensory capabilities in such a way that important data elements and data patterns can be quickly perceived. Important data should be represented by graphical elements that are more visually distinct than those representing less-important information. (Ware, 2012, p. 140)*

It is noteworthy that we are now facing a visual shift to a multimodal landscape (Jewitt, 2009): language is only ever one mode nestled among a multimodal ensemble of modes, and all modes that are a part of a multimodal ensemble need to be studied from different perspectives, such as the underlying implications available in communication and the potential meanings in the context. Influenced by this particular meta-trend, discovering how to perceive graphic structure is what I intend to illustrate next. In one approach, different aspects of communication – such

as colour, texture, motion, and typography – describe how we conceive information visualisation through the meaning of modes, as well as the overall meaning of the neighbouring relationship and sequence (e.g., Harris & Lester, 2002; Ware, 2012). In another approach, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) analyse visual narratives from a social-semiotic perspective, as composition or perceived relationships between elements in an image create meanings (Kress, 2010, p. 59).

The graphic structure on news websites is managed by creating composition, which conveys information, as well as pleasure or persuasion, by means of the information (Brusila, 2014; Hollis, 2002). One of the many purposes of constructing visualisation is to communicate news stories more efficiently. Drawing on social semiotic theories of multimodality, I examine several conventions, such as navigation design and layout design. Transforming information design from print to digital thinking is suggested to create a sense of objectivity and visual similarity, as the data should be perceived "at a glance." Meanwhile, looking through visual cases in the structure, such as interrelations between text blocks, images, graphics, and other materials, can be beneficial in understanding visual journalism as a meaningful space, instead of merely an accumulation of visual objects. Such considerations emerge within the boundaries of aesthetic field and social semiology to analyse graphic representation precisely. This can be achieved by breaking the structure into packages and sub-packages using different categories as graphic artefacts, so that it can be more useful, relevant and shareable for readers.

Present Study's Goals

As I have suggested above, my main goals in this article revolve around the information structure of graphics on news websites. I will show how, in specific examples of Finnish online newspapers, we can set about describing graphic artefacts in various categories to take the next step in looking for empirically motivated characterizations of their inner properties. This corresponds with Bertin's (1983) reading operation, which explores outwardly to social and cultural situations, from signs and meanings within. And yet, with multimodal thinking at news websites, designers' plates are full, who must retool and diversify their skill sets to produce proper visual journalism.

Undertaking research that looks beyond language in papers across digital platforms can be rather overwhelming in creating graphic representation, as the theoretical tools and frameworks in this field remain unsettled. Meanwhile, much consideration tends to focus on technological artefacts or audience theories (Holt & Karlsson, 2011; Muhammad, 2008) due to the application of human-computer interactions (abbreviated as HCI). However, I want to go in another direction and suggest some aesthetic aspects of graphic artefacts in which the espoused values might be hidden or are not necessarily emphasized as they once were in print media.

New visual representations are developing very rapidly as new forms of expression are attempted using electronic techniques, and old expressions are changing under the influence of these new graphics. With multimodal thinking, addressing the information structure of graphics in which new and old forms merge is a complex process. Meanwhile, individual graphic artefacts are sometimes considered isolated from the context. These make it essential to have a systematic framework for addressing the information structure of graphics individually and

collectively, despite newspapers' apparent adaptation of multimodal graphics on their websites. Even though the prominent web-based graphic offerings conform well with online visual guidelines, the way to utilize them on news websites is to structure a rich body of graphics. So, the discussion will show how the information structure of graphics is designed to deliver information salience, as it facilitates visual stratification to identify news value. I want to discuss the topic – not because I discovered something new. Discussion is needed because the landscape has changed, and little has mentioned the new reading strategy in the web-news field. I will discuss in more detail later about how graphic structure is used to create meaning in terms of graphic representations, and what kind of narrative indications it creates.

Toward a Reliable and Contextual Relationship

Considering combinations of different forms of communicative visualization, visual media have attributes that distinguish them and influence our approach to their application, such as static images (e.g., photos and illustrations) and dynamic visuals (e.g., videos, films, and interactive media). We can observe that researchers have succeeded in making sense out of these multimodal communication situations in different categories: typography, graphic design, information graphics, diagrams, audio, and motion, together with interactive multimedia (cf. Harris & Lester, 2002; Bateman et al., 2017). Some researchers have mapped the basic foundations of understanding multimodality, suggesting "visual grammar" in terms of colour, typography, and movement (cf. Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Pulkkinen, 2008). Meanwhile, Engelhardt (2007) makes a major contribution toward unpacking the visual syntax from the diagrammatic mode's structure. Whatever way we approach this analysis, there is a particularly critical challenge in shaping graphical-data structure in online journalism. Considering contextual relationships in visual structure is essential to building the capacity to distinguish different visual forms.

Explaining the visual language of online journalism can be complicated, as a broad range of multimodal ensembles generates different means of expression. What seems to be apparent for readers is that linguistic modes are no longer enough to create a multimodal reading experience. In a series of books and articles, Kress and van Leeuwen have shown convincingly that: firstly, linguistic modes of communication have been confronted by other related factors, such as visual artefacts; secondly, social conditions are changing certain communication features and dismantling different representational and communication potentials of visual modes, such as electronic technologies and cultural meanings (cf. Kress, 1996; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006). Correspondences between communication modes and language have been noted for long. What's more, the societal praxis endowing to representations has formed the basis of the study of contextual relationships between different constructs. Therefore, when researching visual structure, it is now mostly taken for granted that graphic representations, in communicative visual systems, have been constructed by objects, their properties, and the information they contain (Bertin, 1983; Brusila, 2014; Engelhardt, 2007; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The new media environment has allowed news to be more social and participatory, and this has led to profound effects on discursive ethos in online journalism, not alone in the visual representation field. The reason why I think individual visuals in the creative process are only

partially considered and should be considered in the specific social context is that they could be expanded heuristically by incorporating such requirements in collectives (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 177). The schema does not generate a representation automatically; the cognitive procedure needs a context for a mental operation (van den Boom, 2015, p. 88). The challenge is to go beyond the medium and investigate the relationships between modes (Jewitt, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to look more closely at the context of the design practice to identify its heuristic significance in digital platforms.

Taking the exact conditions of production for multimodal artefacts seriously enables a more realistic and logical appraisal of the precise motivations for constructing the information structure of graphics. There are various layers in web-news visualization that convey information, in levels of reading and amounts of visual components (Zha, 2016). From the moment that we define meanings in these information components, and before any attempt is made to interpret the visualization, it is essential to establish relationships that a reader effectively can perceive between different components and layers. Here, I suppose that there is a hierarchical relationship in the three layers: nodal point, articulation, and communication environment *(Figure 1)*. On the elementary level, we interpret nodal points, such as labels, images, or texts, which are collected in their specific context. However, nodal point conveys no meaning without prior understanding of the specific information environment, while the environmental context relies on acquired colours, texts, labels, or images for recognition. Reliance among nodal points constitutes the meaning potential of semiotic components in the context, forming a bridge with the communication environment. Articulation derived from connecting nodal points and communication environments is not easy to define. However, from the existing forms of articulation, we can see that online news is present to allow interaction and engagement on a dense news platform. On such a news website, information value, salience, and reading are not necessarily linear. Readers are welcomed to think more about the meaning of visual components.

I interpret the three stages in the reading process of visualisation as a successive operation: external identification, internal identification, and perception of pertinent correspondences (Bertin, 1983). My perception of the contextual relation of nodal point and communication environment relies on Bertin's image theory (1983), but he did not consider the relationship between the two in a digital format. If we want to understand the way in which visual consistency in the process of signification is realised in online journalism, a theory of reading strategy in print media is no longer sufficient and must be complemented by a discussion that makes the principle of reading visualisation explicit in multimodality. This helps describe, for instance, whether the interpretation of digital aesthetics is interfering with nodal points in linear coding, as I will try to do in the next section.

ARTICULATION

NODAL POINT

COMMUNICATION
ENVIRONMENT
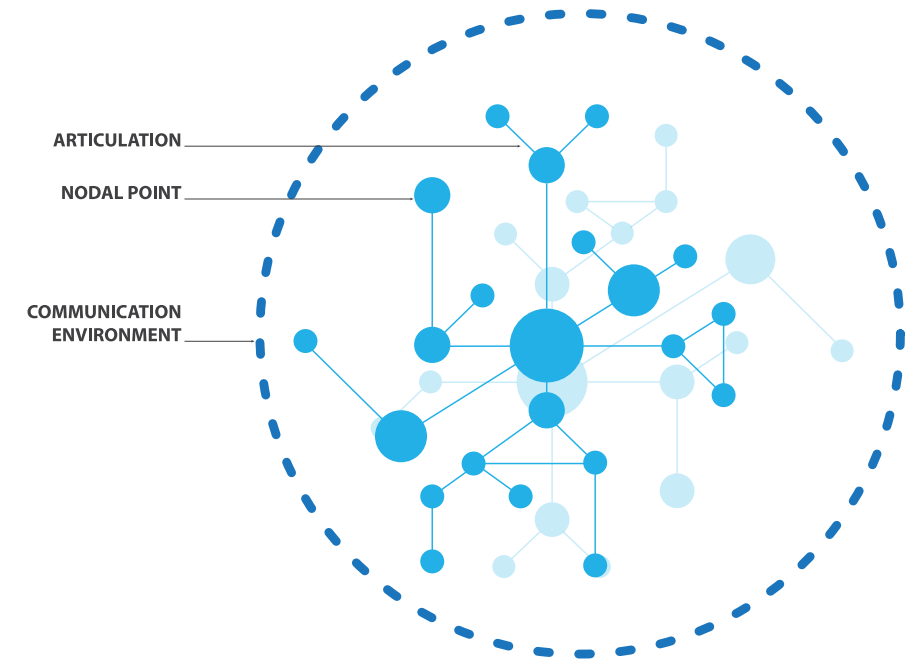
Figure 1.   The reliant and contextual relationship between the three layers: nodal point, articulation, and communication environment.

Sketching the Layers of Reconceptualising Online News Visualisation

Nodal Point

Following the premise that technology addresses us as people, changing not only our relationship with news media, but also how we perceive ourselves (Turkle, 1995), it is noteworthy that more representational and interactive meanings of visualisation are produced in transforming print media to digital as part of the culture. It demonstrates that visual journalists' toolkits are more powerful and able to "visualize the non-visual" better (Engelhardt, 2007), indicating that visuals are becoming more meaningful in responding to the emergence of new media in online journalism. Visual components as nodal points are tied to what they represent, which shape how they can be constituted in the communication environment. Therefore, the graphic structure is marked as a collective of nodal points parallel to their meanings and within the whole web composition. By identifying the meanings within the graphic structure, visual components become indicative in the context. If we examine the visualisation in a meta-context, it is obvious that nodal points inside provide more insights about the layout narration, rather than refer to unilateral understandings or properties.

Therefore, it is assumed that visual components in online journalism are not discrete in their context, and that the proximity between nodal points and communication environments in online journalism is worth highlighting. The motivation to apply visual components to people's aesthetics stimulates various nodal points. Meanwhile, the capacity of these nodal points leads to a further understanding of aesthetics in a digital format.

In this sense, aesthetics in print media influence digital visualisation in online media when considering development of technical infrastructure and skilful techniques. For general aesthetic pleasure, the golden mean (e.g., Harris, 2007) is one of the most widely applied principles of composition in design practices. Designers have used it for centuries as a rule to avoid placing visuals arbitrarily (Brusila, 2014). Nowadays, however, further requirements in online journalism have emerged in this field to influence the digital technology's effects on people's aesthetics.

Articulation

Nodal points are functionally and practically applied in the specific communication environment (it refers to the web environment in this article). But to which nodal points do we connect the corresponding objects? If we wish to regard a news webpage as a sign system, how can we look for coherence between different nodal points present in digital visuals?

By shaping reality into a news story, journalists reinforce and reflect the public and society, and they operate the news structure like traditional storytellers (Bird & Dardenne, 2009). But employing stories in online journalism to engage readers is not any less complex, even with today's digital innovations, in that online visualisation is not merely presented by an accumulation of nodal points in a chronological account, but "seeks coherence and meaning" and "exists within a cultural lexicon of understandable themes" (Bird & Dardenne, 2009, p. 207). Therefore, the articulation between different nodal points and layers needs to be decoded in multiple ways as follows.

On one hand, digital aesthetics as articulations work as reading navigation when clicking from one nodal point to another, or from one layer (webpage) to another in the communication environment. For example, in a dot map with numerous equal-size points, the pointed dot is emphasized when the mouse is hovering on it. The point then is highlighted, either in colour or in size, among all other points of equal size. In this case, potential digital variables make the map comparably more meaningful. The digital variables are much less determined in Bertin's book, as he assures that such property in graphics "seems to lengthen during immobility and contract during activity" (Bertin, 1983, p. 42). Another instance is in *Figure 2*. When the mouse hovers on 'Today' (Finnish word: *'Päivä'*), the subsection is highlighted in light grey. There is a dual perception here: of contrast (ratio of colour or size) and of consistency (to the meaning that the visual can be added). The changing size or colour of the nodal points and the meaning endowed onto the digital movement are completely interdependent.

