

Escola Superior de Artes e Design de Caldas da Rainha

A Research on Talking in Images
in the Digital Age

Chao Fang

Mestrado em Design Gráfico – Caldas da Rainha 2018

Escola Superior de Artes e Design de Caldas da Rainha

A Research on Talking in Images
in the Digital Age

Chao Fang

Mestrado em Design Gráfico – Caldas da Rainha 2018

Orientacao: Diogo Saldanha

Luísa Barreto

Acknowledgments

It wasn't an easy and smooth process to complete this dissertation, besides the passion for the images and the thirst for more knowledge of the images, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my teachers, friends, and family.

First, I thank my supervisor professor Diogo Saldanha for feeding me the major references of this dissertation and sharing with me lots of his genuine thoughts on the images. His supportive feedbacks emboldened me to explore the image world and broaden this research. As well, I give special thanks to the time and effort he put on me and this dissertation, without his help with revising and structuring the former drafts, this work wouldn't be as complete as the way it is now.

I also want to thank my second supervisor professor Luísa Barreto for the stimulating guidance at the very beginning of this research, and her positive and encouraging words really helped me going through some tough times.

I extend my gratitude to the great teachers I encountered in ESAD. I want to thank professor João Pinto for sharing with me his way of thinking and introducing me to some very inspiring image makers' work. I thank professor Aprígio Morgado, Marco Balesteros, Teresa Fradique and José Bártolo for the great teaching methods they use which enriched my knowledge about the images, design, and art, also helped me to assure what is my real passion. And I thank Marco Heleno for those nice talks which he shared with me his personal experience of writing a thesis.

I'm grateful to have those friends who really care about the progress of my research and who are always there to stand up for me. Special thanks to Eason Lu, Marco Ferreira, Catarina Cardoso, Sulafa Zidani, Joana Barros, Bruno Barbaar, Emilie Cerwenka... And thanks to all my classmates, who made this research journey wasn't so lonesome.

Finally, I give my deepest thanks to my family, for the faith and confidence they have for me and the love and support they constantly and unconditionally provide to me. There are no words can express my gratitude to them.

Abstract

Using cellphones to take photos is very common and convenient nowadays. People can take pictures of anything and share with anyone at any time. In the digital age, the images are more liberated and democratized than anytime before. And if one day we could be able to rein the images to serve a bigger scale of communication, there might be some system and rules for using them come along as well. But despite that, at the moment, we are enjoying the fun of playing with the possibilities of the images.

An exhibition which was held in the metropolitan museum in New York City - - “Talking Pictures: Camera-Phone Conversations Between Artists”¹ presented us this behavior of visual artists using visual elements to message one another - - Talking in Images, which actually happens quite often among people in the digital age. So in this dissertation, we will do an observation of this behavior, not only in the art field but also in the mass communication field. We will travel back in time briefly to see how people used images to communicate in history and with the information and knowledge we gain to look into the behavior of talking in images in the digital age.

Key Words: Image, Picture, Photography, Communication, Digital

¹ Talking Pictures: Camera-Phone Conversations Between Artists, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, JUNE 27–DECEMBER 17, 2017
<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2017/talking-pictures>

Index:

Acknowledgments	3
Abstract	4
1. Index of Images	6
2. Introduction	8
3. Methodology	10
4. Talking in Images	11
4.1 What is “ Talking in Images”	11
4.2 Why “ Talking in Images”	13
4.2.1 The Theoretical References	13
4.2.2 What We Found through the Theoretical References.....	16
5. “Talking in Images” in History	20
5.1 The Practical References in History	20
5.2 What We Found from the Practical References	29
5.2.1 The Confirmation of the Traits of the Images	29
5.2.2 The Indication and Inspiration	30
6. Question: How are People “Talking in Images” in the Digital Age.....	33
6.1 The Feasibility of Having a Dialogue in Images.....	33
6.2 Case Study: <i>an Exhibition - - “Talking Pictures: Camera-Phone Conversations Between Artists”</i>	37
6.3 The Mass Communication in the Digital Age	43
7. The Practical Projects	45
7.1 The Intention of the Projects	45
7.2 The Projects	45
7.2.1 The Faces of a Facebook User.....	45
7.2.2 Please Listen to Me	48
7.2.3 A Good Morning Package.....	51
8. Conclusion	55
9. Bibliography	59

Index of Images

Image 1: Red hand stencil in the Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave; Red Pigment; Hand (15cm); Aurignacian
http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/chauvet/hand_mammoth.php

Image 2: Hieroglyphs from the Great Hypostyle Hall in Karnak (Seti I, 13th century BC)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_hieroglyphs#/media/File:Hieroglyphs_from_the_tomb_of_Seti_I.jpg

Image 3: Fresco of T'ang style architecture in the Buddhist land from Mogao Caves.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogao_Caves#/media/File:T%27ang_Architecture_in_the_Mogao_Fresco_2.jpg

Image 4: Reclining Buddha in cave 148
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogao_Caves#/media/File:Grotta_nr_158.JPG

Image 5: Medieval illuminated manuscript; Title: Biblia. Pentateuchus [Pentateuch of Ashburnham or Tours]; Date of edition: VI; Language: latin; 375 x 310 mm, P65v
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53019392c/f140.item>

Image 6: Medieval illuminated manuscript; Title: Biblia. Pentateuchus [Pentateuch of Ashburnham or Tours]; Date of edition: VI; Language: latin; 375 x 310 mm, P68r
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53019392c/f145.item>

Image 7: Ancient Graffiti from the early Roman empire (Found in Pompei)
http://www.edr-edr.it/edr_programmi/view_img.php?id_nr=124976
<http://agp.wlu.edu/Graffiti/graffito/AGP-EDR124976>

Image 8: Ancient Graffiti from the early Roman empire (Found in Ercolano)
http://www.edr-edr.it/edr_programmi/view_img.php?id_nr=145030-1
<http://agp.wlu.edu/Graffiti/results?drawing=all>

Image 9: “ Tea in A Moon Rocket” - - Meiji Tea Print Advertisement
<https://dreamingofy2k.tumblr.com/post/158177000312/tea-in-a-moon-rocket-meiji-tea-print>

Image 10: Asahi Steinie Advertisement, 1965
by Kazumasa Nagai
<http://www.spoon-tamago.com/2014/11/26/vintage-posters-from-the-60s-and-70s-by-kazumasa-nagai/>

Image 11: John Berger/ Ways of Seeing, Episode 1 (1972) 21:17

Image 12: Flying Spaghetti Monster
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flying_Spaghetti_Monster#/media/File:Touched_by_His_Noodly_Appendage_HD.jpg

Image 13: Screenshot of Gangnam Style, K-Pop music video by Korean artist Psy
<https://www.lifewire.com/top-memes-of-all-time-3485903>

Image 14 ... Image 32: Screenshots of the Talking in Images between Nicole Eisenman and A.L. Steiner
<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2017/talking-pictures>

Image 33 ... Image 67: Screenshots of the Talking in Images between Nina Katchadourian and Lenka Clayton
<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2017/talking-pictures>

Image 68 ... Image 83: Screenshots of the Talking in Images between William Wegman and Tony Oursler

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2017/talking-pictures>

image 84 : Chart shows the Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2018

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

Image 85: A screenshot of Faces of a Facebook User
Chao Fang, Faces of a Facebook User, 2018, Video, 76”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BU0-VQCZZ7U>

Image 86 :project 1
photoprints

Image 87: A screenshot of Please Listen to Me
Chao Fang, Please Listen to Me, 2018, Video, 93”
<https://youtu.be/10T7rMk-Ys0>

Image 88: Chao Fang, Please Listen to Me, 2018, Posters, 61 x 91 cm

Image 89: A screenshot of A “ Good Morning” Package
Chao Fang, A “Good Morning” Package, 2018, 61 x 91 cm

Image 90: Chao Fang, A “Good Morning” Package, 2018, Photographs

Image 91: Chao Fang, A “Good Morning” Package, 2018, Postcards

Image 92: Chao Fang, A “Good Morning” Package, 2018, Leaflets

Image 93: Chao Fang, A “Good Morning” Package, 2018, Brochures

Introduction

John Berger once said something like this “The images maybe like words, but there is no dialogue yet. You cannot reply to me”². In less than half of a century after this sagacious claim was made, we are already able to reply to images with images, technically at least. The technologies in our time promise us the ability to send images, still or moving, to one another effortlessly, and insofar of the digital generation, the images are something actually rather indispensable in daily communication.

Solving problems with visual elements used to be the domain for image-workers, especially the graphic designers. In the digital age, everyone could work with images easily with the digital devices and claim himself a photographer, a graphic designer, even an artist. Packing ideas and concepts with visual elements is becoming a norm of everyday life. For one thing, it is definitely enriching and diversifying our daily communication, for another thing, it is demanding higher tasks to the people who are supposed to be the professionals in the image kingdom. Thereupon, to study about how are people using the images to communicate in an everyday base is something rather essential for the image-workers and as well to invest time on experimenting with the endlessly emerging new visual technologies is also becoming a new basic requirement for all the image-workers, especially the graphic designers.

So in this dissertation, we focus on the very fundamental issue, to relieve the curiosity of how do people use the images to communicate, to “talk” to each other. We will investigate the behavior of Talking in Images in the Digital Age.

This dissertation started by briefly explaining what is Talking in Images in Chapter 4.1. Then in Chapter 4.2, the first question of this research was made - - Why Talking in Images. To simplify the question, we made an analogy which regarded the images as a tool for people to use to communicate. We answered the question with the great help of substantial references (we considered them as guidebooks for using this tool) from a couple of influential thinkers and scholars which are from the time that photography was still relatively something novelty, and as well we refined some rather fundamental traits of the images, especially of the photographic images.

With the guidance of the features of the images, We did some small time travel to go back to the past and did a general review on how did people use the images to communicate in history in Chapter 5. On the one hand to test the “guidance”(those traits of the images that we selected from the theoretical references) is trustworthy in practice, on the other hand to investigate how did our

² Ways of Seeing, a 1972 television series of 30-minute films created chiefly by writer John Berger and producer Mike Dibb. Episode 1
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ways_of_Seeing

ancestors use the images to talk in order to give some practical references to the later chapters on how do people in our time “talk” in Images.