On the other hand, digital aesthetics allow for virtual interaction. The presentation of the above dot map poses a possibility of engagement and involvement. This exists not only in various nodal points, but also between different sections, webpages, and websites. Today's online newspapers require consistency in visualisation that may help readers identify the brand. Here, take *Lapin Kansa*[2] as an example, as it just rebranded its website to provide readers with enhanced visuals. *Lapin Kansa*'s logo is mainly blue *(Figure 3)*, can be seen all over the website, and is highlighted in every important section, including 'Most Popular News' (Finnish word: *'Luetuimmat'*), 'Video', 'Latest Free News', (Finnish phrase: *'Tuoreimmat maksuttomat'*) and other sections *(Figure 2 & Figure 4)*. In this sense, the meaning is doubled, as digital aesthetics stimulate both density and dynamics visually. This seems to be a good solution for a visual transmediation when considering the accumulation of information, and not just for HCI's sake.

Thus, articulation determines which nodal points are exposed to the corresponding communication environment. Defining an articulation, such as utilizing a digital variable or inserting a hyperlink, requires examining how nodal points, within the communication setting, connect visuals and create meanings. In a sign system of online journalism, articulation works like a signal to connect individual nodal points and layers.

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2   Lapin Kansa was established in 1928 and is based in Rovaniemi, Finnish Lapland. Owned by national Alma Media Group, Lapin Kansa was considered the biggest subscription newspaper in the Lapland region.

Figure 2. A screenshot of "Most popular news" on Jan. 13, 2016

Figure 3. The Lapin Kansa newspaper logo

Figure 4. A screenshot of "Video" and "Latest free news" on Jan. 13, 2016

Communication Environment

Communication among individuals in a socially distributed system is always conducted in terms of different artefacts (Hutchins, 1996, p. 284). Visual components are emphasized in this way, as they are connected by articulations to clarify news information and to refer to meanings in the information structure of graphics collectively.

From an observation of today's online journalism, we have seen that it is inadequate merely to offer navigation to improve designers' efforts in delivering visualisation to readers. The difficulty we face in digital development is to become a nimbler, digitally focused newsroom that thrives in a landscape of constant changes. Not only do competitors make journalistic practices more complex, but readers' aesthetic growth also raises the bar for visual journalists' efforts. Attractive news websites must not start with a clean slate:

> We have preconceptions, and we can compare the system with other interactive systems that we have experienced, seen, heard, or read about, noting familiarities in the graphics, organization, layout, soundscape, etc. We have a mental model of the system, based on other systems that existed already before the interaction begins. Our intuition guides us to start experimenting with the system. Earlier experiences build our confidence, and this kind of exploration makes the interface seem more transparent. (Knuutila, 2013, p. 168)

Therefore, prior knowledge of the terms in *Figure 1* would entail acquired understandings when reading visualisation. It explains how visualisation can be integrated seamlessly with prior aesthetics, yet at the same time, it possesses a specific graphic structure and entities afforded by visual modalities. I realise that most newsrooms have their own visual guidelines when conducting research in Finnish newsrooms. For instance, in locator visualisation, the visual team takes a common-sense approach to what colours are available for the paper and what font or size is suitable for the website. Investigating how pixilation is used on different platforms and how limited pixels affect visual placement has confirmed some of the guidelines. Unifying all nodal points and details to represent the quality and magnitude of the newspaper's brand is a method that the visual department employs in the newsroom. It produces a particular communication environment for readers, by which the reasoning of visualisation can be traced. In this case, the communication environment also removes ambiguity in recognition.

Having conceived of both the nodal points and articulations, readers are ready to perceive pertinent aesthetics on the specific website. In this sense, the conglomerates do not simply manufacture news content. Readers' experiences (*The New York Times*, 2014, p. 60) also may result from a tightly organized and concentrated arena of visual structures that unfolds within the conglomerates. These new media criteria differ markedly from traditional newspapers, specifically in interactions, conceptual tactics, cultural expressions, and visual strategies of the newsroom workflow. Though it is difficult to observe every detail in conglomerates, many points of access are available, as I have discussed in this paper. The shift to three layers – nodal point, articulation, and communication environment – is a commencement of reading the information structure of graphics present on news websites.

By observing the contextual relationship between the three layers, I try to re-conceptualize the categories and dynamics in reading visual structure on news websites. The relationships between the three layers, however, are not linear, as meanings are defined and redefined in the process of constructing visual dynamics, especially in a multimodal environment. For example, Point A is connected to Point B by Articulation C in Environment D. Meanwhile, B, situated in Environment F, is also contingently articulated to C in the same environment. This creates integration of reliable and contextual relationships, instead of discretion in visual components. According to this view, it enables readers to retain online journalism in a comprehensive manner, as we cannot isolate any individual graphic and create a mind map for the least-meaningful element based on "the component."

By "dynamics," I mean that the visualisation is not static or linear for two reasons. First, the forms of nodal points are diversified as texts, images, and other visual components, carrying a communication message and conveying information. In this situation, individual interpretations always are open to reinterpretation (Werning, 2013). The integration of digital aesthetics enriches visual components in representation, as well as meaning. Secondly, compositional layers, which constitute various nodal points, are not simply sorted in a linear sequence. The sequence of layouts is arranged by designers for both aesthetic and communication purposes in digital art. Serious consideration of aesthetics in design practices is indispensable in social and cultural ways (Bardzell, 2011).

Visual-Representation Examples of News Websites

As discussed in the above sections, a reliable and contextual relationship is developed between visual objects when considering the conditions of producing multimodal artefacts in digital visualisation. The design work during the process is to find a compromise between many competing and sometimes conflicting constraints. I think the reasons why social and cultural practices affect understandings of graphic structures, which further influence conceptions of information salience, can be traced to constraints framed by newsroom practices and the possibilities created by technological potentials.

The relationships between social and cultural practice, the three layers of online visualisation, and the extended notions of multimodality in news websites are depicted in *Figure 5*. The ideas here are not brand new, as visualisation relies on and is constrained by materiality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The three notions of re-conceptualizing online visualisation on news websites rely on particular social and cultural practices, but they have the potential to expand when deploying multimodality or constructing artefacts in a different way. The variability is compatible with the results elicited by social and cultural practices, e.g., the technology applied in the visual production. This can be found in the differences in graphic design among traditional newspapers and the digital aesthetics of online journalism.

To depict how visual composition gives rise to information salience in digital aesthetics, I start by analysing the reliable and contextual relationship, then approach the information structure of graphics on news websites by describing the three meta-concepts: nodal point, articulation, and communication environment. In the following sections, I provide two visual-representation examples. First, I analyse how the concept of nodal point, as evoked in the discourse on news websites, is divided into two categories containing outcomes and inspirations of digital

movements in multimodality. Second, I contrast the different versions of a piece of information design practiced both in print and on digital platforms. This involves understanding the visual representation of information graphics as something generated through its interrelatedness with both visual-production guidelines or constraints and the online aesthetics that it moves through and of which it is a part.

To read visualisation in online journalism is to proceed, more or less, through individual nodal points in configurative spaces. For clear knowledge of graphic structure in the successive three levels (nodal point, articulation, and communication environment), one can view *Figure 6* as a general overview of visual presentations and narrative indications in nodal points on news websites. The aforementioned visual cases are distinguished based on The New York Times' *Innovation report* (2014). In the figure, some of the nodal points only function as visual narratives, while others involve implications.

In terms of narrative indications in nodal points, implications have appeared in different categorizations of the sign system, which covers eight visual components with three functions: spatial and temporal management, archive attribution, and story property. The first two streams describe the perceived value of digital innovations, and flow into a composition of various forms. The last conforms with the sense-making process of journalism, and it is modified to comply with digital structure as well.

When I was conducting ethnographic research in Finnish newsrooms, I discovered that visual journalists, especially those who are doing infographic designs, usually are very quick when responding to breaking news. They knew how to use visual language in the timeframe, including what nodal points would provide the strongest information in telling the story. The visual guidelines they must follow also facilitated their capacity to handle visualisation during breaking news, and I will come back to this issue later. The practice itself showcases spontaneity and creativity. In the process, visual journalists have succeeded in capturing the dynamics of nodal points within the newsroom culture. The practices revealed spatial and temporal management in their routines, which identified timeliness and geographic factors in news for readers. The two factors might be the most influential and distinctive motivations in visualisation, especially when delivering breaking news.

With archive attribution, news photographs and story archives are common cases in narrative categories. This stream reviews how to easily perceive the story through the benefits of digital innovations. Most news websites have a news bank with a practical and functional manner. Another stream in narrative indications is story property – respectively, story type, story thread, and story tone. They focus on the journalistic value of news and reading habits through which readers perceive news stories. They are categorized efficiently due to the intended involvement of digital movements on websites. After all, the three properties (story type, thread, and tone) enable functional consequences and values that readers associate with news.

In online journalism, as a communication environment, visual journalists apply each nodal point differently according to the specific function, either in visual presentation or in narrative indications. For example, individualized service is applied for localizing news websites accordingly. Consider a news website that features stories based on readers' appetite and location. In addition, corresponding to narrative indications, there are also many visual presentations on news webpages. The most common visual artefacts are as follows in recent news websites: column, text, images (including photos and illustrations), header, logo, grid, main content, sidebar, footer, and 'whitespace'. Nodal points are realised by different visual representations that make up web-news visualisation.

The other visual representation is an example of restructuring graphics in visual transmediation, from print to digital platforms. In a sense, it helps us go far beyond just evoking the discourse when analysing the information structure of graphics.

In *Figure 7*, an image from an infographic designer who works in the *Helsingin Sanomat* [3] newsroom, we see the same infographics (about the influence of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, known as TTIP, agreement) diverge into three versions: original print version, original digital version in two pieces, and a digital version combined with print. Considering the visual representation, the designer "deducted" how the contextual influence affected visualisation in different platforms. These choices relate to the sizes of the infographics. The two separate pieces should be merged into one image, as the maximum width of the digital platform is 560 pixels. This is why the original digital version in two pieces disagreed with the mobile and website platforms. As to the interactive meaning, it is reasonable to read the infographics with the combined pieces, as people get used to flipping upward when reading on screen. Meanwhile, when reconstructing graphic artefacts in digital versions, designers need to reconsider the meaning of composition. The digital patterns do not exhaust the relationships set up by the original print version, but there is a new variable – the way the visual artefacts were connected in a fixed placement. The arrows looked more salient than the ones in the original versions. New values embedded in visual modes would have been transpired. Visual representation on news websites is composed of static visual artefacts, yet in a different way from traditional media. On today's news websites, the placement of artefacts endows individual visuals with informative values relative to each other, which may influence information salience. This is why we need to re-structure graphics, and even re-conceptualize the information structure of graphics, when digital aesthetics interfere with our prior experiences of traditional media.

Looking more closely at the visual-representation examples in this article, I mainly emphasize two kinds of design practices: layout design and navigation design. The instances are not intended to be exclusive, as there are many other aspects of multimodality applied in the visual transmediation from print to websites, such as linguistic and content fields. From the perspective of visualisation, however, these two kinds of information graphics will be unreasonably related to digital aesthetics. I do contend that the characteristics addressed in the visual-representation examples are reflective of the new possibilities and challenges for the appearance of online news visualisation. Layout design refers to the communicative modes on the webpage, as well as their hierarchical relationships, while navigation design frames the ways in which intended artefacts and layers are connected. Actually, both practices have been discussed for long in visual communication, but digital aesthetics invite us to understand the information structure of graphics as being produced and consumed as part of the experience of a multimodal environment. To understand how to produce proper graphic structure in such a visual transmediation is beneficial for delivering news value, as well as information salience. From this point, it is natural to suggest a reconceptualization of the ways that visual artefacts can be classified.

3   Helsingin Sanomat is the largest subscription newspaper in Finland, considering its circulation (Lehtisaari, Karppinen, Harjuniemi, Grönlund, Lindén, Nieminen, & Viljakainen, 2012, p. 21). It is important to recognize that nowadays both Helsingin Sanomat and Lapin Kansa are tabloid sizes, not broadsheet as newspapers are traditionally understood. Although in English usually broadsheet newspapers are considered as quality papers, both examples from Finland are quality papers even as tabloids.
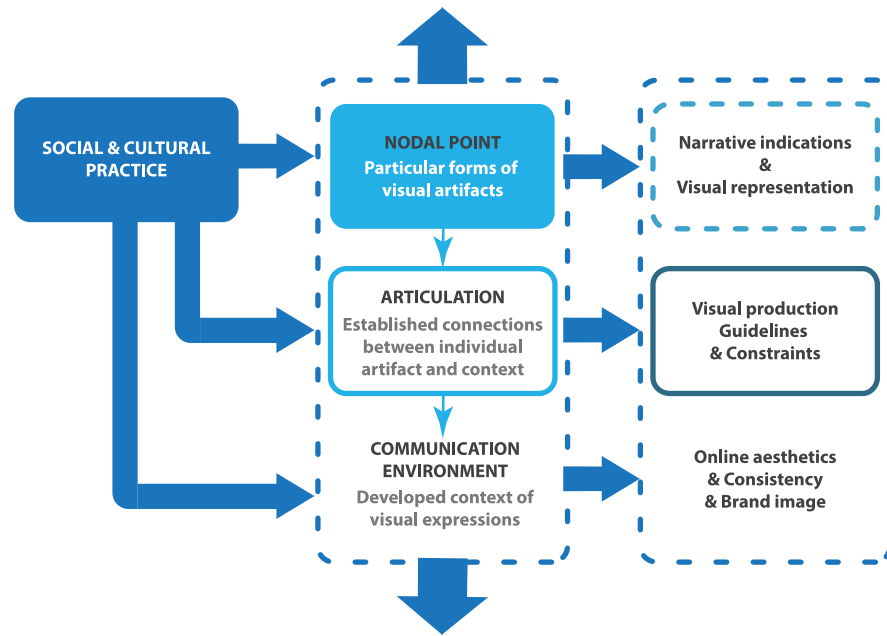
Figure 5. Social and cultural practice in relation to the three layers of re-conceptualizing online visualization on news websites.