After acquired and assured some theoretical and practical references, we came back to our time in Chapter 6 and as well threw out the primary question of this dissertation How are People Talking in Images in the Digital Age. In this chapter, we first talked about the feasibility of having a conversational Talking in Images in the Digital Age. Then in Chapter 6.2, we did a case study on an exhibition “Talking Pictures: Camera- Phone Conversations Between Artists”. This exhibition displayed visual conversations made by cellphones between visual artists which provided us some examples of what a conversational Talking in Images could look like from the artistic view, and also confirmed the direction of this research, which is to observe how do people in the digital age use the images to communicate, to talk. In the meantime, the exhibition encouraged me to keep on inquiring into how the masses use the images to "talk" in our time. So in Chapter 6.3, we took a look at how are the technologies in the digital age influencing the way people use images and the mass communication.

The experimental part of this dissertation is in Chapter 7. In this chapter, we did some visual research on how the masses are using images on some social media platforms. Through this visual research, a nice amount of images were gathered and from which we are encouraged to do some visual experiments with those images. The experiments were done with the aim to display what we had found through the visual research, and with an intention to try to test out some thoughts and ideas about the images so to conclude something can probably contribute to this research. In Chapter 7.2 you will see those three experiments which are based on different social media on the internet. In 7.2.1, there is a trial on a Facebook user’s profile photos; In 7.2.2, the test is done on some videos of the most popular topics on Youtube; In 7.2.3, an analogical experiment is done to some images on Instagram. And by the end, those visual experiments were carried out in a somewhat artistic way. So we decided to constitute the practical projects of this research with the outcome of the visual experiments. In this way, the practical projects of this dissertation could be rather closely related to the conclusion we made and as well give the conclusion some visualized presentation.

Methodology

“明鏡所以照形,古事所以知今”

Míngjìng suǒyǐ zhào xíng, gǔshì suǒyǐ zhī jīn

This saying is from Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance³ which means the mirror reflects your appearance, and history reflects the present. In this dissertation we studied about the images and how did people use the images to “talk” through some theoretical and practical references from the past. And those historical references are also playing the role as a mirror to reflect the Talking in Images in the digital age.

“The Pareto principle states that, for many events, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes.”⁴

Aroused by the Pareto principle, we did a case study on how the visual artists are talking in images to see the effects from the pioneers of the image-users. And with this case studying, we got some indications for the next step research, as well gained some precious features of the image conversations made by the artists.

“practice is the fundamental source of knowledge and the criterion of truth”.⁵

With the inspiration we got from the case studying, we did some visual research on the images that people use on social media platforms. The images we gathered from the internet encouraged us to do some artistic visual experiments with them. Those experiments were focusing on presenting the result of the visual research, as well as putting some of the knowledge and thoughts we acquired from doing this dissertation in practice. Those visual experiments were turned out to be artistic to offer up to be the practical projects of this research. By this means, the practical projects are rather tightly related to the conclusion and as well giving the conclusion some vivid visual support.

³ The Zizhi Tongjian (Chinese: 資治通鑑; literally: "Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance") is a pioneering reference work in Chinese historiography, published in 1084, in the form of a chronicle.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zizhi_Tongjian

⁴ (also known as the 80/20 rule, the law of the vital few, or the principle of factor sparsity) Management consultant Joseph M. Juran suggested the principle and named it after Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, who noted the 80/20 connection while at the University of Lausanne in 1896, as published in his first paper, "Cours d'économie politique".
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareto_principle

⁵ Thomas Weston, Practice and Knowledge
<http://marxistphilosophy.org/Intro/WhatPracticels.htm>

Talking in Images

4.1 What is Talking in Images

To answer the question, first, let's separate this phrase - - Talking in Images and try to make clear of each meaningful word in it. The two key words in this phrase, "talk" and "image", will also repeatedly appear in this dissertation. Therefore it's necessary to clarify the meanings of them at the very beginning.

As a verb, in Oxford dictionary Talk means:

"1. Speak in order to give information or express ideas or feelings; converse or communicate by spoken words.

2. Have formal dealings or discussions; negotiate.

*3. Use (a particular language) in speech."*⁶

In this dissertation, the first meaning of Talk is what we will focus on.

*"Most of us do it every day without even thinking about it, yet talking is a uniquely human ability. Not only do humans have evolved brains that process and produce language and syntax, but we also can make a range of sounds and tones that we use to form hundreds of thousands of words."*⁷

Indeed, talking is a great gift that we have, a human's specialty, and we might be the only creature that can talk on this planet, but we are definitely not the only ones that can communicate. All animals are able to communicate, and so as plants and fungi, even bacteria. Literarily all the living organisms communicate within their own kinds or even cross species. But how come communication is such a key in this world? What's the purpose of communication if it's so important to all the inhabitants on the earth. Well, one of the fundamental purposes of communication is "We communicate to exchange information"⁸ so that we can get the useful

⁶ The definition of Talk on Oxford dictionary.
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/talk>

⁷ KATHLEEN MASTERSON, *From Grunting To Gabbing: Why Humans Can Talk*
<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129083762>

⁸ Kathleen S. Verderber, Deanna D. Sellnow, Rudolph F. Verderber, *Communicate!* (Cengage Learning, 2016),12

information for our own needs. Since one of the very basic needs for the human is Subsistence⁹, which probably all the species on this planet share this universal need, in this case, communicating in the cause of subsistence could simply explain why all the living things on the earth need to communicate.

As a noun, in Oxford dictionary Image means:

“1, A representation of the external form of a person or thing in art.

2, The general impression that a person, organization, or product presents to the public.

3, A simile or metaphor.”¹⁰

In this dissertation, we will focus on the first meaning of Image, to regard the image as a representation of an external form of something or someone. To talk about any image, firstly we need to see it. So the image has this natural link with vision. “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak”¹¹. We don't mean to make any comparison in this dissertation between seeing and speaking but to just point out the importance of the sense of sight here, “ It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world”¹². And the world that surrounds us could be represented in the form of the image, which is exactly why the image is so magical and meaningful to us.

Talking in Images

“Today, at the level of mass communications, it appears that the linguistic message is indeed present in every image we are still, and more than ever, a civilization of writing, writing and speech continuing to be the full terms of the informational structure”¹³. Roland Barthes wrote that in 1964, after half of a century passed, we are dealing and surrounded by a lot more images than any time in human history, and there are more and more images are present without caption or title, but in most of the cases, the images still cannot be text-free. Writing and speech still are playing pretty much the lead in human communication. That’s why the linguistic terms are none the less being widely borrowed in other studies and domains which refer to communication. As Talking remains to be the

⁹ Max-Neef classifies the fundamental human needs in his Fundamental human needs and human-scale development as: Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Leisure, Creation, Identity, Freedom

Manfred A. Max-Neef, HUMAN SCALE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTION, APPLICATION AND FURTHER REFLECTIONS (Apex Press, 1991), 32

¹⁰ The definition of Image on Oxford dictionary.
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/image>

¹¹ John Berger, Ways of Seeing (Penguin, 1972), 7

¹² John Berger, Ways of Seeing (Penguin, 1972), 7

¹³ Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text (Fontana Press, 1977), 38

preferable way for our everyday communication, and it is relatively a fair simple and common term to most of the people, so we employed “talking” as a metaphor in Talking in Images to stand for using the images to communicate.

4.2 Why “Talking in Images”

How many times you see people showing images to each other with their electronic devices instead of making old-fashioned chitchats, and how many times you are involved in such social activity yourself? As we can see, the image is playing more and more of an important role in our everyday communication and daily life. Today it’s almost impossible to keep our hands clean from making and spreading images. Even if you are old school enough to own none of those image-making electronic devices but if you live in any major city, just look around you, look around in your own apartment, look around on any of the streets... “We are surrounded by images”¹⁴, said by the British art critic John Berger in his notable television programmes “Ways of Seeing”. Indeed, as time goes by, the images are embracing us tighter and tighter, and it’s getting harder and harder to avoid them as if we are haunted by the images.

But, why images? Why we choose the images to pass information, to communicate with each other, and why Talking in Images?

4.2.1 The theoretical references

In order to answer the question Why Talking in Images? First, let’s make sure we know enough about the images.

In Chinese, we have a saying - - “知己知彼,百战不殆”¹⁵, which means To know yourself and your opponents fully, which empowers you never to lose any battle. Well, the image is not our opponent, on the opposite, it is our tool, a tool in our hands to help us to communicate. There are other tools people use to communicate as well. And all those different channels of human communication, each has its own traits to make itself irreplaceable. The image, as one of them, definitely has something special and unique.

¹⁴ Ways of Seeing, a 1972 television series of 30-minute films created chiefly by writer John Berger and producer Mike Dibb. Episode 4

¹⁵ It’s from Strategic Attack (Chinese: 謀攻), The Art of War (an ancient Chinese military treatise dating from the Spring and Autumn period), 5th century BC
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Art_of_War

Searching for the traits of the image might help with answering the question, and as well it would be a great chance to learn something very essential about the image.

There are some selected guidebooks for learning the features of this tool.

Why these are the guidebooks?

*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*¹⁶

Walter Bendix Schönflies Benjamin

Walter Benjamin was living in a time that it was a turning point in modern history. The images could be mechanically reproduced, and the film as a new member of the image family was challenging and changing the old ways of making and seeing art. Now it seems like we are undergoing another turning point, this time not only that the images could be made much easier than any of the time in human history but also the images could be transmitted much more rapidly to one another. This more interactive new relationship between us and the images, especially the cellphone made photographic images, is influencing hugely in the art world. As well it is changing the way how people communicate with each another. Taking a good look at “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” from the last turning point, in which Walter Benjamin successfully foretold a revolution in the art world, we might be able to find something to reflect what is happening now.

*Ways of Seeing*¹⁷

John Berger

"Feminism, political theatre, Ways of Seeing: I wasn't thinking, 'what a terrible time'. It was very dynamic, activist, political. Creatively it was very exciting." - - This is when Mike Dibb¹⁸, the producer of the film essay Ways of Seeing, talking about the 1970s. “ This was a period when TV

¹⁶ The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1935, Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit), is an essay by Walter Benjamin (a German Jewish philosopher, cultural critic and essayist) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Work_of_Art_in_the_Age_of_Mechanical_Reproduction

¹⁷ Ways of Seeing is a 1972 television series of 30-minute films created chiefly by writer John Berger and producer Mike Dibb. It was broadcast on BBC Two in January 1972 and adapted into a book of the same name. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ways_of_Seeing
In this dissertation, there are quotations from both the book and the television series.

¹⁸ Mike Dibb (born Leeds, West Yorkshire, 29 April 1940) is an award-winning English documentary filmmaker. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Dibb

had high ambitions and a lot of extraordinary things happened”¹⁹. It was relatively a free time for TV broadcasting. The TV people could be playful, could be innovative, could be idealist and experimental with all that freedom they had at the time. And luckily Ways of Seeing was born in that period so that it was able to question, to challenge the traditional ways of seeing, and despised the constraint of the Western cultural aesthetics on images. We shall borrow this boldness and revolutionary spirit to help us to question, to examine, to challenge the ways that we are using the images at our time.

*Camera Lucida*²⁰

Roland Barthes

Camera Lucida is more focusing on writing about the photographic image and in a rather intimate and sentimental way. The author “used his own emotions as a prime source of insight”²¹. Instead of rationally writing something theoretical about the photographic image, Roland Barthes rather honestly shared his personal experience, thoughts, and feelings on the photographic image. What he shared with us on the photographic image is more from a perspective of not an image maker or a visual worker but a consumer and user of the photographic image. He was not viewing the photograph merely as an artistic or scientific medium, but a rather “bizarre” and “mad” medium. “In a deeply personal discussion of the lasting emotional effect of certain photographs, Barthes considers photography as asymbolic, irreducible to the codes of language or culture, acting on the body as much as on the mind”²².

The author passed away not so long after this book was published. It doesn’t necessarily mean that this last book of him would be able to sum up his life. But at least at the time when he was writing this book, he had experienced and learned enough disciplines and principles through his quite academical life, and by the end, he was back to just want to look at the photograph as a little boy, to simply react to the photograph from his primitive feeling. So hopefully from this book, we might be able to learn how to look at the photographic image in a native and innocent way.

¹⁹ Sukhdev Sandhu, Ways of Seeing opened our eyes to visual culture
<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/sep/07/ways-seeing-berger-tv-programme-british>

²⁰ Camera Lucida (French: La chambre claire) is a short book published in 1980 by the French literary theorist and philosopher Roland Barthes. This English version is translated by Richard Howard, (Hill and Wang, 1981)
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera_Lucida_\(book\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera_Lucida_(book))

²¹ ANDY GRUNDBERG, DEATH IN THE PHOTOGRAPH
<http://www.nytimes.com/1981/08/23/books/death-in-the-photograph.html?pagewanted=all>

²² Sandra Lila Maya Rota, Describing the self through the photographic medium: the autobiographic fictions of John M. Coetzee, Roland Barthes and Edward Said, University di Pavia

4.2.2 What we found through the theoretical references

By consulting the “Guidebooks”, there are some characteristic features of the images selected. Those are definitely not all the traits of the images. We could not even cover all the features that we found through the guidebooks here, but hopefully, those selected features could reveal something to help us to answer Why Talking in Images.

Some traits of the images

(1) Incomparable persuasiveness

*“Every photograph is a certificate of presence.”*²³

- - *Camera Lucida*

*“The film has not yet realized its true meaning, its real possibilities ... these consist in its unique faculty to express by natural means and with incomparable persuasiveness all that is fairylike, marvelous, supernatural.”*²⁴

- - *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

In the Image family, the photographic image is a very special member. As the representation of the physical reality in a two-dimensional method, the photographic image is a perfect copy of the photographed, which promises the photographic image of the nature to convince people. Even though a lot of the photographic images that we see have been manipulated, but our naked eyes still haven't evolved to be able to recognize. And that's why we have such a strong faith in the photographic images, and can't easily hold our feeling and emotion to react to them.

We are visual animals, “It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world”²⁵ and we mechanically respond to visual stimuli, so it's not easy for us to resist to react to what we see, even we know that our eyes might get tricked. In a way, we can say the persuasiveness of the

²³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Hill and Wang, 1981), 87

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Translated: by Harry Zohn, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, Schocken/Random House, 1998), VII

²⁵ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin, 1972), 7

photographic image is actually parasitic on the human visual perception, which endows the photographic image of this incomparable specialty.

(2) Speak the unspeakable, visualize the invisible

*“the Photograph: it cannot say what it lets us see.”*²⁶

- - *Camera Lucida*

To talk about this feature of the images, we can see it from two perspectives - - the image maker and the image viewer. The photograph indeed “cannot say”, but the person who chooses this medium to express himself might just want to make good use of this mute genius to speak the unspeakable. Not only the photographic images, but all images can do. When there are things that the image maker doesn’t want to say it out loud, he hires this perfect medium - - the images, to speak for himself, loudly but without making any sound. Meanwhile, the image maker may also accidentally leak out some of his “secrets” through the images that he made. Sometimes our unconscious mind can reveal something very true to ourselves, “What is hidden is for us more ‘true’ than what is visible”²⁷. Then when the images accidentally revealed some “hidden” invisible truth from us, that actually is a process of visualizing the invisible. And if so, this ability might be a unique specialty of the images.

As an image perceiver, by looking at some image, this might happen to him, “this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me”²⁸. The “element” might be some hidden secret of the image maker but probably more like some secret of himself which he didn't even know such thing exists inside of him until encountered this image. So he is shocked and might be scared to face this “arrow”, but it’s too late to dodge, he can never undo this experience.

Well, now you may be scared of the images, but the evocative could be not only secrets but also ideas, inspirations, experiences, feelings, emotions... anything that an image can take it out from you. So thanks to this specialty of the images, to evoke the hidden information inside of ourselves more than just inside the images. And the ironic thing is that the invisible (information) is brought up by this most visible and direct form as an image.

²⁶ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Hill and Wang, 1981), 100

²⁷ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Hill and Wang, 1981), 100

²⁸ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Hill and Wang, 1981), 26

(3) A visual adventure

*“An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced.”*²⁹

- - *Ways of Seeing*

Since “an image is a sight” so it is visible, which is obvious and simple, but it is also one of the very fundamental features that the image has. With this fundamental feature, the image could contain a vast amount of information and deliver it to people in a short amount of time. Besides that, the visibility also promises the image the functionality of passing certain information across different languages and cultures even.

The visibility of the image also enriched our visual perception so the image can take our eyes to travel to the places where we don’t usually go and see.

*“...the best word to designate the attraction certain photographs exerted upon me was advenience or even adventure.”*³⁰

- - *Camera Lucida*

*“... a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye”*³¹

- - *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

Not only passively receiving what an image could show us - - marvelous spectacles, impressive sights, including “a way of seeing naturally embodied within the image”, but also when we have an image in our hands, we can do whatever we want to that image, just like we have some kind of superpower. We can freely zoom in and out, cut and glue, copy and multiply, layer and color that image. We can create our own visual experiments and adventures according to our own “way of seeing”.

²⁹ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin,1972), 9

³⁰ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Hill and Wang,1981), 19

³¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Translated: by Harry Zohn, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, Schocken/Random House,1998), XIII

Incomparable persuasiveness, Speak the unspeakable, visualize the invisible, A visual adventure - - any one of those traits could explain why the image is a rather special medium for human communication, and in a way could answer the question Why Talking in Images. In the next chapter, we will confirm those theoretical traits of the images with some practical uses of “Talking in Images” in history.

“Talking in Images” in History

From the last chapter, there are three traits of the images selected from those “guidebooks” which are actually the major theoretical references for this research. With the purpose to answer Why Talking in Images, in this chapter, a rough investigation on how did people “talk” in images in history will be done. Firstly, to study “talking in images” through some practical references from the past. Secondly, to confirm those traits of the images by checking them on some actual uses of the images in history. And via this process, there might be some indication and inspiration for the research about Talking in Images in the Digital Age.

5.1 The practical references in history

It is never a new thing that people use the images to communicate, to “talk”. There are an ocean of examples in human history. The origins of using the images to communicate can be traced from the origins of human existence.



Image 1

The Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave³², contains some of the oldest known cave paintings, and “there are a few panels of red ochre hand prints and hand stencils made by blowing pigment over hands pressed against the cave surface.”³³ There are studies about those hand stencils, and some studies regard those hand stencils as “ the earliest known artistic forms of human communication.”³⁴

³² The Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave in the Ardèche department of southern France is a cave that contains some of the best-preserved figurative cave paintings in the world, as well as other evidence of Upper Paleolithic life.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chauvet_Cave

³³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chauvet_Cave

³⁴ A research project of the Department of Archaeology (Durham University), Hand stencils in Upper Palaeolithic cave art
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/all/?mode=project&id=640>



Image 2

Egyptian hieroglyphs were the formal writing system used in Ancient Egypt. It combined logographic, syllabic and alphabetic elements, with a total of some 1,000 distinct characters.³⁵

Below, there are more examples we picked through some rough internet research on how did people “talk” in images. Every single image that we picked is full of value for the studying of art, culture, archeology, anthropology..., but we can only talk about each image in certain perspectives for this dissertation and focus on the methods they applied to Talking in Images.

³⁵ There were about 1,000 graphemes in the Old Kingdom period, reduced to around 750 to 850 in the classical language of the Middle Kingdom, but inflated to the order of some 5,000 signs in the Ptolemaic period. Antonio Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), p. 12.

How did people from before “talk” in images?



Image 3



Image 4

The murals in the Mogao Caves (Chinese: 莫高窟)³⁶, date from the 5th to the 14th century, and are covering an area of 490,000 square feet (46,000 square metres)³⁷

³⁶ The Mogao Caves, also known as the Thousand Buddha Grottoes or Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, form a system of 492 temples 25 km (16 mi) southeast of the center of Dunhuang, an oasis strategically located at a religious and cultural crossroads on the Silk Road, in Gansu province, China.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogao_Caves#Murals

³⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogao_Caves#Murals

As you can see, the images did some Big Talks.