A general overview of the two functions in nodal points in news web site.
The information is divided into two fields,
respectively narrative indications and visual presentations.

NARRATIVE INDICATIONS	VISUAL PRESENTATIONS
timeliness	column
the geographic location of story	text
searchable photos	image (photograph, illustration)
news photos	header
archives	logo
story type	grid
story thread	main content
story tone	sidebar
	footer
	'whitespace'

Figure 6. Two functions of nodal points in news websites: narrative indications and visual presentations *(Innovation, 2014, p. 42).*

Original print version
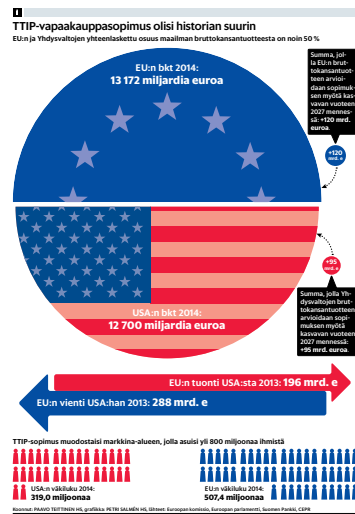
Original digi version in two pieces
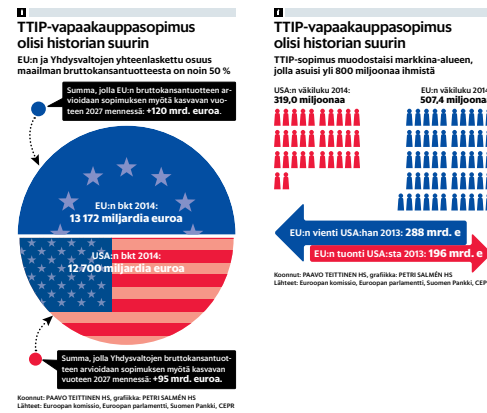
Digi version combined to print
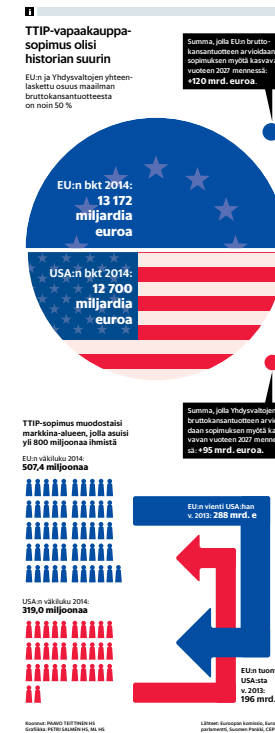
Figure 7. The influence of TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) agreement infographics with three different versions, published on May 2, 2015, in *Helsingin Sanomat.* Graphics: Petri Salmén, published with permission.

Conclusions

To analyse visual modes on news websites, webpages in online journalism can be coded more precisely as layers with different composition (Zha, 2016). Observations have demonstrated both reliance and discretion in the analysis of visual components in online journalism. Two main levels of understanding are, first, iterative visuals, observed to be interdependent throughout the whole website, while consistency and sequence are observed throughout different webpages. Second, designers have tried to apply different methods to realise digital movements from this visual to that visual and from one webpage to another (nodal points), which are connected by articulation to support website construction (*Figure 1*). In this sense, the two key concepts, namely nodal point and articulation, stand out in the specific communication environment.

Within news websites, the realization of the information structure of graphics is predominantly devoted to the integration of different visual modes. The composition is then an overarching conglomeration consisting of individual nodal points whose meanings provide the logic of the communication environment. On the other hand, digital visuals provide meaningful narration when readers perceive the visualisation. As far as salience is concerned, we note that moving images are constructed by static visuals, and we provide greater stress to the visual meanings behind them than to the visuals themselves. Therefore, digital aesthetics are mediated by technological effects and work as articulation in that context. After all, visual journalists create information salience by making different multimodal compositions.

This work evokes a discourse on the information structure of graphics in online journalism, in terms of constructive components in visualisation. For me, understandings of visualisation are not completed in traditional media, as it is time to treat multimodal forms of visual communication that employ graphics as seriously as print media. But it can be activated when situated in an online reading setting because the properties of visuals carry prospective values in a digital format. The practices of representing visual components enrich meaningful spaces, then elicit opportunities to thicken the information structure of graphics on news websites. Therefore, it is essential to consider the graphic structure as a whole when defining the consistency of visual composition and analysing visuals on a digital platform where information is conveyed.

In addition, the distinctiveness of this paper not only points to defining the hierarchical categories of graphics. I also focus on how the characteristics of digital aesthetics interfere with prior experiences of visual production in traditional media. It shows that, however similarly concerns and orientations are derived from the journalistic field among others, social and cultural influences affect the understanding of graphic structure, which derive different information salience in visual transmediation. In this sense, thinking about visualisation from an empirical perspective has become an active act of participation in new media, especially for visual journalists in the field.

With these aforementioned developments and changes in the newsroom, the aesthetic inputs by visual journalists are re-shaped in multimodality. The situation has shed light on how the use of digital innovations has occurred in visualisation practices from a designer's perspective. I have found that previous understandings of traditional media are insufficiently applicable on news websites. Nodal points are transformed into new ones and are enriched by digital aesthetics in the specific communication environment. In this sense, visualisation practices are reconstructed and reshaped, which address more meanings in the process. Therefore, the findings here may benefit future design work by improving practices in newsrooms.

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Mysterious mood

Overall design as conveyer of meaning in Maurice Sendak's picturebook Dear Mili

Leena Raappana-Luiro

Abstract

In the 1980s, academic interest increased in the picturebook* as an art form, along with interest in traditional fairy tales. Amid the growing emphasis on visual and multimodal texts, the picturebook is also understood as an ever more complex mode of synergistic form of telling stories. Based on theories of picturebook and multimodal semiotics, the present article examines how immediate impressions of the overall quality and design of Maurice Sendak's picturebook Dear Mili create meanings and expectations, and how these meanings relate to deeper analytical perspectives.

Keywords: picturebook, overall mood, multimodal semiotics, peritexts, graphic design, illustration

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*   I have adopted the spelling picturebook (rather than picture book) to indicate the multimodal entity of pictures, text and book as artifact (see also Sipe, 2011, p. 273).

Introduction

In 1983, a previously unpublished tale by Wilhelm Grimm was discovered (see for instance Kushner, 2003, p. 28). The story was composed in the form of a letter that Grimm wrote in 1815 to a girl named Mili. Already a famous picturebook artist, Maurice Sendak was commissioned to illustrate the fairy tale, and the picturebook was published in 1988. The girl in the story (also called Mili) was sent to a forest by her mother, who was trying to keep her daughter safe from war. Mili walks scared in the woods; followed by her guardian angel, she manages to get to Saint Joseph. She helps him with the daily chores and plays with her guardian angel, who now looks almost like Mili herself. After three days, she has to leave. Saint Joseph gives her a rosebud, promising that she will come back when the bud opens. On returning to her home village, Mili realises that she has been away for thirty years rather than three days. She finds her mother old and blind, but they go to sleep, happy together. The next morning, villagers come to see them and find them dead. The rosebud has unfolded.

My first encounter with Maurice Sendak's *Dear Mili*, a picturebook based on Wilhelm Grimm's text, was in 1988, when the book was also published in Finland. As a young art student, pursuing my first masters thesis on picturebooks, I saw the book in a bookstore and immediately wanted to own it. The appearance of the book was so captivating that it was some weeks before I read the text. Compared to my own expectations of the children's picturebook regenre—bright colours and glossy, illustrated covers—the first impression created by this book was exceptionally sophisticated, old-fashioned, mysterious and somehow solemn. It was of course also interesting that I had never heard of this particular tale, written by the famous brothers Grimm.

I returned regularly to the book, to browse and to explore the illustrations. Having read the text and examined the pictures in more detail, the story seemed even more mysterious and complicated. Nevertheless, my first impression, and the mood aroused by the book, persisted and even strengthened. The years went by, and I had children of my own, but I kept *Dear Mili* primarily as my own book. Today, there are annoying coffee stains on the dust jacket of my copy of the book rather than the children's scribbles found in most of the picturebooks we own.

In picturebook research, although it is common to emphasise the status of the picturebook as art, book publishing is also big business, and *Dear Mili* has sold over 200,000 copies (Zipes, 1995, p. 4). Many people choose the books they buy by looking and browsing in bookstores. In the case of a picturebook, overall appearance and design is likely to be especially important, given its nature as a very visual—or, more precisely, multimodal—medium.

In this article, I wanted to explore how one's first impression of a picturebook's overall quality or overall impression conveys meanings, and how these meanings relate to a deeper, more analytical level of multimodal semiotic analysis. My starting point was personal experience—those spontaneous questions aroused by *Dear Mili* concerning how the book by its immediate appearance indicates its overall mood, the potential reader and the type of story, as well as other, perhaps more detailed meanings. Does this single case reveal general features of how a book's design qualities relate to our expectations of that book?

Paratexts, Overall Impression and Multimodal Semiotics

In the late twentieth century, when *Dear Mili* was published, a lot was happening in the field of picturebooks. Academic interest had increased, and there was a visible expansion in terms of audience, themes and techniques. A number of studies focused on the concept of *iconotext* (Hallberg, 1982), classifications of different types of picturebook and the narrative relationships between text and picture. There were also some notions of layout and material design features as potential meaning making resources in picturebooks. (e.g. Schwarcz, 1982; Nodelman, 1990; Rhedin, 2001; Nikolajeva & Scott 2001.) At the same time interest in classical fairy tales and their psychological meanings renewed, inspired in many cases by the writings of Mif Bruno Bettelheim. The influence of postmodern aesthetics could also be seen, as parodic, eclectic and multilayered narratives grew in number, and the picturebook was increasingly seen as a unique art form combining text and picture. So-called *crossover* picturebooks (with a dual audience of children and adults) became popular. (Beckett, 2013, pp. 1–17.) These trends are also manifested in the overall quality of book in the case of *Dear Mili.*

In recent studies of picturebooks, the concept of iconotext has broadened to encompass artefactual elements of the book as media form. Among the theories informing picturebook research is Gerard Genette's (2001) concept of paratexts. Paratexts includes all those internal and external factors—beyond the textual content of the book itself—that shape our interpretation of and our attitude to the book. Genette refers to those external paratexts that do not belong to the book artefact as *epitexts*. (Genette, 2001, pp. 4–5.) In the case of *Dear Mili*, for example, some readers may already have known of the publishers' press releases reporting the sensational discovery of an unknown tale by Grimm, translated by the gifted translator Mannheim and illustrated by the famous Maurice Sendak.

The internal paratexts (called *peritexts*) include all those things that make the text a material book, including title, please-inserts, dedications, covers and appendages, typography and illustrations. As Genette described peritexts as they appear in classical French literature, his focus was on literal peritexts—titles, please inserts, dedications and so on. However, he also noted that we must... bear in mind the paratextual value that may be vested in other types of manifestation belong to other types of manifestation: these may be iconic (illustrations), material (for example, everything that originates in the sometimes very significant typographical choices that go into the making of a book) (Genette, 2001, p. 7).

Since Nikolajeva and Scott (2001, p. 241) observed that "almost nothing has been written about the paratexts of picturebooks such as titles, covers, or endpapers", a number of articles have been published about endpapers (Sipe & McGuire, 2006) and typography (Serafini & Clausen, 2012), but there is still relatively little research of this kind.

These peritextual features work exactly like *thresholds* of interpretation in an audience's first impressions of a picturebook. Before reading the text or looking at pictures in detail, the reader's first impression of the book is shaped by peritextual features such as illustrations, format, covers, paper, typography, colour scheme—in short, all those spatial, visual and material things that cause the book to exist. Given my particular interest in first impressions of the picturebook, these immediate tactual and visual nonverbal elements are my main focus here.