We used to make huge images in a time that had no machines, no electronics. Those massive images were purely handmade, which cost lots of labor work and time. Looking at the survived ones, with or without the knowledge of how did they manage to make them thousands of years ago, just simply looking at them, they are still visually marvelous and powerful, tempting the viewer to this miraculous world within the images. No doubt that the people back then easily dedicated themselves to whoever made those tremendous magical-looking images, actually whoever had the power to organize such enormous image-making projects.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Image 5



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Image 6

Medieval illuminated manuscript; Title: Biblia. Pentateuchus [Pentateuch of Ashburnham or Tours]; Date of edition: VI; Language: latin; 375 x 310 mm³⁸

³⁸ Manuscrit Biblia. Pentateuchus [Pentateuque dit d'Ashburnham ou de Tours]
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53019392c/f306.item#>

The images did some Small Talks.

Those miniature manuscripts are greatly tiny comparing to the giant frescoes. Each one is smaller than one palm, but with incredibly detailed illustrations. Those delicately illustrated manuscripts also required a significant amount of elaborate labor and thoughtful planning which left us not only some priceless visual archives and in such unbelievable tiny size but also revealed how important that the images were for elucidating and illustrating concepts and ideas.

And since they are tiny, so they can follow you everywhere. Imagine, back then, whenever someone took it out, this elaborated miniature was “talking” for its owner, “ See, My owner is so loyal and so important (since not anyone can own such a well made miniature at the time).”

Conc. Min. BB. AA. CC., divieto di riproduzione



Image 7

Ancient Graffiti Found in Pompei (Napoli)

Conc. Min. BB. AA. CC., divieto di riproduzione

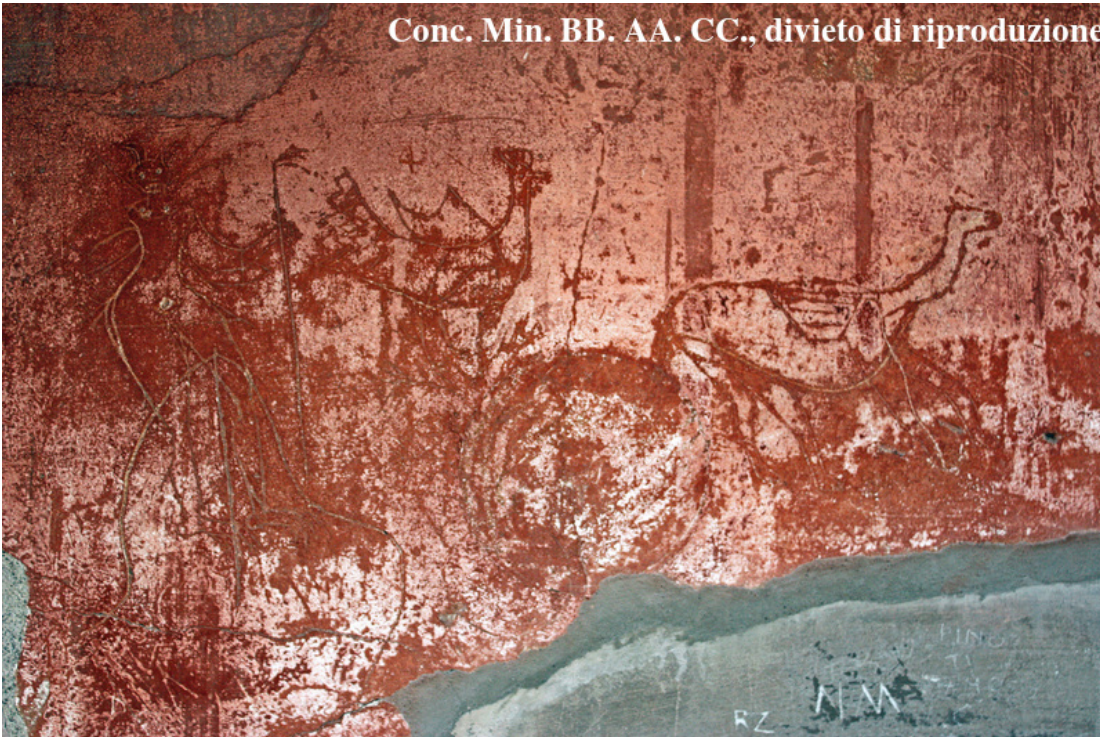


Image 8

Ancient Graffiti Found in Ercolano (Napoli)

Ancient Graffiti from the early Roman empire³⁹

³⁹ The Ancient Graffiti Project, a digital resource for locating and studying graffiti of the early Roman empire from the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
<http://agp.wlu.edu/Graffiti/>

*“An inscription on stone may be commemorative, dedicatory, sacred, but in almost all cases forethought has gone into the preparation of the text and the inscribed monument. Graffiti, by contrast, are more often the result of spontaneous composition and are the handwritten creation of the ‘man on the street’.”*⁴⁰

The images did some Fun and Free Talks.

Well, not everyone can afford to make tremendous frescos or exquisite pocket-friendly manuscripts to “talk” for themselves. However people all have the desire to express, to have fun. So when people cannot talk out loud, they find their own outlets. Those ancient graffitis were maybe made as a discreet method to release something unspeakable or just simply made for some casual pleasure.

No matter what, the images were chosen to be the medium to make such free and fun, wordless but fearless speeches. We always talk about freedom of speech in the modern time, and those might be some of the earliest actions which indicate the demand for free speeches of the masses. Moreover, those ancient graffitis might be the rare free speeches that people from that time can freely make.

No one can take away the magic power that people have to make images and to have fun with the images.

⁴⁰ The Ancient Graffiti Project
<http://ancientgraffiti.wlu.edu/>



Image 9

“Tea in A Moon Rocket” - - Meiji Tea Print Advertisement, 1960s



Image 10

Asahi Steinie Advertisement, 1965
by Kazumasa Nagai

Japanese Advertisements from 1960s.

The images did some Real Talks.

The photographic image is the special one in the image family, not like paintings, carvings, or illustrations, it doesn't require that much labor work, but it provides the most authentic realness. With just one click, a sight of the reality is captured by this mechanical equipment but shows "an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment"⁴¹.

The photographic image is playing this role as the "representation of reality"⁴², and with this magic sounding title, it can trick anyone with its real "talks", at least, visually. That's why when we look at those two advertisements, even we know that the content in the photographic images are unrealistic and those are not something that could easily happen in real life, but visually they still look real to us. Also, our eyes just happen to be more attracted to such realistic surrealist visual adventures. Once they got our eyes, they might get our minds as well. So this is exactly what the commercial industry is for, using the visual tricks to deliver the information to the target audiences of their clients.

5.2 What we found from the practical references

5.2.1 The confirmation of the traits of the images

As we talked about at the beginning of Chapter 4, we would confirm the traits of the images we found from the theoretical references through checking the practical uses of the images in history. With those images, we picked from the time before we had experienced one after another "Visual Adventures". Although every single image is from a different time, different culture and in a different form, each one is trying to "persuade" us (the viewers) to believe in what it shows. Some of the images are from thousands of years ago, but they are all still "talking" and asking the viewers to look at them, to listen to them, crossing time and language. So as well, no matter the viewers or the image makers, some of them might have experienced there were something "unspeakable" and "invisible" inside of them being evoked through some of those images.

⁴¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Translated: by Harry Zohn, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, Schocken/Random House,1998), XI

⁴² Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Translated: by Harry Zohn, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, Schocken/Random House,1998), XI

“A Visual Adventure;

Speak the Unspeakable, visualize the invisible;

Incomparable Persuasiveness”

All those specialties of the images which we found through the “Guidebooks” seem to be pretty adequately applied to the practical uses in the past. And to varying degrees, they are all well confirmed by almost every single image that we picked. At the same time, we can say that we answered “Why Talking in Images” with both theoretical and practical support.

5.2.2 The indication and inspiration

Via the process of studying the practical uses of Talking in Images in history, on the one hand, we finished the confirmation of the traits of the images we gathered early on which actually in a way also confirmed that the necessity of using the images to communicate. On the other hand, we as well obtained some indication and inspiration which provided us certain angles to check how the people from our time are using the images to talk.

(1) The Images Bound

No matter the “talking-big” frescos or the “talking-small” miniatures, and later on, the use of the “real-talks” from the photographic images in advertising, all those images are bound with codes. But since the codes are under the disguise of culture, so they become invisible. And that’s why Roland Barthes in *Rhetoric of the Images*⁴³ called the information that the advertise images deliver as “messages without a code” and “in order to “read” this last (or first) level of the image, all that is needed is the knowledge bound up with our perception.”⁴⁴

Those images are used to connote the information which text is invalidated with. However, isn’t this the specialty of the images? Isn’t this a good applying of the use of Talking in Images? But “What matters now is who uses that language for what purpose”⁴⁵

⁴³ The Rhetoric Of The Image – Roland Barthes (1964)

This essay is a classic semiotic text where Roland Barthes analyses an advertising image and uses it as a means of teasing out how different messages are conveyed by a system of signs.

<https://tracesofthereal.com/2009/12/21/the-rhetoric-of-the-image-roland-barthes-1977/>

⁴⁴ Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text* (Fontana Press, 1977), 36

⁴⁵ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin, 1972), 33

And the technologies become a smart method to make the Talking in Images stronger and louder, with the rather clear purpose to astonish people, to display the miracle, to show off the authority. So in the case of the photographic images, “the mechanical is here a guarantee of objectivity.”⁴⁶

So back then, the images were not so free, they were bound with culture codes.

(2) The Unchained Melody

The authority was holding the images tightly to “talk” for them, but the individuals never lost the ability to use images to “talk,” to communicate. They might not be able to talk loud, but they can talk low, just like one can be told to be mute, but one cannot be told to lose one’s voice. The desire of expressing oneself impelled people used their own methods (those ancient graffiti we picked as examples) to make those “free talks,” to play those “unchained melody.”

Also, the “free talks” in different times act differently with the help of the technologies at the time. After we mastered the skill to reproduce images, “You can sometimes see how naturally this begins to happen when, for instance, children or adults pin up reproductions alongside snapshots, or their own drawings, or pages from magazines. There, everything belongs to the same visual languages. Used for describing or recreating experience.”⁴⁷

The image is the voice of the individuals, through history, since it is a rare medium which could be a free voice and the volume could be turned down to even mute but still can be heard. Although this free voice was relatively low most of the time in history (also in the examples that we picked), no one can kill the desire of the individuals want to express themselves, want to “describe or recreate experience.”

⁴⁶ Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text* (Fontana Press, 1977), 44

⁴⁷ *Ways of Seeing*, a 1972 television series of 30-minute films created chiefly by writer John Berger and producer Mike Dibb. Episode 1

(3) One-Way Conversations



Image 11

John Berger in the film essay Ways of Seeing

“The images maybe like words, but there is no dialogue yet. You cannot reply to me.”⁴⁸

No matter the amplified privileged voice or the almost mute but unchained individual voice, those Talking in Images back then were mostly monologues or personal manifestos. Due to the limitation of the image making and transmitting technologies back then, an image-reply-to-image kind of visual conversation was still something hard to achieve.

Most of the Talking in Images in history were still more or less one-way conversations.

⁴⁸ Ways of Seeing, a 1972 television series of 30-minute films created chiefly by writer John Berger and producer Mike Dibb. Episode 1

Question : How are People “Talking in Images” in the Digital Age

Now we are in the Digital Age⁴⁹, the technologies are far more developed than before, “the phenomenon is that the digital industry creates a knowledge-based society surrounded by a high-tech global economy.”⁵⁰ Everything is becoming more and more efficient and convenient including making and using the image. The springing up of new technologies are constantly influencing the way how people make and use images, which is in a sense forming the new ways of Talking in Images. So how are people Talking in Images in the time right now, in this Digital Age? Meanwhile, from the last chapter, through studying some examples of how did people from before talk in images we learned that the images were bound; there were some unchained melodies (individuals’ voices) but most were playing rather low, and it was hard to have a “conversation” in images. So In this chapter, we will check on those aspects of “ Talking in Images” in the digital age.

6.1 The feasibility of having a dialogue in images

“Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign.”

- - *The Conquest of Ubiquity*⁵¹

Paul Valéry

Paul Valery romantically predicted that “the visual or auditory images” would become ubiquitous as “water, gas and electricity” at the beginning of the 20th century. Indeed a visionary he is, but to predict that wouldn’t be very hard once we know how special and necessary that the images are to

⁴⁹ The Information Age (also known as the Computer Age, Digital Age, or New Media Age) is a 21st century period in human history characterized by the rapid shift from traditional industry that the Industrial Revolution brought through industrialization, to an economy based on information technology.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_Age

⁵⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_Age

⁵¹ Originally written in French. “La conquête de l’ubiquité” (1928) is an essay by French poet, essayist, and philosopher Ambroise Paul Toussaint Jules Valéry

us. Since we are good at making the things that we need become easier and more convenient for us to get and use. “Change is caused by lazy, greedy, frightened people looking for easier, more profitable and safer ways of doing things.”⁵² Ian Morris⁵³ uses this theory to explain the cause of the development of human society, and he is probably right about the intentions behind might not sound as glorious as we want, but it doesn't affect the truth that our human society is constantly changing, and just because we want to “satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort.”⁵⁴ When Paul Valéry made the prediction, it was about 40 years after the first film camera “was offered for sale in 1888,”⁵⁵ and now with less than a century, his prediction became true - - the images are commonly in use in our daily life, they are being passed around just as messages with the smartphones.

The convenience of making and transmitting images fulfills the possibility of using the images just like the way we use “water, gas, electricity,” beyond that, the way of using them also changed how we see them.

⁵² Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules--for Now: The Patterns of History, and What They Reveal About the Future* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 28

⁵³ Ian Morris is a historian and archaeologist and holds Stanford's Jean and Rebecca Willard Professorship in Classics. <https://classics.stanford.edu/people/ian-morris>

⁵⁴ Paul Valéry, *The conquest of ubiquity*, 1928

⁵⁵ The use of photographic film was pioneered by George Eastman, who started manufacturing paper film in 1885 before switching to celluloid in 1889. His first camera, which he called the "Kodak," was first offered for sale in 1888. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera#Photographic_camera

Unbinding the images

If the “mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual”⁵⁶, then making the images ubiquitous is definitely democratizing the images. They are becoming freer and “normal,” the mystification on them is getting less since it is not easy to keep the aura on something ubiquitous and easy to reach. After taking off the surrounded aura, the images could take the chance just to be themselves - - who they actually are. We can see that is naturally happening. For instance, some images used to be holy and worshipped and only could be seen in somewhere almost unreachable for the masses. But now people are using and recreating those images to serve their own purposes. And in this condition, the image is just serving as a medium to express, to deliver some information, to communicate.

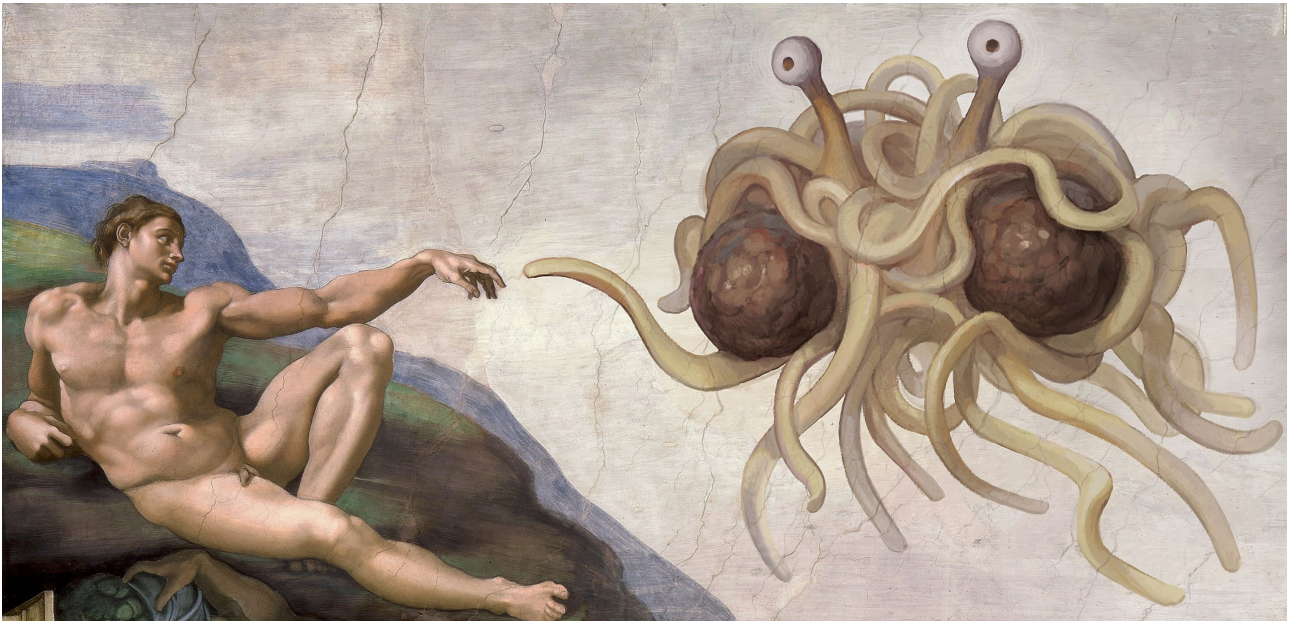


Image 12

Touched by His Noodly Appendage, a parody of Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*, is an iconic image of the Flying Spaghetti Monster by Arne Niklas Jansson.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Translated: by Harry Zohn, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, Schocken/Random House,1998), IV

⁵⁷ The Flying Spaghetti Monster (FSM) is the deity of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, or Pastafarianism. Pastafarianism (a portmanteau of pasta and Rastafarianism) is a social movement that promotes a light-hearted view of religion and opposes the teaching of intelligent design and creationism in public schools.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flying_Spaghetti_Monster

The voice of the individuals are much louder than before

The voice of the individuals was probably never as loud as it is right now in human history. To a circumstance, a “voice” from someone could be heard and understood by the number of people that no kings or gods from before could reach. We are using the word “voice,” again, as a metaphor here, and under this dissertation what it means to say is - - an image made by someone could be seen by a massive amount of people in a short amount of time through the internet connection. Information could be like the virus, could be spread out rapidly in our age, and in a lot of the cases that information are being disseminated in the form of images, owing to the specialty - - being simply visible, which gifted them the ability could even cross the barriers of different languages and cultures.



Image 13

Memes: Gangnam Style, K-Pop music video by Korean artist Psy , 2012, one of the most-viewed YouTube video, as of October 2016, has been viewed over 2.6 billion and has almost 10 million thumbs up. ⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Elise Moreau, 10 of the Best Memes of All Time
<https://www.lifewire.com/top-memes-of-all-time-3485903>

The possibility of having a dialogue in images

When we have a talk with someone, we pick the words to express ourselves, and the words are serving us, serving the communication. And now with the democratization of the images, we are holding the possibilities of freely using almost all the images that are available to serve our expression, and beyond that, we could easily recreate those images and make new images. With the internet and the electronic devices, receiving and sending images almost as easy as opening our mouths. Technically, we have the feasibility to have a real Talking in Images, a conversational talk, a dialogue not with words but images. In the next chapter, we will continue to explore the possibility of having a dialogue in images through a case study of how the visual artists are Talking in Images.