As meaning can inhere in the very existence of peritexts like title pages, dedications and prefaces, these are likely to affect our preconceptions of a given book. In picturebooks especially, all the design elements convey meanings. For instance, the role of illustrations in picturebooks clearly differs from those in books based on verbal text and linear reading. In picturebooks, illustrations are seen less as peritexts than as part of the verbal-visual "text". Nodelman (1990, pp.36-37) compares the overall impression of the picturebook to tone of voice—generated by non-textual elements, less by individual features in a given picture than by a general mood or atmosphere. Non-textual elements such as the book's size and shape, its covers, paper, layout and colour scheme, the use of line and the selected technique (e.g. watercolour or crayon) together create the book's overall mood, strongly influenced by our previous knowledge of different kinds of books and pictures. According to Nodelman (1990, p. 59), the concept of style differs from aforementioned elements. Style is not a distinct entity: "It is the name we give to the effect of all the aspects of a work of art considered together" Picturebook utilises the preexisting style of a certain period or artist as a source of information, conveying meanings in the context of the artist's own personal style and the story in question (pp. 59-74).

On the field of visual communication research, the social semiotic theory of visual grammar formulated by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2005) has broadened from visual images to concern also other meaning making resources like layout, typography, colour and texture. In the context of multimodal social semiotics, picturebook can be seen as a communication comprising different modes, among which writing is only one. According to Gunther Kress (2010, p. 79), mode is a socially and culturally shaped and constantly changing semiotic resource for meaning making. Different modes have different semiotic potentials, and the meanings conveyed by them are always dependent on each other: co-present signifying elements can affect the meanings of others by narrowing or specifying—for example, typography with different colours, dimensionality or texture creates different meanings (van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 144), or the same typography in books that differ in format or paper creates still different meanings in conjunction with certain pictures. For this reason, I examine the meanings created by all modes together rather than by a single mode such as typography. This is a challenging task in a single article, but my focus on the immediate overall mood created by a multimodal entity justifies an examination of how the most immediate impressions created by book originate. For the same reason, because the overall impression is formed mainly by the visual and tactual modes, no deeper analysis is pursued of the meanings aroused by the verbal text alone, although – after my really first experience of *Dear Mili* – I was aware of this content in the background when analysing the picturebook (see also Nodelman, 1990, p. 36).

To address the complex area of the multimodal text, Frank Serafini (2010) presents his tripartite framework with particular application to the picturebook. Drawing on "diverse fields of inquiry, including semiotics, art theory, visual grammar, communication studies, media literacy, visual literacy and literary theory" (Serafini 2010, p. 85), the framework combines three nested perspectives of interpretation: perceptual, structural and ideological. Where the social semiotic viewpoint emphasises the social formation of meanings (e.g. Kress, 2010, pp. 8–10), Serafini's model incorporates more universal perceptual qualities: "…before images are interpreted in the social contexts of their production, reception and dissemination, qualities of the image must be perceived, processed, and categorized" (pp. 87-88). The structural perspective focuses on the elements of visual grammar as conventions established to produce meaning through visual and compositional structures. From an ideological perspective, our meaning making need to be activated by producers and viewers in a given socio-historical context, based on the possibilities offered by perceptual processes and structural interpretations (Serafini, 2010).

All of these theories note the complexity of how picturebook—or any representation that combines different resources for meaning making—works semiotically. Even before reading a book in detail, certain elements related to genre and the implied reader are seen to affect the reader, provoking quite immediate expectations. Some of the meanings aroused, especially those dealing with the overall mood of the story, are more perceptual and universal by nature, as for instance in the association of muted colours with melancholy and sophistication. Other meanings are based more on semiotic conventions of visual structures in pictures and layout or existence of peritexts like the dedication or preface. Additionally, the idea of shared meanings in certain cultures positions me as a Scandinavian (and, more precisely, as Finnish) in a particular way in relation to *Dear Mili*, as will become evident here. Against this theoretical background, I will analyse the immediate overall quality (or mood, or "tone of voice") aroused by Sendak's book—the sense of traditionality and historicism, of ambiguity and mysticism, as well as the sombre undertone.

Traditionality Created by Design

Semiotic meanings consist in part of specific connotations formed by the earlier contexts in which they occurred; signs from one era or culture can be imported into another, introducing the original values and ideas into the new context. In the same way, we come to expect different kinds of content in different kinds of book (van Leeuwen, 2006, 146–147; Nodelman 1990, 37). The sense of traditionality informing the overall quality of *Dear Mili* derives largely from this kind of association. This meaning is strong because all the design elements participate in this meaning making.

Nodelman notes that "we expect more distinctive literature from hardcover books with textured, one-color covers and more conventionally popular material from books with luridly colored plastic coatings" (1990, p. 38). Unlike many modern picturebooks that also use the covers, endpapers and traditional front and back matters to enhance the verbal-visual storytelling (see for instance Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, p. 241; Rhedin, 2001, p. 147; Serafini, 2012), the outermost layers of the *Dear Mili* "package" seem more like an old-fashioned novel. The outermost part is the dust jacket *(Figure 1)*, which serves as the illustrated cover. Beneath the dust jacket, there is a hard cover with a linen-like, matte cloth bearing a small, blind-stamped symmetrical leaf ornament. On the spine are the names of the writer and illustrator, along with the title printed with gold. Pale endpapers in powder-like shades extend the subdued red colours of the dresses worn by Mili and her mother. *(Figures 1–2)*. There follows a traditional title page, a half title page and Sendak's dedication page, all without illustrations. The letter by Wilhelm Grimm to the girl named Mili, which serves as a preface, is distinguished by cursive/italic type. As cursive can also be seen to connote handwriting, this lends a more personal, informal "typographic tone" (van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 148). The presence of all these traditional peritexts, material as well as literal, means that *Dear Mili* looks like belles-lettres: prestigious

and at the same time nostalgic. Additionally, the natural feel of the matte paper, which is typical of Sendak's books, echoes more "authentic" times before the advent of glossy, coated "industrial" papers. Finally, the muted, slightly greyish and brownish colours of the covers and endpapers and the off-white paper of the body matter strengthen the *patina* effect of the book as a whole.

Although, at first glance, *Dear Mili* seems not to use typography in an expressive way, the book's typography and layout impart much of its expectations in terms of genre and ideology. *(Figure 3).* The classic serif font (based on my investigations, some typeface of Esprit Std – font family) creates the impression of traditional textbook. The idea of an invisible typography, whose main function is to transmit the text content in a neutral way without distraction, has traditionally reigned the area of book typography (See, e.g., Warde 1956; van Leeuwen 2006, 141 passim.). With the digital turn in graphic design during the 1980s, typography also began to gain more expressive potential, working increasingly like visual imagery rather than as verbal text (e.g. Zelman, 2000, pp. 53–54; Kuusamo, 1996, p. 196). In this light, the typography of *Dear Mili* represents the ideology of traditional book typography.

Ulla Rhedin (2001) has defined the fairy tale picturebook as a type of epic picturebook, in which the role of pictures is illustrative—that is, the pre-existing text can also be understood without the pictures. The epic picturebook has its origins in the tradition of illustrated books, in which the picture depicts an episode in the text. In the most formal classical layout model, resulting initially from printing techniques, text columns were placed on the left-hand page, with picture "plates" on the right. This layout also separated the acts of reading and looking, sustaining the idea of the verbal and the visual as two parallel but non-integrated experiences. Many picturebooks of classical fairy tales use this form of composition. (Rhedin, 2001, pp. 59, 77–78; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, 44.) While picturebook design is always connected to the printing techniques of the period, some elements of previous technical constraints began to be used as meaning-bearing resources, connoting traditionality or historicity. In *Dear Mili*, the traditional layout, separating the linear text and picture plates and framed by white space, awakens this sense of historicism and nostalgia. *(Figure 3).*

In *Dear Mili,* there is obvious use of the principle of symmetry. Looking at the double pages, the text is placed on the left of the spread and the picture on the right, creating a tension, but the text columns are justified and centered on their pages. The history of centered typography is long, deriving from classical ideas of symmetry as signified by measure and harmony. We have become used to seeing serif fonts in symmetrical layouts and sans serif fonts in asymmetrical ones, but in fact, the conventions of functionalist asymmetry and "traditional" symmetry in typography have provoked almost violent social reactions. In 1930s Germany, the new, asymmetric typography introduced by Jan Tschichold, the pioneer of modern typography, was suppressed as "cultural Bolshevism" while traditional symmetric typography was stigmatised as an expression of power structures, hierarchical thinking and conservatism. In recent Western culture, where we are accustomed to seeing both of these principles in book design, such ideological associations can still be surprisingly strong. (Hochuli & Kinross, 1996, pp. 11–30.) Thus, based on layout and typography, *Dear Mili* evokes expectations for highly literal, conservative content. On the other hand, especially in front matter, where the typeface is used as cursive, the calligraphy-like features of the font are clearly visible, creating associations to handwriting and meaning of historicism.

As well as meanings created by associations with cultural conventions, typography also has meanings that are shaped by our physical experience (van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 146). It follows that the typography of the title on the dust jacket of *Dear Mili* can evoke a bundle of intertwined meanings; letters similar to Roman capitals create an atmosphere of ancient culture and text that has been carved into stone, and tine-like serifs and the curved tail of the capital R gain a tension from the co-existence of soft and sharp forms.

The first we see of a picturebook is its cover, which serves to advertise, promote and package the story (Sonzogni, 2011, p. 15). The front dust jacket of *Dear Mili* bears an illustrated cover design (Figure 1). It includes a small, oval vignette-like picture of Mili and her mother, framed symmetrically by decorative flower garlands. Illustrations of this kind were typical of the German Romantic tradition (Dal, 1969, p. 16; Dal, 1975, p. 17), and the framed image-in-image construction creates a window-like passage into the story world. Both the decorative and text elements on the dust jacket of Dear Mili (including the title and names of the writer and illustrator) are assigned much more salience spatially than the image depicting the protagonists. The faded colours, the Biedermeier-style dresses of the characters and the symmetric leaf decorations with puttos again create a sense of eclectic Romanticism.

Delving deeper into the book, we find some divergence between the "promise" of the cover and the connotations created by the design of body matter—that is, the story itself. The inner book reveals a much paler design, affording the illustrations a principal role. As a product of the postmodern period, *Dear Mili* also owes something to modernism, as the lack of decoration and the generous use of white space around the text blocks serve to express value and sophistication *(Figure 3).* While modernism originally employed white space for functional simplicity, it came to connote sophisticated luxury in the bourgeois modernism of the 1900s (Robertson, 1994, pp. 61–65; Pracejus et al., 2006, pp. 82–89). Paradoxically, the symmetrical flower ornaments on the covers also echo the connotations of high value associated with decorative book design before modernism (see also Hochuli & Kinross, 1996, 11-30). Together, the natural, faded effect in materials and colours, the decorative dust jacket and cloth covers with blind stamped decoration and pinch of gold on the spine, the literal peritexts, the classical serif font, the traditional layout and the use of empty space around the text and illustrations create an old-fashioned, romantic mood with the overtones of conservative sophistication.
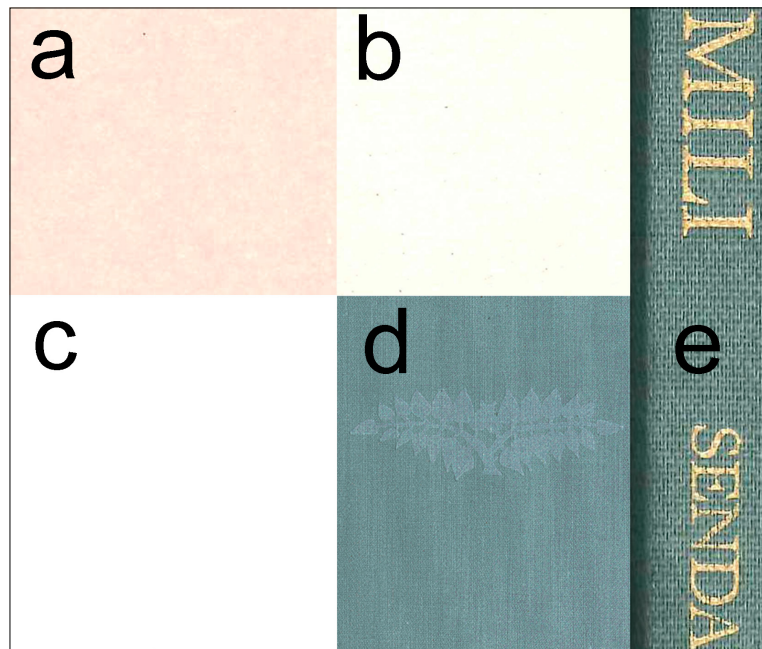
Figure 1. Dust jacket, front cover.

Figure 2. Peritexts: colours and materials
a. Endpapers b. Dustjacket, background colour c. Body matter paper
d. Cloth cover with the blind stamped ornament e. Spine

Figure 3. Layout and typography.