6.2 Case Study - - an Exhibition: “Talking Pictures: Camera-Phone Conversations Between Artists”

“Ms. Fineman wanted to examine the speechlike nature of cellphone photo-chat through a finer lens: artists’ longstanding habit of communing with others of their kind. ”

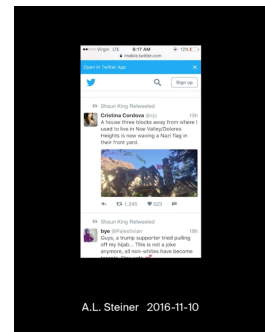
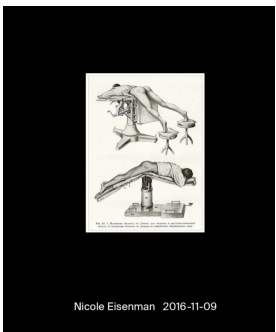
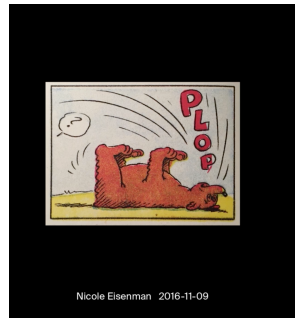
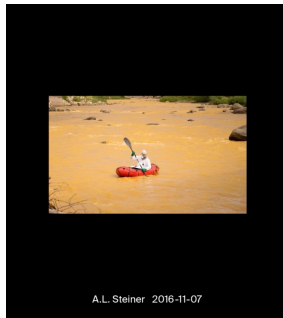
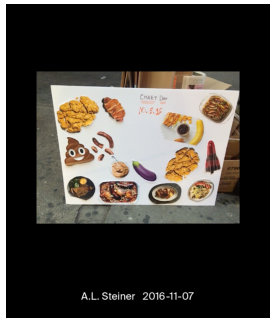
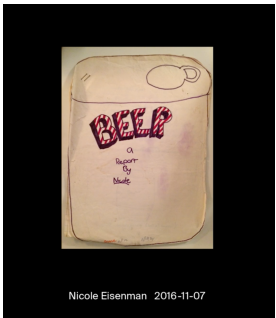
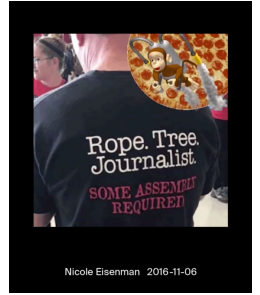
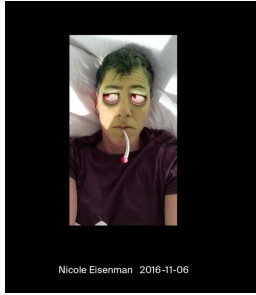
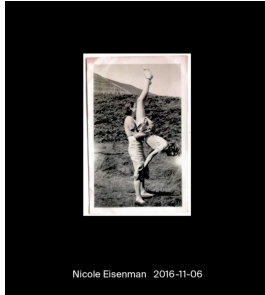
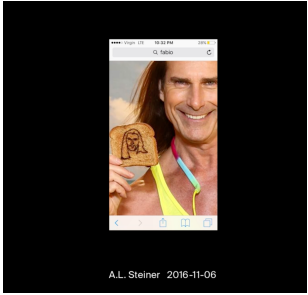
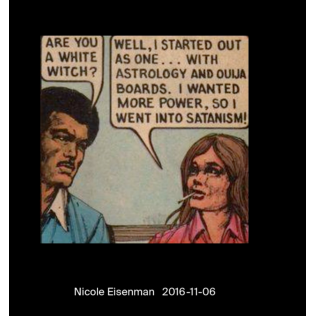
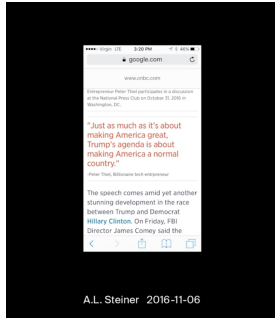
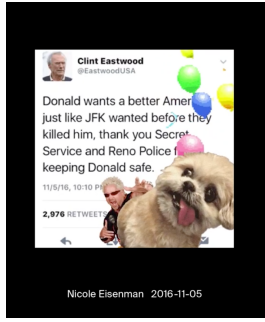
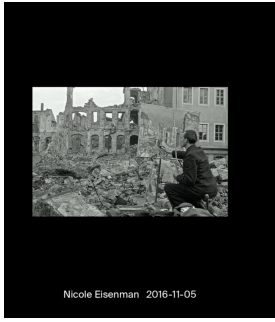
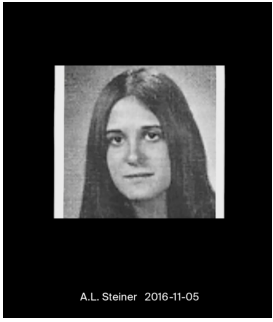
- - An Exhibition Worth Thousands of Words⁵⁹

Roberta Smith

“Talking Pictures: Camera-Phone Conversations Between Artists,” is a visual art exhibition which hosted by the MET Museum in New York City in 2017. Under a simple rule - - no words, just using images, 12 artists were partnered with another 12. Each pair made some one on one conversations only in images (made by their phones), still or moving images, as often as they liked. From November 2016 to April 2017, five months, the 24 artists made about 1,822 images, including 183 videos for their visual conversations.

We are going to pick three pairs of artists and see how did they Talk in Images.

⁵⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/06/arts/design/an-exhibition-worth-thousands-of-words.html>



(from left to right)

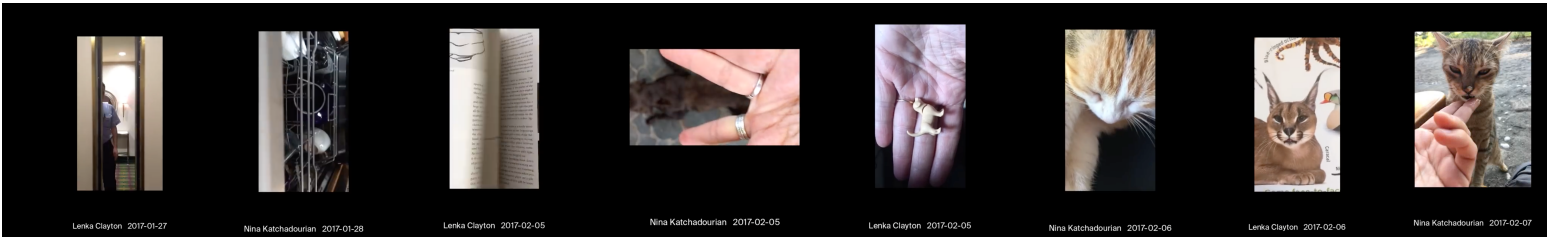
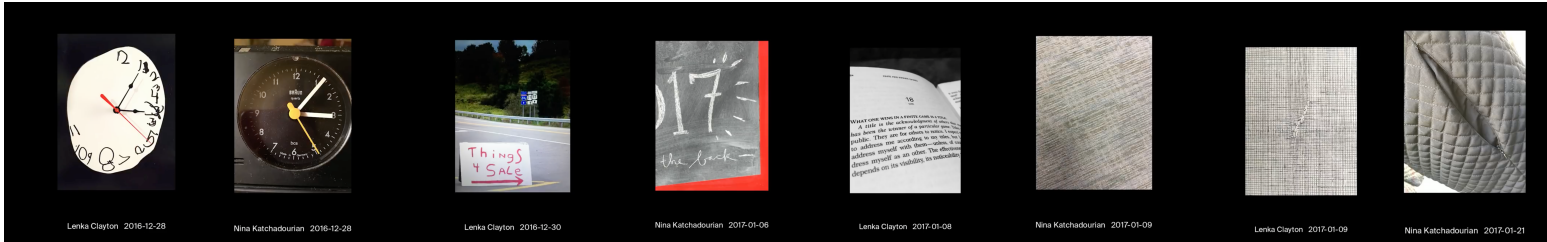
Image 14 ... Image 18

Image 19 ... Image 23

Image 24 ... Image 28

Image 29 ... Image 32

Screenshots of the Talking in Images between Nicole Eisenman and A.L. Steiner



(from left to right)

Image 33 ... Image 39

Image 40 ... Image 47

Image 48 ... Image 55

Image 56 ... Image 63

Image 64 ... Image 67

Screenshots of the Talking in Images between Nina Katchadourian and Lenka Clayton



William Wegman 2017-03-06



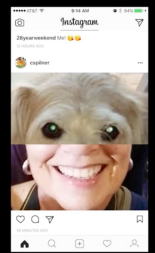
Tony Oursler 2017-03-07



William Wegman 2017-03-07



Tony Oursler 2017-03-07



Tony Oursler 2017-03-08



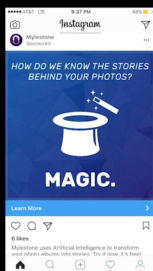
William Wegman 2017-03-10



William Wegman 2017-03-10



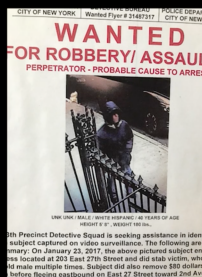
Tony Oursler 2017-03-11



Tony Oursler 2017-03-14



Tony Oursler 2017-03-14



William Wegman 2017-03-15



William Wegman 2017-03-15



William Wegman 2017-03-15



Tony Oursler 2017-03-16



Tony Oursler 2017-03-16

(from left to right)

Image 68 ... Image 72

Image 73 ... Image 76

Image 77 ... Image 80

Image 81 ... Image 83

From the images above, the artists showed us what a Talking in Images could look like in our time. As we can see, technically we are able to have an image-reply-to-image kind of visual conversation. Moreover, from the content, here are some thoughts we got from studying about those images.

1, Easier to make conversations

When there is a verbal conversation, trying to find topics, and what interests the partner of the conversation is the key to keep the flow of the talking going. Also, in Talking in Images is the same. For instance, from Image 24, Image 33, Image 72 (there are other examples, we list three here), we can see the intention of the conversation holders of trying to make conversations. So what special about the images is that the images contain a great amount of information, and “all images are polysemous; they imply, underlying their signifiers, a "floating chain" of signifieds, the reader able to choose some and ignore others.”⁶⁰ So that means we can decode the image the way we want and it might be easier to find something that may interest us. So relatively, it is easier to find something “talk-able” from each other’s images.

2, The strong linguistic impacts

Roland Barthes talked about how strong the linguistic impacts are still on the images in Rhetoric of the Image. “ as title, caption, accompanying press article, film dialogue, comic strip balloon. Which shows that it is not very accurate to talk of a civilization of the image - - we are still a civilization of writing.”⁶¹

From lots of the images above (like Image 18, Image 50, Image 79), we can still see letters, words, text. Even it supposed to be dialogues in images without text, but since the linguistic elements are still very commonly exist in our life, so lots of the images above are still constituted some linguistic messages.