Mysterious Mood and Muted Tones— Colours, Composition and Style of Images

The most salient elements in *Dear Mili* are undoubtedly the images. Pictures are seen first because of their natural attractiveness (Nodelman, 1990, p.181), and spatially, they dominate the printed space of this book. Expect the full spread illustrations, illustrations fill the page on the right of the spread, which according to visual grammar and our convention of reading from left to right is the place of the "new", often used for visual key information (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005, pp. 179-185). In terms of the style and technique of Sendak's other works, the illustration style in *Dear Mili* is very similar to his earlier book *Outside Over There* (1981). Tony Kushner (2003, p. 18) describes the illustrations in *Outside Over There* as "almost hyperreal... like photographic dream-plates—paradoxically cavernously deep and hard-surfaced, impenetrably finished". The matte paper used in *Dear Mili* intensifies the sense of three-dimensionality, various levels of light and darkness; the reader is looking into the depth of the forest, and the pictures are like windows that penetrate the two-dimensional surface of the page, making maximal use of the aesthetics of picture plate as "hole image". (Nodelman, 1990, pp. 40– 41; Moebius 1986, 150.) The emphasis on static solidity rather than active line creates the illustrations' dreamlike stagnation (Nodelman 1990; pp. 73, 117). With regard to Sendak's personal and persisting style, his characters are somehow heavily built with their big heads, hands and feet (see for instance Kushner, 2003, pp. 9–10, 18). In *Dear Mili*, they seem particularly slow, often sitting and a little hunched or remaining immobile *(Figure 4)*. Only three of the fifteen pictures show Mili walking; even then, she appears slow, with both feet on the ground (see also Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2009, p. 6).

In picturebooks, there are some typical ways of creating a narrative rhythm. In books that emphasise fluid linearity—as in Sendak's famous *Where the Wild Things Are*—the horizontal format is well utilised, with the text running below illustrations that fill the whole spread, without frames. Unlike standalone works of fine art, image compositions in picturebooks are often unbalanced, adding dynamism to the narrative by tempting the reader to turn the page to see what will happen next. For instance, in *Where the Wild Things Are*, the three points at the end of the last sentence of the spread work as just this kind of page turner. (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, pp. 152–153.) In *Dear Mili*, the use of white space as picture frame and the black hairline that frames the text spreads can be seen as tools for achieving visual balance—a calming, static symmetry. At the same time, they also influence the rhythm of reading. As with layout, the use of framing elements in composition serves to punctuate the verbal text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 176), creating a pause or caesura that allows the reader to concentrate, looking at the pictures or reflecting on the meaning of the text. In this way, the rhythm of reading of *Dear Mili* is slow rather than hastening.

In terms of form, *Dear Mili*'s almost square format creates less tension than vertical or horizontal formats, especially as most of the pictures are the size of one page. In those pictures that fill the whole double page spread, there is usually some element on the gutter—a big flower or a fruit tree, for instance—that divides the horizontal format of the picture *(Figure 5)*. Most of the pictures are balanced compositions, often construed by two characters set diametrically and framed by vegetation, cottage structures or the arches of ruins. As Gregory Maguire (2003, p.

670) notes, Sendak, who was also a scenic designer, had a penchant for tableaux vivants. These precisely designed, arrested scenes, in which the characters are caught at a certain moment, create a dream-like stagnation (see also Nodelman 1990, pp. 53, 73, 117). Together with the sense of depth and intimacy created by the three dimensional solidity of forms and strengthened by the matte paper, the dynamism of the pictures is directed inwards rather than onwards; it is psychological rather than physiological, encouraging the reader to attempt to access the characters' enigmatic minds.

Colour as a semiotic mode is construed in the complex interaction between meanings that are very local, sometimes almost individual, and those that are global and sometimes almost natural (van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 345). As colour is closely related to affects (e.g. Nodelman, 1990, p. 48) it is an especially significant semiotic resource in first impressions of overall quality. In the pictures in *Dear Mili*, the dominant hues are the natural colours of the flourishing forested landscape and the rural buildings: different shades of green, brown, grey and red. While usually using red in flowers, Sendak also selected red for the clothes of Mili and her mother, adding energy to a prosaic scheme of hues. In addition to hue, colour offers value and saturation as semiotic resources, and these are perhaps more significant than hue for the overall mood of *Dear Mili*. In general, light and dark are fundamental experiences, shared by all human beings. In the pictures emphasising the dark shadows of the forest and the night and evening scenes, the predominant colour values are dark. The overall appearance is darker and more muted than the real hues because of generously used dark, thin lines of hatching, that makes the water colour technique look like an engraving. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, the key affordance of saturation lies in its ability to express emotive "temperatures": "High saturation may be positive, exuberant, adventurous, but also vulgar or garish. Low saturation may be subtle and tender, but also cold and repressed, or brooding and moody" (2002, pp. 355–356). In *Dear Mili*, the overall emphasis is on less saturated, muted colours, which – together with desaturating effect of matte, off-white paper – strengthen the patinated, sophisticated atmosphere while adding a sense of brooding, melancholy and mysterious twilight *(See colour bars in figures 1, 4, 7 & 9)*.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2002, pp. 349–50) believed that the colour schemes now used in interior design or in software like PowerPoint, for example, may gradually become more meaningful than individual hues. Indeed, the aim of such schemes in a design context is to create an overall style that engenders certain meanings. In this sense, the same colour scheme can be seen throughout *Dear Mili*, from paper and covers to illustrations. Lighter and with only with a hint of colour, the paper, cover and endpapers connote old-fashioned sophistication. In the illustrations, the colours remain muted but darker and a little more saturated, evoking more intensive meanings of melancholy and mysticism. Compared to the palette of pure colors that has become the signifier for ideologies of modernity, the colour scheme of *Dear Mili* is closer to the hybrid colours associated with postmodern ideologies (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 356).

In pictures, we tend to look first at objects that occupy a central position or that are large in size or bright or diverse in colour. Because of their cultural importance, we also tend to focus on humans or animals, and especially on their faces. (Nodelman, 1990, p. 75; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 177.) Most of the pictures in *Dear Mili* are composed to include only a thin strip of sky (if any), right at the top of the image. With no clear vanishing point, these pictures create the effect that characters (even those in central positions) are hidden deep in the forest. Similarly, giant leaves and flowers, painted in almost surrealist detail, seem to fill the

entire picture space. The most saturated, salient colors tend to be used for certain flowers rather than characters, contributing to the forest's important role in the book's overall mood (see also Bosmajian, 1995; Perrot, 1991, p. 259).

The pictures vary from medium long shots (showing the whole figure but filling most of the frame) to very long shots, where the characters are shown at long distance and less than half the height of the frame. Characters are most often shown in profile; in some pictures, Mili has turned her back to the viewer. In combination with the use of framing white space around the pictures, the long distance between characters and reader has an alienating effect, which is strengthened by the oblique viewing angle. As noted by Kress and van Leeuwen (2005, p. 136), "The oblique angle says, 'What you see here is not part of our world; it is their world, something we are not involved with.'" The pictures in which Mili is shown from behind are more complicated. This can be interpreted as the most detached relationship between character and reader; on the other hand, it indicates trust, as the viewing angle allows the reader to share the character's viewpoint. In this way, the reader is invited to follow Mili deep into the forest while she retains her distance. (2005, pp. 117-140; see also Bosmajian, 1995.)

Through vectors made by gestures or by the gaze, images can create interpersonal meanings between the depicted characters or between the reader and the characters. In pictures where characters look directly into the viewer's eyes, contact is established. Conversely, no contact is made when characters do not look directly at the viewer but remain objects of contemplation while the viewer is an "invisible onlooker". (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005, pp. 117–119.) In *Dear Mili,* there is some eye contact between the characters; Mili and her mother look intensely at each other as her mother sends her daughter to the forest, emphasising the importance of the moment. There is similar but less intense eye contact between Mili and Saint Joseph and between Mili and her guardian angel. The absence of eye contact between characters and reader is also meaningful. When characters turn to face the viewer, their gaze is always directed elsewhere in the environment, often towards nothing special, or their eyelids are half-closed, gazing contemplatively to nowhere. *(Figures 4, 6 and 7)*. This creates an evasive effect. In the double-page picture of Mili *(Figure 6)*, sitting in the ominous forest with animated trees, with a group of people crossing the bridge in the background, Mili seems to gaze inward into her own mind, oblivious to her environment. Again, these distant or contemplative gazes deepen the overall mystery of the pictures. There is one instance of direct eye contact with a character, as the dog lying between Mili and Saint Joseph stares intently towards the reader. However, as the dog is unable to speak, it remains a mute witness of the inexplicable story (see also Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, pp. 168, 227–228). *(Figure 7)*.

The cooperative action of different elements of design in creating contrary effects achieves a paradoxical tension (Nodelman, 1990, pp. 41, 43). *Dear Mili* exhibits such a tension between intimacy and involvement, created by the matte paper and the impression of depth, and the alienating effect created by the picture frames, the long and medium shot sizes, the oblique point of view and gazes that evade the reader. Coupled with the dreamlike stagnation derived from the three-dimensional technique and static composition, as well as the muted color palette, this tension defines the overall quality of the pictures; while inviting the reader to share their world, they appear to guard their inner secrets, which are presumed to be ambiguous and sombre.

Figure 4.

Figure 5. Full spread.

Figure 6. Full spread with colours.

Figure 7. One page -illustration (recto).

Romantic Quotes and Different Levels of Story

In 1980s graphic design, history made a comeback, in a period that has been called the "decade of appropriation" (Kalman et al., 1994, p. 25; Heller, 1994, pp. 34–38). Around the same time, classical fairy tales again became popular in the picturebook area. Thoroughly illustrated picturebooks of single fairy tales were one manifestation of this "market-driven renaissance" (Hearne, 1986); many of these books were illustrated in ways that evoked immediate associations with earlier styles in the history of art (see for instance Beckett, 2013, p.147).

In contrast to fine art, illustration is less concerned with expression of the artist's personality, and illustrators commonly "quote" the styles of different artists or of different historical periods to communicate the ideology, attitudes and atmosphere of the original style in the new or contemporary context (Nodelman, 1990, pp. 60-64). Known as a brilliant "quoter" of styles, Sendak adopts a very different style in *Dear Mili* than, for instance, in works where he used a more cartoon-like style; the German Romantic art of Philipp Otto Runge and Caspar David Friedrich are most often mentioned as sources of inspiration (see Bosmajian, 1995; Kushner, 2003, pp. 18, 28). Style is created not only by technique but also by the objects presented: the ruins, gloomy forests, roses, monks and puttos in Sendak's pictures are typical motifs in Romantic art. Following the rationality of the Enlightenment, Romanticism looked towards mysticism and the dark, irrational sources of past history, fantasy and emotion, where dreams were more interesting than reality and nature, and children represented creativity and purity. As well as the dust jacket design mentioned above, compositions in which the cottage, surrounded by creepers, creates an architectural frame for the characters between the outer and inner space echo the Biedermeier style of fairy tale illustrations, such as those by Ludwig Richter *(Figures 7-8)*. Again, almost identical elements can be found in pictures made by Sendak and the German romantic prints of Carl Wilhelm Kolbe the Elder; the ruins in Kolbe's work have been replaced by Jewish gravestones, but the details of vegetation are similar *(Figures 9-10)*. Also the animated ghost trees in Dear Mili are reminiscent of those produced by Arthur Rackham, another famous illustrator of Grimm's tales at the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth century.

The very personal features of Sendak's style, seen in most of his works—the big feet of characters and their somehow stocky physique—do not make them humorous or cartoon-like. At most, they seem more gentle and childish, but they retain their contemplative seriousness. By using the style of the German Romantics, Sendak confirms the origins of the tale. In his preface to *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Wilhelm Grimm described the tales as "last echoes of pagan myths... A world of magic is opened up before us, one which still exists among us in secret forests, in underground caves, and in the deepest sea, and it is still visible to children" (as cited in Lerer, 2008, p. 212). At the same time, because the illustrations emphasise the irrational, mystical, dreamlike and subjective tones of romanticism, they dispel the sometimes moral, didactic tone of Grimm's text.

As a product of its time, *Dear Mili* shares features associated with the postmodern picturebook. However, it stretches the limits of the genre, including the age group of potential readers and therefore the themes and topics addressed (Beckett, 2012). The book is constructed in such a way that the same story supports several layers of interpretation, according to the reader's age and knowledge. In the book's pictures—which Tony Kushner, a Sendak specialist, regards as "the darkest work in the Sendak canon" (2003, p. 28)—another kind of story is hidden, which

starts to reveal itself when the images are explored in greater detail. For instance, in one picture where Mili has left home and sits in the forest, some of the tree branches lying on the forest floor prove to be human limbs *(Figure 11)*. Then, behind the forest, there are poorly dressed people crossing a bridge; behind them is a rugged tower, newer than the cottages of Mili's home village. The darkest level of the story become apparent when the reader notes the similarity between the dead branches and documentary images of Jewish victims of concentration camps; the tower in the background is the camp watch tower, and the people on the bridge are prisoners. Told only in pictures by visual intertexts, interpretation requires previous knowledge of the Holocaust (see also Steig & Campbell-Wilson, 1994).

Dear Mili does not share all the characteristics of postmodern picturebooks, in that the book's use of the genre's typical tricks is quite discreet and not an end in itself. Nonetheless, the visual intertextuality and pastiche create ambiguities of meaning, at the same time hiding and revealing the story's darkest level. It seems clear that after an already long career as a children's book artist, Sendak wanted to stretch the limits of both theme and audience (see also Kushner, 2003, pp. 24–33), leading to this overall mood, so ambiguous and intrinsically mysterious.

For those readers more familiar with Sendak and his art, there is a further explanation for some other inexplicable details. For instance, a full spread illustration depicting Saint Joseph, Mili and her guardian angel in the garden is—simultaneously—the Garden of Eden and a Jewish graveyard *(Figure 5)*. A group of children can be seen in the background, like a choir conducted by a man resembling Mozart in his red tailcoat. This visual fragment references Sendak's passion for Mozart's music; in a 2004 interview with Bill Moyers, Sendak said, "I know that if there's a purpose for life, it was for me to hear Mozart" (https://vimeo.com/33284145). The choir, in turn, derives from a photograph of Jewish children, taken days before they were sent to Auschwitz (Kushner, 2003, p. 28). With the revelation of this most ultimate tragic theme, the pervasive dark ambiguity of the book seems finally to be fully explained.

Figure 8. Ludwig Richter (1803-1884): *Für's Haus: Im Winter.*
http://www.goethezeitportal.de/wissen/illustrationen/anthologien-und-sammlungen/ludwig-richter-fuers-haus-im-winter/richter-winter-2.html

Figure 9. One page –illustration (recto) with colours.

Figure 10. Carl Wilhelm Kolbe the Elder:

Youth Playing a Lyre to a Maiden by a Fountain (c. 1803)

Etching and drypoint

Plate: 16 1/4 x 20 15/16 inches (41.2 x 53.2 cm)

Sheet: 18 11/16 x 23 11/16 inches (47.4 x 60.2 cm)

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Purchased with funds contributed by Marion Boulton Stroud, 1984

1984-88-1

Conclusion

While it is challenging to analyse in a single article how the total design of a picturebook serves to convey meaning, this seems the best approach to comprehending how the different elements of design interact. Semiotic resources like typography, layout, image and colour entail a countless set of sub-factors that in turn contribute to the meanings evoked. The different modes intertwine; typography deploys a certain colour, which can exert an effect in itself or as part of a scheme, and so on.

In *Dear Mili*, the sense of traditionality is achieved by traditional literal peritexts, cloth covers and dust jacket, typographic symmetry and traditional typeface, and a layout that separates images from text and uses white space to frame the illustrations. The faded, muted colour scheme and the matte paper further connote traditionality and, along with the use of white space, a sense of old-fashioned refinement. Taking care not to alienate potential readers, the illustrated dust jacket uses the ornamental Biedermeier style to hint at content that is more gentle and harmless than the story turns out to be.

The sense of mystery and darkness of tone is achieved mainly in illustrations; by Sendak's use of colour and visual structure. Static compositions strengthened by painterly technique that emphasises plasticity combine to create a dreamlike, contemplative atmosphere. This is further consolidated by viewing angles and the characters' shrouded gaze. Muted colour tones make the overall mood melancholic. The use of German Romantic print style conveys a sense of history and the Romantic ideology.

All of these qualities become immediately apparent to the reader. Created by different modes acting together, the overall mood serves the ultimate theme of the story, supported by visual narration. This emerges gradually in the pictures; Romantic and historical associations are engendered by stylistic quotations (visual intertexts) and the objects depicted: a fairy tale forest, giant flowers, angels and a monk-like Saint Joseph. The use of pastiche, involving strange fragments of concentration camps, Mozart and the victims of Holocaust, reveals a parallel story that is much more serious than that originally told by Grimm.

Discussion

Reflecting on fairy tale publishing, Betsy Hearne (1986) noted that federal funding to schools and libraries in America dropped in the mid-1970s, forcing publishers to turn to bookstore trade. Available at no expense, fairy tales proved to be a low-risk solution. Crystallising the business case for picturebook publishing, Hearne declared that "Graphics carry the day when adults select on sight" (p. 21).

The sense of traditionality is most obvious in the design of the outermost layers of peritexts, hinting at belles-lettres, the traditional gift book and a sophisticated adult audience. This harmless Romanticism does not reveal the dark side of *Dear Mili*.

As is typical of fairy tales, the verbal text of *Dear Mili* is quite laconic, leaving open the possibility of different visual representations. As an epic picturebook, it follows in the tradition of the illustrated book. However, while picturebook text and illustrations are made by the same

artist or involve close co-operation of writer and illustrator, the epic picturebook poses certain specific challenges. Separation of text and pictures—and, by implication, the acts of reading and looking—is clearly visible in the layout. The static elements in the style and the composition of the images are typical of hole images, which means that the narrative rhythm in epic picturebooks often drags. In the case of *Dear Mili*, the book turns this challenge to its advantage, directing the tension inwards. The reader becomes absorbed in the depth of the story (in the psychological sense too), trying to understand the inner mystery that hides below the surface.

At an ideological level, *Dear Mili* can be seen as a postmodern interpretation of Romantic ideology. If the style of a certain period can be used to express the spirit of that time in a new context, Sendak's choice of German Romanticism is not a random decision. According to Hauser (2005), Romanticism had its roots in the "torment of the world". As for Jewish people, as for the new generation of the Romantic period, "the feeling of homelessness and loneliness became the fundamental experience…" (p. 160). In Sendak's post-modern story, an escape into past history is not entirely possible, and fragments of the tragic reality of a later age exudes through the images.

It has been widely suggested that postmodern picturebooks, laden as they are with cultural codes, sophisticated allusions and metaphors, are really intended for a more learned, literary adult audience (e.g. Rhedin, 2001, pp. 12–13). In this sense, Sendak's works could easily be seen as a symbolic code to be broken, taking account of previous research and Sendak's own commentaries (Steig & Campbell-Wilson, 1994). On the other hand, as children nowadays are familiar with various media forms, they seem paradoxically well aware of the book's structural recourses for meaning making (Crocker, 2011, p. 54; Mackey & Shane, 2013, p. 17). In short, the "postmodern" resides not only in the form of the narrative but also in the way it is read.

International picturebooks are translated and published in multiple countries, sometimes printed in the same place at the same time. From the social semiotic point of view, the interpretation of multimodal representations depends on culture and period and is never fixed: "The more pronounced the cultural differences, the greater are the differences in the resources of representation and the practices of their use" (Kress, 2010, pp. 7–8). In analysing *Dear Mili* as multimodal representation, it is important to possess "inwardness" in respect of the culture that produced it. Although picturebooks are published and marketed globally, there are still cultural differences in how semiotic resources are used. For me, the use of dust jacket and cloth covers connotes "high writing" and adult novels, as well as something old-fashioned, because in Finland, cover texts and illustrations are now commonly printed straight onto the cover (see also Kaataja, personal communication, 18 February 2016; Poskela, personal communication 26 February 2016). The traditional, literal peritexts of the front matter also convey strong associations with high literary adult content, in part because of my inwardness in Finnish culture. In American picturebooks, these elements of traditional book design are also more commonly used in picturebooks. It is commonly the case that peritextual features of the picturebook—paper, covers, layout and so on—can vary from edition to edition (Nodelman, personal communication, 28 February 2015; Happonen, 2001, pp. 11–14). If we take the semiotic resources of overall design seriously as an integral part of the story, the story itself changes each time these features are changed. So, for example, the American custom of pasting a gold medal on the cover illustration of Caldecott Medal winners surely conveys fame and market value. Overall, the fact that the design of *Dear Mili* is so similar in both Finnish and American versions indicates

that publishers have paid attention to design as a conveyer of meaning. Additionally, the typographic designer's name is mentioned on the copyright page, which is by no means inevitable, at least in Finnish book publishing.

In terms of cultural differences in how we use and interpret semiotic resources in picturebook design, *Dear Mili* is a real melting pot of cultures. Sendak, a Jewish American artist, visualises the Jewish trauma of the Holocaust in his illustrations for a German tale, which in turn has its origins in German Romanticism, which in turn generated an ideal of patriotism that later echoed even in National Socialist imagery (Bosmaijan, 1995, p. 192). As the peritextual features of *Dear Mili* are faithful to North American conventions of picturebook design, my interpretation of the book is inevitably marked by some outwardness. In this regard, Steig and Campbell (1994, p. 122) pointed out that illustrating (or, according to multimodal point of view, illustrating and designing) someone else's text is itself a rewriting, and any interpretation is therefore a rewriting of a rewriting. Granted these concerns, I believe the overall quality of *Dear Mili* conveys very affective, universal meanings—or can you imagine someone describing their first reading of Sendak's book as hilarious, racy, modern, unambiguous or shallow?

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Fashion Photography in

Nonhuman Drag

Saara Mäntylä

Abstract

This article explores how camping up the fashion representation in the form of non-human drag challenges the normative gender system in Vogue magazine's editorial photography. Using queer-feminist theoretical framework of gender performativity, the article sheds light on interpretive perspectives of female sexuality and gender in fashion imagery through resistant close reading of selected examples of photographs. Styled in nonhuman drag, the subjects within the representations renegotiate the borders of human. Within such subversive politics the werewolf, for instance, presents itself as a potential queer character. The simultaneously both queer and trans act of nonhuman drag underlines the fluidity and flexibility of identity, and further queers human opposition to nature and animal world. It works against the performatively constructed and sustained concepts of gender and sexuality by revealing the artificiality of such categories. This article suggests that nonhuman drag can serve as a valuable and transgressive point of view in investigating visual culture queerly and in contesting normative discourses. The discussion reaches its conclusion by opening up the conversation of queering within visual communication towards the nonhuman.

Keywords: camp, drag, fashion photography, gender, nonhuman, performativity, queer theory, sexuality, visual culture, vogue, werewolf

Introduction

In a Mario Sorrenti's photograph, part of Vogue Paris' fashion editorial "Nouvelle Eve" (*Figure 1*), a female model fills the frame in a close medium shot taken straight up front. She looks at the camera. Her eyebrows defined and strong, her eyes accentuated by back eyeliner, her pink lips slightly ajar. She is wearing a pink fur outfit resembling a coat. The model is holding a snake which she has lifted casually in front of her so that her chin leans lightly on the animal. The snake has its head raised, seemingly observing the camera and the viewer of the image. The shot is lit up from the side; the space remains black leaving the location empty.

The fur coat on the model is open on the front, revealing a shiny belt buckle. Beyond this glimpse, however, the viewer is not able to tell whether the woman is wearing anything else, as the snake conceals the model's body. Only a small area of skin that remains above the belt buckle suggests that the fur and the snake's serpent figure alone are covering her otherwise naked torso. The model's figure is further surrounded by thickly combed and curled medium blonde hair which shape follows the form of the fur.

As the fur and hair frame the model's pose with the snake, the animalistic reference shaping the narrative invites me to a nonhuman reading of the depicted scenery. The point of view of nonhuman allows an apt way of extending queer theory's inquiry on discursively formulated practices of gender and sexuality (see for example Giragosian, 2014; Hird, 2006; Hird & Roberts, 2011). It is important to clarify that in the context of this analysis nonhuman refers to all species that are not human, since the term animal could in certain instances broadly incorporate human as well. Furthermore, I narrow down the meaning of nonhuman here to animal-others, that is, for example snakes and wolves, whereas elsewhere nonhuman largely may apply to both organic and inorganic materiality of the world, such as plants, bacteria, water, rocks, and so forth (see Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, pp. 169–175). In discussing the dichotomy of culture and nature, in this analysis, human refers to culture and nonhuman represents nature (see for example Birke, Bryld, & Lykke, 2004, p. 179; Hird, 2006; Hird & Roberts, 2011, pp. 110–111).

In my analysis on the representations of Vogue magazine, I propose a nonhuman angle for reading fashion photography queerly. I use queer as a term to describe "aspects of spectatorship, cultural readership, production, and textual coding that seem to establish spaces not described by, or contained within, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, or transgendered understandings and categorisations of gender and sexuality" (Doty, 2000, pp. 6–7). Queer can thus be understood as the opposing power to normativity, something that questions the ways gender and sexuality are socially constructed (Rossi, 2002, pp. 82–83; also Butler, 1993). In this article, I perceive queer as something divergent that dismantles the boundaries of binaries such as heterosexuality and homosexuality, or femininity and masculinity (de Lauretis, 2004, pp. 84–85), and as something which aims to contest all identity categories altogether (Vänskä, 2006, pp. 32–33).

In the context of fashion magazines, editorial content refers to the images that the magazine produces for its readers. Usually, editorial photographs are considered as series which are organised thematically and typographically under headlines that construct imaginary narratives the consumer is able to interpret (Garner, 2008, pp. 48–49). I refer to these narratives here as fashion stories.

The fashion stories in Vogue magazine are part of the globally circulated fashion imagery — an arena in which female or feminine roles are specifically targeted, constructed and defined seasonally (Evans & Thornton, 1989; Lewis & Rolley, 1996). As a high fashion and lifestyle magazine, Vogue impresses upon its readers not only how to dress and act stylishly in order to attain success, but also how to be a woman in today's Western society (Craik, 1994, pp. 44–46, 59, 65; McCracken, 1993, pp. 168–172).