3, Very personalized idiolects

“The language of the image is not merely the totality of utterances emitted, it is also the totality of utterances received: the language must include the "surprises" of meaning.”⁶²

Comparing to the verbal language, the use of the image is still relatively free and has nothing as strict as the lexical and syntactic rules to language. That is why the idiolect could be more personalized. And there are also more “surprises of meaning.” We could be more fearless to surprise each other with the image. Like in Image 21, Image 34, Image 83.

⁶⁰ Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text (Fontana Press, 1977), 38-39

⁶¹ Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text (Fontana Press, 1977), 38

⁶² Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text (Fontana Press, 1977), 47

4, A direct and visual connection to personal experience

John Berger in his Ways of Seeing expressed that the visual language should be “used for describing or recreating experience.”⁶³ “If the new language of images were used differently, it would, through its use, confer a new kind of power. Within it we could begin to define our experiences more precisely in areas where words are inadequate.”⁶⁴

From the Images above, we can see lots of the image-dialogues are based on how the image-talkers who were having the dialogues perceiving and connecting the images through his personal experience. So as well, don't forget, when we are looking at those images, we are also subconsciously connecting our personal experience with those images. For instance, when I was looking at Image 71, naturally I just assumed that it was in New York City because once I saw a similar poster in New York City.

5, Playful and inspiring

From the images above, in many cases, the images inspired the replies and encouraged the people who are making the visual conversations to explore the surroundings with the eye of the camera. Also, the image talkers could be very playful and intuitive with the images and with each other. So thanks to the phone camera and the images, with which the artists could see this world that we are living in differently and having much fun learning more about it.

“I'm an eye. A mechanical eye. I, the machine, show you a world the way only I can see it. I free myself for today and forever from human immobility. I'm in constant movement. I approach and pull away from objects, I creep under them. I move alongside a running horse's mouth, I fall and rise with the falling and rising bodies. This is I, the machine, manoeuvring in the chaotic movements, recording one movement after another in the most complex combinations.

Freed from the boundaries of time and space, I co-ordinate any and all points of the universe, wherever I want them to be. My way leads towards the creation of a fresh perception of the world. Thus I explain in a new way the world unknown to you.”⁶⁵

- - Dziga Vertov, 1923

⁶³ Ways of Seeing, a 1972 television series of 30-minute films created chiefly by writer John Berger and producer Mike Dibb. Episode 1

⁶⁴ John Berger, Ways of Seeing (Penguin, 1972), 33

⁶⁵ This quotation is from an article written in 1923 by Dziga Vertov, the revolutionary Soviet film director. John Berger, Ways of Seeing (Penguin, 1972), 17

The images in those visual conversations are used as “a fluid, instantaneous, ephemeral medium, closer to speaking than to writing.”⁶⁶ The conversations are not only one way anymore, but there also are replies and answers, there are interaction and coherence between those talking pictures. So now I am wondering how are people talking in images in everyday life? How are the masses talking in images?

6.3 The Mass Communication In the Digital Age

We are in the digital age now, “the onset of the Information Age (the Digital Age) is associated with the Digital Revolution, just as the Industrial Revolution marked the onset of the Industrial Age.”⁶⁷

“Central to this Digital Revolution is the mass production and widespread use of digital logic circuits, and its derived technologies, including the computer, digital cellular phone, and the Internet.”⁶⁸

- - Debjani, Roy, Cinema in the Age of Digital Revolution

With the internet, this virtual net, the images could be transmitted to anywhere with an internet connection just like how Paul Valery predicted: “we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand”⁶⁹. Not only the technologies dramatically changed the image making and transmitting process but also changed the method of human communication. There is almost like another reality created along with the internet. Exactly as how important communication to us in our everyday life, social communication takes huge part in this internet reality as well and there are plenty of social networks on the internet for people to communicate with each other on a daily base, and to a level, face to face communication might even not be able to reach. So it is very necessary to study the image using behavior of the masses on the internet if we intend to do some research about “How do people talk in images in the digital age.”

⁶⁶ Roberta Smith, An Exhibition Worth Thousands of Words (The New York Times, July 6, 2017) <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/06/arts/design/an-exhibition-worth-thousands-of-words.html>

⁶⁷ Castells, M. (1999). The Information Age, Volumes 1-3: Economy, Society and Culture. Cambridge (Mass.); Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hilbert, M. (2015). Digital Technology and Social Change [Open Online Course at the University of California] (freely available). Retrieved from <https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/949415>

⁶⁸ Debjani, Roy (2014). "Cinema in the Age of Digital Revolution" <http://www.ijims.com/uploads/8173db12811b1899bcf52014418.pdf>

⁶⁹ Paul Valéry, The conquest of ubiquity, 1928

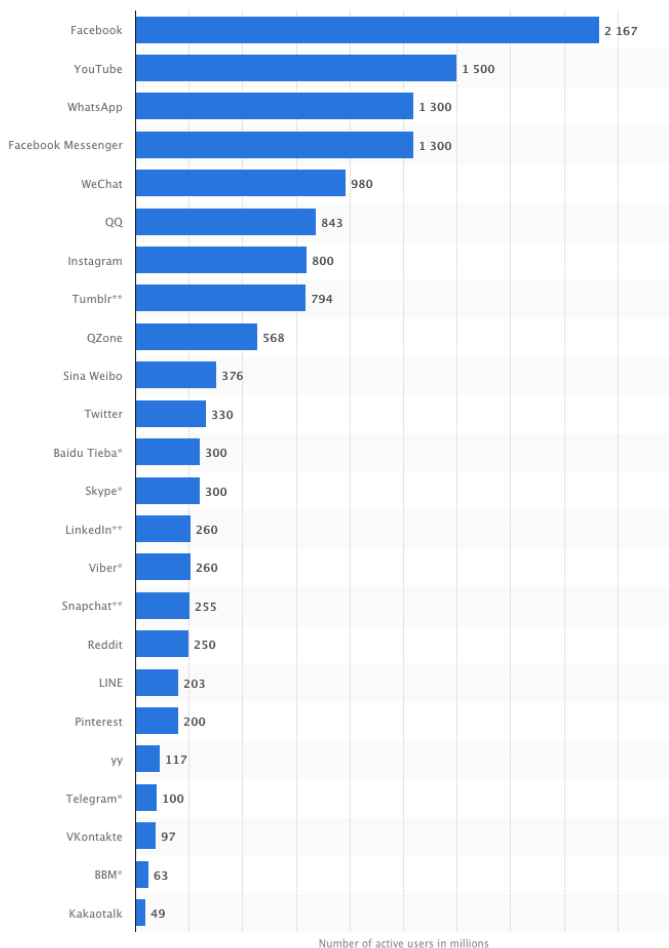


Image 84

Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2018, ranked by number of active users (in millions).⁷⁰

From Image 82 we can see, the most popular social networks are mainly serving for information sharing and instant messaging. There are multimedia information sharing platforms, like Facebook, Sina Weibo where users exchange messages, post status updates, share photos, videos and links, and there are platforms which are focusing on sharing images, moving or still images or both, like Youtube, Instagram. And for instant messaging, we have WhatsApp, WeChat, moreover, any of those messaging tools in our digital age has at least the function of sending and receiving a photo. So the images are even more frequently, widely and deeply involved in our daily information sharing and communication with the social networks.

In the following chapter, we are going to do a couple of visual experiments which are inspired by some visual research on how people use images on some popular social networks. On the one hand, we continue trying to answer the question How do people Talk in Images in the Digital Age, on another hand, we are going to make some practical visual projects for this dissertation.

⁷⁰ This statistic provides information on the most popular networks worldwide as of January 2018, ranked by number of active accounts.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

The Practical Projects

7.1 The intention of the projects

The intention of making those practical projects is very simple - - we want to let the images “talk.” In this chapter, we continue our investigation of Talking in Images in the Digital Age, and to study how do the masses talk in images on social networks. So from the Chart of “the most popular social networks of January 2018”, we picked some of the most popular social networks and did some visual research on them. There are plenty of images we gathered through this process, and those images are rather good examples to show to us how the masses are using the images to talk. Meanwhile, inspired by those images, we did some simple but artistic experiments on them. For one thing, to present those images that we gathered and let those images to talk to the viewers. For another, while doing the experiments, we attempted to try out some of the ideas might contribute to the conclusion of this dissertation.

7.2 The projects:

The Faces of A Facebook User

“Photo identification or photo ID is an identity document that includes a photograph of the holder, usually only his or her face.”⁷¹

“An identity document (also called a piece of identification or ID, or colloquially as papers) is any document which may be used to prove a person's identity.”⁷²

If photo identification is used to prove the identity of a person, then what is a profile photo for?