In doing so, fashion photography borrows plenty of its narrative power from cinema as it builds imaginary realities to identify with its characters (Kismaric & Respini, 2004, pp. 11–31). However, unlike in cinema, the concept of time is treated differently in fashion. Fashion images function without the limitations of time: they are always treated in the present tense. Without past or future, or even location — the stories within the images take place in artificially decorative, leisurely settings where their characters are simplified into signifiers for professions and transparent personalities in a theatre-like manner — the narrative unfolds without chronology (Barthes, 1990, pp. 247–257, 272–303). Since there is no linear timeline to the stories of fashion, their power lies precisely on the surface of the image. As such, fashion is allowed great liberties in its representations with, for instance, drama, violence, sexuality, or humour (see Evans & Thornton, 1989, pp. 84, 106).

This freedom of visual expression has allowed fashion to explore playfulness with gender and sexuality abundantly. Already in the 1970's, themes such as homosexuality, murder or voyeurism were commonplace in fashion photography (Craik, 1994, pp. 108–111). Later on, much has been written about lesbian representation in fashion in the forms of lesbian chic, twinning and butch–femme pairing, to name a few (see for instance Clark, 1993; Dittmar, 1998; Lewis & Rolley, 1996; Vänskä, 2006). Queer is not something that appears foreign to the fashion world either. A great deal of fashion history along its existence is understood to have queer involvement and presence all the way from production and style, to transgender and androgynous models, and imagery that connotes queer lifestyle and culture (Steele, 2013). Examined more closely, no matter how much play with sex or gender has been celebrated in fashion, the dualistic understanding of these concepts have remained intact within its narrative core (see Negrin, 2008, pp. 147–161). The queer, which is recognised in fashion, is connected to discursive binaries, thus enforcing the very notions of polarised gender system. This article taps onto this supposition in its attempt to open up fashion representation with the assistance of nonhuman.

The theoretical background for my investigation is based on de Lauretis' (2004) notions on gender as a societally maintained system where individuals are automatically categorised based on their anatomical sex (male or female) and thereafter taught how to perform femininity and masculinity accordingly to their socially assigned gender. This model of thinking formulates the so-called technology of gender, where gender is a product of cultural discourse which is established continually in, for example, linguistic, visual and bodily representations (de Lauretis, 2004, pp. 40–42). Operating via dualities such as sex and gender, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, cultural discourse defines the possible ways in which identities can be understood.

Fashion photographs function as a part of this technology of gender and sexuality, where both men and women are supposed to act in certain coded ways (Vänskä, 2006). In this analysis, I reveal alternative readings to the ostensible dichotomies of gender and sexuality of the editorial content of Vogue by adopting the notion that gender is a performative, something that

exists externally via the act of repetition of fabricated signs and not as something immutable in individuals' inner core (Butler, 1990; 1993). Within this framework, the world is understood to make sense only within discursive structures, which means that individuals cannot choose whether to participate in the performative meaning-making system — however, it is possible to choose in which way performativity is carried out (Butler, 1993, pp. 136–141, 145–149). Here, drag can function as a tool towards alternative tautology.

Drag is a position of ambivalence (Butler, 1993, p. 125). By emphasising performative imperatives by queering and parodying them, drag makes normative structures noticeable (Kuhn, 1985, p. 54). It can be used to bringing visibility to existing hierarchies in sexuality, and to point out the binary division of gender as something ironic or unnatural. Nonetheless, drag does not automatically lead to subversion of these systems (Butler, 1993, pp. 231–237). Its primary power lies in its ability to demonstrate the artificial discursive nature of norms by overemphasising the ways hierarchies and normalcy are acquired and sustained (see Chinn, 1997, pp. 299–301).

The fantasy-led and often sexualised fashion imagery positions the female on the centre stage similarly to cinema, where the woman is looked at as an erotic spectacle. According to film theorist Mulvey (1989), the pleasure in viewing can be only attained via gaze that is gendered as male — even if the viewer of the image is female, she is obliged to take the position of the male and adopt some masculine traits in order to reach pleasure in looking (see also Kaplan, 2000). Theories of gaze are concerned with this problematisation and have been sought to unravel the release of the female spectator from such limiting power structures. In fashion imagery, for instance Reina Lewis and Katrina Rolley (1996), and Annamari Vänskä (2006) have proposed for possible female and lesbian pleasuring gazing positions. These involve images that allow for narcissistic identification of the female viewer within their narratives (Lewis & Rolley, 1996, pp. 181–184). Furthermore, it is postulated that in order to engage the female gaze which is otherwise repressed as passive, fashion photography needs to present signs of activity (Vänskä, 2006, p. 134). In my explorations of queer pleasures within the fashion representations selected for this article, I adopt the notion of oppositional gaze as my strategy towards active spectatorship. Oppositional gaze is regarded as a conscious effort to explore marginalised viewing positions (hooks, 1992, p. 116).

While recent feminist research is increasingly interested in the materiality of the images (see for example Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012; Kontturi, 2012; Negrin, 2008), the quest to explore the discursive power structures of gender and sexuality on the narrative surface of fashion photographs has prompted me to narrow down the field of inquiry here to the representational meanings of images. Additionally, I opt out of focusing on the intentions behind the production of the photographs (see Seppänen, 2005, pp. 94–95; Rossi, 2010). Instead, I consider images as representations which themselves participate in the meaning-making system of gender and sexuality, and not as presentations that would reflect something that exists in the world beyond discourse. The aforementioned lack of chronology within fashion stories (Barthes, 1990, pp. 289–301) permits the extraction of single images out of editorial content as object of analysis. I do, nonetheless, consider the titles of the fashion stories as verbal cues towards dissecting the representational construction of meanings.

I advance my analysis from an oppositional point of view by using the method of resistant close reading of images, therefore purposefully paying attention to details that allow for queer interpretations (Fetterley, 1978, pp. xi–xxvi; Palin, 2004, pp. 45–46). By approaching images as

visual texts, I attend to the framing, composition, models' pose and gaze, styling, colors, materials, and lightning of the shots (Vänskä, 2012, pp. 26, 31–32). Analysed in this way, images can be interpreted also beyond their obvious meanings, against the grain — they can be read as coded entities similarly to written language (see Vänskä, 2012, pp. 26–27). My aim is not to reveal generalisable patterns but to point out the possibilities for queer readings in the images at hand by focusing on details that might seem less important but which in close reading can reveal subdued or hidden meanings and attitudes (see Vänskä, 2006, p. 15; Palin, 2004). As such, this article embraces the tradition of post-structuralist queer-feminist approach (see Rocamora & Smelik, 2016) in my quest to explore particularly how the visual representations of women in the high fashion magazine of Vogue can be read to produce and enforce gender and sexuality in a non-normative way.

It's important to keep in mind that this point of view does not deny other readings but it originates from the interpretive scope of fashion photography. It must also be understood that I analyse the examples as a researcher whose knowledge and understanding of the world is limited to Western social environments and academia, as well as more personal points of departure — fashion representations have unapologetically and unavoidably played a role in my own identity building projects through contrast and assimilation. My research focus in visual culture and visual communication, as well as professional experience in the fields of photography and visual communication design, help bringing these topics forward. While the core of this research concerns itself within understanding representations in the field of visual culture studies, the analysis categorises as interdisciplinary as it unfolds amid the discussions of queer-feminist theories and lends some of its theoretical frameworks from film studies as well.

Next, I will discuss three photographic examples taken from the editorial content of Vogue magazine. These photographs have been published in various editions (Paris, USA and Britain) of the widely circulated Vogue in the year 2014. The examples have been selected based on their visual qualities and noticeable susceptiveness to represent fashion stories that allow queer readings within the topic of nonhuman drag. Semiotic vocabulary lends me its assistance when reading the photographs, but the main interest of this article remains in larger cultural meanings that are built, challenged, and maintained by these mainstream images.

Within these frameworks, I answer the primary question of interest: In which ways do the representations of fashion editorials in Vogue magazine use nonhuman drag as a queer strategy that can challenge the normative gender system? The discussion reaches its conclusion by opening up the conversation of queering within visual communication towards the theories of nonhuman.

Figure 1.   *"Nouvelle Eve"*. Photographer: Mario Sorrenti. Vogue Paris, 949, Août 2014. Les Publications Condé Nast, p. 126.

Camping up Eve

The title of the fashion photograph "Nouvelle Eve" *(Figure 1)* published in Vogue Paris, refers the audience back to the well-known biblical tale of disobedience famously situated in the Garden of Eden. In this myth, Eve is enticed by the evil serpent and betrays God by eating a forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Biedermann, 1993). According to Biedermann (1993), Eve's weakness at the face of such seduction leads to God condemning humans to mortality (pp. 8–9, 180). Different readings of this tale suggest that rather than being an evil liar, the serpent actually only questions the instructions given to Eve in a subtle and enigmatic manner that involve guile and charm of persuasion (Rutledge, 1996, pp. 191–193, 195–196). In a way, the serpent in this interpretation aims for queering the setting as it is constructed in the language by God, opening up the statement of prohibition to alternative readings. Rutledge (1996) proposes that Eve herself decisively chooses to eat the fruit without denying her responsibility. This can be interpreted as the acknowledgement of sexual difference — not a female difference to male, but a difference as it is based on the division of human and nature (Rutledge, 1996, pp. 194–197). This background narrative guides my reading of "Nouvelle Eve" towards nonhuman queering.

The Eve in the fashion photograph analysed here seems to confederate with the snake lifting it close to her face and leaning into it as if resting onto a friend's shoulder. The snake curls by her body, her skin. In this way, the figures take the same side, they touch as if becoming one. Both the model and the snake make eye contact with the camera, thus demanding the viewer to return their gaze (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, pp. 126–127, 154). This gaze then places the viewer's participation in a biblical discourse where sexual difference is created and defined for the category of human.

By becoming an ally of the serpent, Eve begins to rebel in coalescence with the nonhuman. The model's naked body (nakedness that is apparent as a human condition for the characters in the Garden of Eden) is covered by the pink fur, the long hair and the shape of the snake — all of which connote nonhuman. The human hides behind a fashioned role play where, alongside the serpent, the female takes an active role in producing alternative readings to the tale. This animate rebellion is emphasised in the model's strong eye makeup. Additionally, the pink fur coat alludes to parodical approach to modern fur fashion. Parodizing is a strategy that the fashion industry has successfully used in order to depart from the burden of the 1980's anti-fur campaigns, and to make fur young, trendy, approachable and conscious consumer choice instead of an expensive luxury commodity (Hahn & Yang, 2001).

In my reading of "Nouvelle Eve", the pink colour of the fur indicates the playfulness and unnaturalness of fashion. Furthermore, the model's hair is backcombed voluminous on purpose, suggesting that without styling its form wouldn't reach such bold volume. This emphasis on the fabricated nature of clothing and styling makes them appear "camp" — purposefully created performances constructed through exaggeration and parody (Kuhn, 1985, p. 53; Sontag, 1999). Such underlined performance of camp activates the gaze to observe the representations queerly and without the "claim to truth" (Case, 1999). Regardless of camp's many definitions over time such as style, sensitivity, taste, certain aesthetic, or queer discourse, ultimately camp resists all categorisations since it manifests itself heterogeneously without being fixed into one core meaning (Cleto, 1999, pp. 2–3). All camp objects and persons possess great amount of the-

atrical artifice, and have a joyful and aesthetic affinity towards approaching the world (Sontag, 1999). A camp performance is a construct of signs throughout, where different roles are played with irony and wit (Case, 1999). Being fluid and escaping fixed definitions, the characteristics of camp are comparable to queer which, equally mutable, also operates against categorisations of naturalness and normalcy (Cleto, 1999, pp. 12–13). In this analysis, camp offers an entry point towards recognising queer strategies within performative power structures. Similarly to aforementioned drag (see Butler, 1993, p. 237), camp can make the gender system visible for investigative purposes.

Considering pleasurable spectatorship, the direct gazes of the model and the serpent in "Nouvelle Eve" demand the viewer of the photograph to participate in an active role play. In this play, the character of Eve covers her human self in the signs of the nonhuman, which brings us to consider the foundations of human–nature difference and female agency, insofar as these are situated in the referenced biblical tale of the creation of human. When Eve partakes in the camped up performance of the fashion photograph, it makes the representation appear unnatural.

According to Lewis & Rolley (1996), female spectatorship and agency beyond the male opposite emerge when the reader-viewer is visually encouraged to both desire to be the woman in the fashion photographs, and to desire her. Furthermore, when the female reader-viewer desires to be the woman in the image, she then desires to be the object of other females' desiring gaze. This shift in pleasurable gazing, where a woman can want another woman regardless of her sexual preferences, is visually coded safe and temporary by the camp of the fashion photograph "Nouvelle Eve". Camp denaturalises the performance and parodies it into a joyful role play, simultaneously exposing the constructedness of the characters of Eve and the serpent. As a result, the performance of gender which gets revealed by camp in "Nouvelle Eve", proves to be the very same conception which queers the photograph.

The Queer Power of Werewolf

A photograph from the fashion story "The Wolf In Her" *(Figure 2),* published in British Vogue (September 2014, p. 357), moves my analysis on gender and sexuality further alongside the borders of human as it begins to queer the human category from the perspective of nonhuman. This happens when a queer nonhuman character, a werewolf, is introduced.

In this image, a long-haired female model is sitting on a burgundy-coloured vintage sofa with spread legs, facing the camera in front of her with a direct gaze. A wolf — or a dog playing the role of a wolf, according to the fashion story's title — has risen up between the model's legs. The wolf's gaze is on the model; it has turned its back on the camera. The model is wearing a white unbuttoned fur coat, and her legs are bare.

Similarly to the photograph "Nouvelle Eve", the risen animal figure covers the front of the model, leaving the viewer to wonder whether she is wearing anything else under her fur coat. The model's hands remain behind the wolf's head as well — it seems as if she is holding the animal's muzzle or perhaps feeding the wolf. The particularities, whatever they might be, are left to the viewer's imagination. The blonde hair of the model appears wet, pulled back from her forehead, but hanging casually over her shoulders. As the white fur somewhat resembles a bath

CHASE THE WILDEST, MOST WINDSWEPT SHEARLING
IN DARING NEW LENGTHS – DONNA KARAN'S
BUTTERMILK COAT IS THE ONE TO EMBRACE
Goatskin coat, from £6,190, Donna Karan New York.
For stockists, all pages, see Vogue Information

MARIO SORRENTI

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Figure 2. *"The Wolf In Her".* Photographer: Mario Sorrenti. British Vogue, September 2014. A Condé Nast Publication, p. 357.

robe, the wet hair further feeds into an association that perhaps the female has just finished bathing or showering — an interpretation that adds to the narrative with its sexualised connotations. Although the white colour of the coat connotes purity and innocence, it is contrasted with the idea of a fur being a sign of an animal-victim. This, together with the old and dingy couch, coloured in washed-out hue of love, aggression, and evil (Biedermann, 1993, p. 284), and the model's strong black scruffy eyeliner, beckons a mystery. The duality of good and evil in the colors of white and burgundy of the photograph creates movement between these polarised meanings, posits the image in the state of in-between.

As the model is situated higher than the wolf in the frame, the intense salience of her gaze controls the situation and gains power over the animal character (Goffmann, 1979, p. 40; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 212). Based on female goddess figures and wolf motives on old totems (She-Wolf), it is believed that women tamed wolves into dogs for humans (Walker, 1988, p. 393). In the image of "The Wolf In Her", the animal seems rather tame and sympathetic with its soft fur and slightly but kindly tilted head, and big ears ready to listen. Turned towards the model, the wolf offers its entire demeanour to her. The wolf's gaze is transferred to the model, and through her, in her eyes, it travels to the viewer of the image. As the title suggests: the wolf is in her. Hereby, the wolf and the woman become one, and the space between them literally disappears. When we look at her, we are looking at the wolf.

In several cultures there are beliefs that humans can turn into wolves or werewolves from time to time by dressing up in wolf hide (Walker, 1988, pp. 281–282, 393; Biedermann, 1993, pp. 357–358; see also Bernhardt-House, 2008). As the model of the fashion story is located behind the wolf in the photographic plane, following Goffman (1979), her psyche becomes situated at the border of the scene's dynamic. This means that she is predisposed to change while simultaneously capable of participating and being impacted by the events in the image (see Goffman, 1979, pp. 70–72). The dichotomy of the colors, and the signs referring to fluidity, movement and merging of the dynamic structures in the image, prompt a nonhuman reading. The model appears as a werewolf — a queer character that is perpetually in the stages of transition and in-between.

However, the model is not dressed up as a wolf to attain a full transformation. Instead, her performance in the photograph resembles drag. As I mentioned before, drag makes queering of discursive constructs possible by bringing visibility to them. Drag is also a form of camp (Medhurst, 1997, p. 282), which thus connects this fashion photograph to the previous one of Eve.

Bernhardt-House (2008) suggests that since a werewolf is part human and part wolf, it easily signifies queerness — something that exists outside of normativity and actively disrupts fixed identity categories. Interestingly, werewolf characters are also symbolically linked to many forms of sexuality, whether libido, sexual orientation, sexual positions or uncontrollable female (teenage) sexuality is concerned (Bernhardt-House, 2008). Alluding to these connections, the model's pose in the fashion photograph beckons sex and sexuality. With her intense, vivid gaze she offers herself to the viewer directly. Her lips are slightly ajar. Without the animal in the frame, the woman's crotch would take over the very centre of the image. Moreover, the wolf's location between the model's legs insinuates a sexual position. The red and white colors of the scene can refer to the beginning of a new life: symbolically, red blood (menstruation) and white sperm together create life (Biedermann, 1993, p. 284). Fascinatingly, moon cycles and female menstruation can also be considered connected to werewolves (Bernhardt-House, 2008). Thus,

all signs of the fashion photograph consolidate the queer reading of a werewolf. The eroticised play in nonhuman drag exposes the discursive gender practices as it diverges from normative representations of human.

As a fluid and transformative character, werewolf is both queer and trans (Bernhardt-House, 2008; Ferreday, 2011, p. 219). Queer and trans are performative tools that can be used to subvert masculine and feminine categories as starting points for understanding sexuality and gender. Trans refers not only to movement within gender roles, and surgical and social changing of sex or gender, but also to a flux in the wider understanding in the tradition of categories (Hird, 2006). The behavioural models of nonhuman species — introduced to fashion representation here as nonhuman drag — point out to the discursive structure of naturalness. What in human understanding is considered normal sexual or gender behaviour, does not necessarily apply to nonhuman (Hird, 2006). For example, as animals are known to transgender or masturbate, those behaviours problematise the human understanding of natural. Following Hird's (2008) claim, by implementing notions of nonhuman into queer-feminist research, it is possible to challenge already established gender hierarchies of human.

The nonhuman consideration possesses the transgressive potential to queer humanity itself by broadening the scope of the discourse. This becomes evident as the "The Wolf In Her" in its reference to a werewolf invites a queer viewing position. The image disobeys the normative boundaries of human existence by reminding us of the nonhuman. We are faced with a character that escapes fixed categories. As a figure in a constant and unexpected state of transformation, the werewolf becomes actually such a queer figure in its perpetual fluctuation in-between, that it threatens all understanding of stable identity — even within queer itself (Bernhardt-House, 2008, p. 165).

Nonhuman Drag as a Uniform

In an example of Vogue USA's editorial photography titled "Playing It Cool" (*Figure 3*. Vogue USA, September 2014, pp. 814–815), camp reading queers not only the human but nature too. Here, five models are standing in a full-length portrait, which is set in what seems to be an overgrown garden. One of the models is standing on the stairs of an old, derelict building. The others take their poses on the ground, surrounded by trees and branches of dark green hues. They are all facing the camera with a simple stare. The models' outfits consist of different kinds of knee-length fur coats. The model who stands in the middle, but furthest away from the camera, has her coat open revealing an animal-patterned dress underneath. The coats are made of both long-haired and short-haired furs, but also of leather and other materials. In addition to the fur coats, each model in the photograph is wearing a different headpiece that invites for nonhuman readings. The shapes of these head decorations made of leather, fur, metal, and hair, resemble two ears, antlers, or horns. Some of the pieces have fox head hide attached to them.

Historically, helmets and headpieces have been decorated with antlers and bear teeth during war because their thus enlarged silhouette has appropriated qualities of strength and menacing size to their owner (Biedermann, 1993, p. 294). Further, animal skin or fur connotes the predatory qualities of the animal itself, a notion that has been employed by humans on their

quest to attain the magical nature of bears or wolves (see Spooner, 2012). The image "Playing It Cool" is hereby laden with symbolic elements: fox is considered to be lascivious and cunning symbol of eroticism and seduction in many cultures, and its red fur colour connotes fire and devil (Biedermann, 1993, pp. 124–125); antlers signify strength and aggression on bovine god figures, and sexual energy and potency on males (Biedermann, 1993, p. 323; Walker, 1988, p. 139). The unifying head-gear altogether implies an unstable sexualised identity which can be interpreted also as queer.

A headpiece, on the other hand, symbolises societal status and marks belonging to a group (Biedermann, 1993, p. 294). The women in the photograph are not physically touching each other but their outfits and head accessories create a unison between them, almost as if the garments were uniforms. This homogeneous look is completed with off-road shoes worn by each of the models.

According to Craik (2009), a uniform can be a mark of social class or status, or a sign of authority, to name a few. The codes, roles and norms related to certain uniforms, such as professional uniforms or army uniforms, contribute to building a suitable identity for a certain outfit (Craik, 2009, pp. 149–151, 155–156). Furthermore, uniforms are also used to emphasise sexual identities or sexual preferences in many ways (Craik, 2009).

In "Playing It Cool", the unified looks connote hunting culture and its groupings. The models in the photograph form their own subcultural group, or a herd or a pack, by harnessing the domains of hunter and hunted with their role play with nonhuman. Besides the already mentioned wolves, deer and bovine are known to be gregarious animals as well. The untamed setting of nature in the photograph emphasises the wildness of its characters. Hereby again, nonhuman opens up the queering potential of the image, bringing in the question of destabilising the borders of human (Ferreday, 2011, p. 222).

For fashion imagery, female groups are common since they enable multiple points of view to the same garments in one photograph (Dittmar, 1998, pp. 327–330). Besides showcasing clothing, female homosocial groups offer a site for erotic narratives that queer the lesbian pleasures within the act of looking (see Vänskä, 2006). The alluring and unifying styling builds relationships between fashion characters on the site of the image which is meant to titillate, arouse and be desired (Dittmar, 1998, p. 330). The viewer is invited to read both heterosexual and lesbian narratives within such fashion photographs.

Similarly to "The Wolf In Her", the nonhuman in "Playing It Cool" allows the transgression of existing categories of sexuality and gender, and challenges the fixity of cultural and natural definitions (see Hird, 2006, pp. 36–37). The group becomes a joining force for a performed identity, or as the title of the fashion story puts it: for playing cool. That is to say, the unified grouping strengthens the representation when it is understood as a performative repetition of acts. One of the models in the photograph, however, appears as if she has lost her posture — it looks as if she, being on the edge of the frame, is about to take a step out of the set. As a result to this glitch in the group's pose, the performance is revealed and the viewer of the image understands the fabricated nature of the play and the identities within. Furthermore, because a perfect transformation from human to nonhuman does not take place, the performance comes in drag (see Ferreday, 2011, p. 222).

Here again, drag appears as a conscious strategy to destabilise the societally gendered apparatus. Nonhuman drag queers the connections between desire and masculine and feminine,

revealing the constructed nature of binary logic of desire. In "Playing It Cool", models are coded feminine in their styling and makeup. Thus, dressing up as nonhuman animal is camp — fluid, unfixed and theatrical play. This camp performance works against the hegemony of gender system in its queer opposition to human category. The models are not trying to become animals, they perform nonhuman. In the name of drag, the antlers and headpieces that the women are wearing appear as hunter's trophies, instead of being prosthetics in a transformation (see Ferreday, 2011, p. 222). The desire to transform oneself into resembling an animal is also a desire to escape the definitions and constrains of language, comparable to the longing for the innocence of infancy — the proposed reading of these images thus suggests that nonhuman drag aims to free the subject from discursive meaning-making, towards queer freedom (Ferreday, 2011, pp. 223–224). Hereby, nonhuman drag can be considered as a project to shake up the understood boundaries of gender and sexuality, but also to redefine the concept of naturalness in this context (see Hird, 2006; also Butler, 1993, pp. 228–229). As a result, a camp nonhuman drag reading of fashion stories has a queering impact on both what is considered as natural and what is considered as human.

Conclusion

As a queer strategy, nonhuman drag can serve as a novel point of view in further explorations on representations within visual culture. The concept of nonhuman drag can also be interestingly applied to investigations of other cultural contexts where garments, accessories and self-presentation make an important part in defining subjectivity. For example, the Japanese dress-up culture cosplay — which has gained popularity especially amongst teens in Western cultures as well — mixes and matches sexualities and gender comfortably as part of its role playing. Besides putting stress to the constructed nature of gender and sexuality in cultural contexts, nonhuman drag challenges the boundaries of humanity altogether by making visible the limitations of human understanding of what is normal and natural. Especially within popularised visual communication, which often allows playfulness, fantasy and exaggeration in its imagery, nonhuman drag offers valuable and applicable tool for queering, for setting cultural and social categories on the move. Playfulness and fluidity within definitions breaks down the discursive normativity, and pushes us further to question the boundaries of human and the naturalness of the human point of view.

EARTHLY DELIGHTS
Nothing feels quite so
indulgent as a truly unique
and creative coat. FROM LEFT:
Sasha in Donna Karan New
York shorn white goatskin
mantle. Edie Campbell in
Dolce & Gabbana scarlet fox-
and-alpaca coat with hood.
Joan in Oscar de la Renta
pieced skunk coat and point
d'esprit dress. Calvin Klein
Collection boots. Caroline
in Alexander McQueen coat
and steel-toe boots. Raquel
in Prada leather coat with red
shearling trim. Headpieces
created by Julien d'Ys.
Details, see In This Issue.

Figure 3.   *"Playing It Cool"*. Photographer: Annie Leibovitz. Vogue USA, September 2014.
Condé Nast, pp. 814–815.

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