A profile photo of a social media account also includes a photograph of the holder, but not as the photo ID, which has very specific rules, a profile photo has to fit in a certain format but content-wise, there is more freedom for the account holder to demonstrate himself or herself. Moreover,

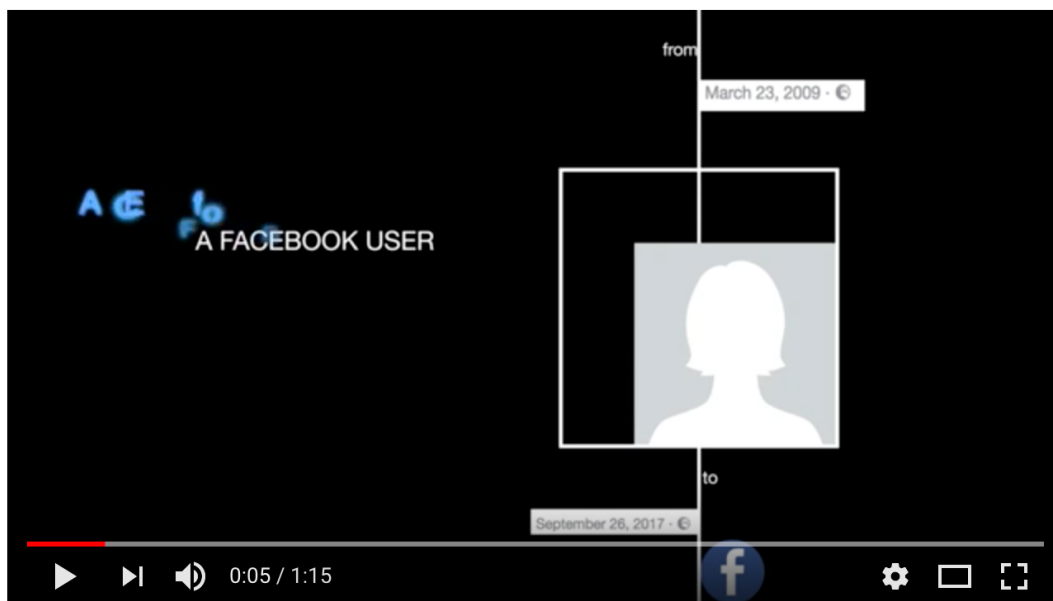
⁷¹ About Photo identification on Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photo_identification

⁷² About Identity document on Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_document

there is no such necessity of a profile photo has to have the physical face of the account holder. Not like most of the photo ID, one can not freely change the photo until the document expired, the social media account holder can change his profile photo anytime he wants. Since people have relatively more freedom on the images that they use to represent themselves, so the changes of the profile photo sometimes not merely chasing the trend or showing one's new look. Instead, some of those changes could reflect something under the surface and might reveal something more than just one's physical identity. So in a way, the profile photos maybe are more accurate of one's current situation than the photo ID.

In this project, I picked a random person's Facebook account to observe how she was using profile photos to represent herself online. From the 23rd of March, 2009 to the 26th of September, 2017, there are 15 profile photos⁷³ of her are open to public viewers, each lasted a different amount of time. I made a short video to visualize the changes of her profile photos in that eight years. I regard one year for 5'' in this video, and according to this simple mathematic method to calculate how long each profile photo displays in the video. So in an around 60'' length video we can see the changes of her profile photos for eight years in chronological order

Prints of these 15 profile photos of this Facebook user in a Photo Identification format are made as part of this project as well.



Project 1: Faces of a Facebook User

Image 85

A screenshot of Faces of a Facebook User

Chao Fang, Faces of a Facebook User⁷⁴, 2018, Video, 76''

⁷³ The images are under a "Public" privacy setting

⁷⁴ <https://vimeo.com/283030806>
Password: chaofang



Image 86

Some of the prints of these profile photos in a photo identification format

Chao Fang, Faces of a Facebook User, 2018, Photographs, size 12.7cm×8.9cm each, color print photographs

Please Listen to Me

One of the most romantic thing that humans have ever done is that we sent the Voyager Golden Records⁷⁵ to interstellar space. “The records contain sounds and images selected to portray the diversity of life and culture on Earth, and are intended for any intelligent extraterrestrial life form, or for future humans, who may find them.”⁷⁶ I picture those golden records are mostly floating in the endless darkness and silentness where time and space are ineffective, “but the launching of this 'bottle' into the cosmic 'ocean' says something very hopeful about life on this planet.”⁷⁷ We live in hope, which keeps us going. We sent those Records with the hope of there might be someone one day will hear it. No matter how small the chance of being heard, but we still did it with great hope. I found this kind of human behavior somewhat very romantic and poetic and it also practically projects that we are such social animals, and always up to communicate. We like to make a sound and we'd like to be heard.

In the age of Information, anyone can use the internet to spread his or her “talks” with a platform that he or she feels comfortable with. However, on the other side, if the talker wants his voice to be heard by a considerable amount of audiences, then he has to learn this medium well and pays attention to what people would like to hear.

In this project, I picked one of the most popular video-sharing website Youtube, to take a peek at what are the trendy topics and how are people Talking in Images there. According to this article “The 20 types of videos that get the most views on YouTube,”⁷⁸ I made a short video to symbolically reveal the incredible amount of visual information we are constantly producing nowadays. As well there are three posters made for the top 3 trendy topics on the list, which could give us a general look of the “ same same but different”⁷⁹ visual language that those video makers are using.

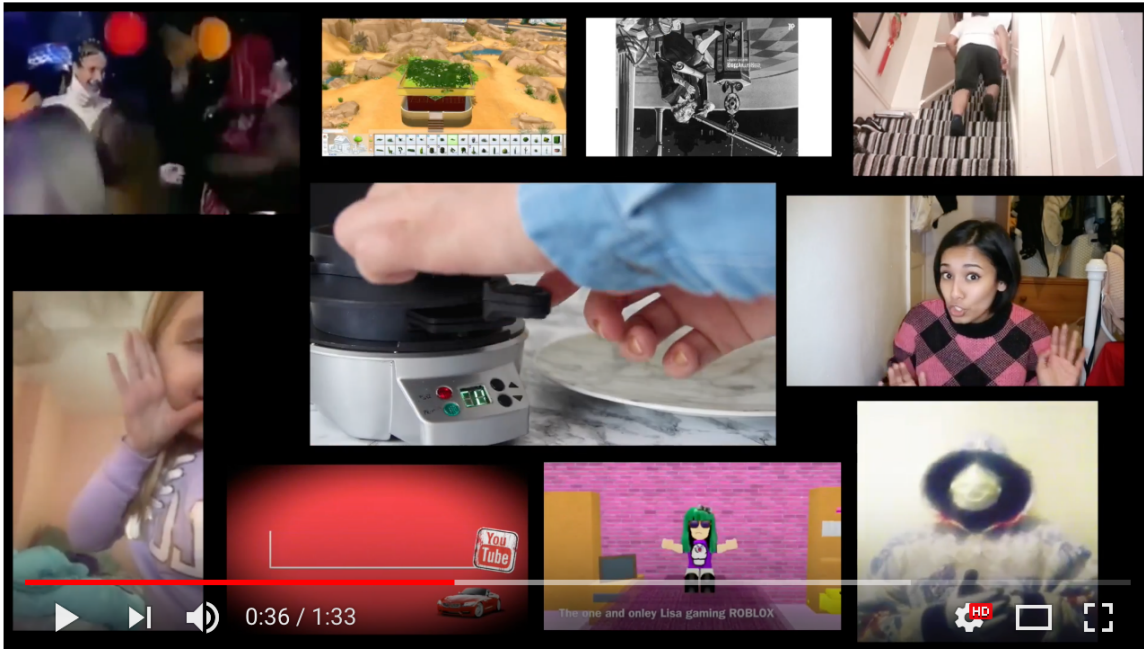
⁷⁵ "Voyager – Golden Record". Jet Propulsion Laboratory. NASA. Retrieved September 23, 2010.
<https://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/golden-record/>

⁷⁶ <https://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/golden-record/>

⁷⁷ "Voyager – Golden Record". Jet Propulsion Laboratory. NASA. Retrieved September 23, 2010.
<https://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/golden-record/>

⁷⁸ HARALD MEYER-DELIUS, The 20 types of videos that get the most views on YouTube (Text: Harald Meyer-Delius, Research: Luna Giontella)
<https://blog.printsome.com/top-20-types-of-videos-with-most-views-on-youtube/>

⁷⁹ The phrase is common throughout much of Southeast Asia, from people with limited English attempting to communicate the word “similar” to travellers and tourists.
<https://www.samesamebutdifferent.site/2017/08/same-same-but-different-origin/>



project 2: Please listen to me

Image 87

A screenshot of Please Listen to Me
Chao Fang, Please Listen to Me⁸⁰, 2018, Video, 93”

“ Please Listen to Me” a video collage which is based on the most popular 10 topics on YouTube⁸¹. I used the searching function on YouTube with those ten trendy topics. There were a humongous amount of videos under each topic, so to simplify the data collecting procedure, and to make sure the videos are recently made, so to avoid the effect of any personal preference, I set the searching filter only to display the videos that uploaded in the “last hour.”⁸² And I only picked the first video on the searching list of each topic. 10 video clips were collected, each stands for one of the Top 10 trendy topics, and they were all uploaded in the same hour. I decided to put them all together on one screen to create this visual and sound chaos which is trying to visualize all these different voices are there all at one time and intending to be heard; as well as trying to symbolically present how massive amount of visual messages we are constantly creating and putting out there nowadays.

⁸⁰ Please listen to me: <https://vimeo.com/283031966>
Password: chaofang

⁸¹ The 10 topics are: “ Product reviews”, “How-to’s/Tutorials”, “Vlogs”, “Gaming Videos”, “Comedy/Skit Videos”, “Haul Videos”, “Memes/Tags”, “Favourite/Best of”, “Educational”, and “Unboxing,” according to this article “The 20 types of videos that get the most views on YouTube”
<https://blog.printsome.com/top-20-types-of-videos-with-most-views-on-youtube/>

⁸² The " last hour" here is regarding from 11 pm on the 5th of February, 2018 when the visual research was done.



Image 88

Chao Fang, Please Listen to Me, 2018, Posters, Each 61 x 91 cm

Three posters are made, each for one of the most popular 3 topics⁸³. Each poster here displays all the cover images of the videos that uploaded in the “last hour”⁸⁴ under the same topic.

⁸³ The 3 topics are: “Product reviews”, “How-to’s/Tutorials”, “Vlogs”, according to this article “The 20 types of videos that get the most views on YouTube.” <https://blog.printsome.com/top-20-types-of-videos-with-most-views-on-youtube/>

⁸⁴ The “last hour” here is regarding from 11 pm on the 5th of February, 2018 when the visual research was done.

A “ Good Morning” Package

Imagine, one day you woke up in the morning, and you were in the time before the internet was invented. There were no smartphones, computers, tablets. Then you received this “package,” from Instagram...

Talking about the morning activities, I was born in the 80s in China. I remember my father used to read newspapers on our dining table during breakfast, we also used to watch TV News in the morning, and the other thing was to check the mailbox, which to me was the most exciting thing in the morning. I remember how cheerful to receive letters from friends, and if I received some photos or postcards from someone, that really could make my day.

In the digital age now, we can still do all those “old school” morning activities, but most of the people start their day by checking some digital devices, and there is no need to get out of beds even.

“Instagram has vowed that the change would ensure the best, most meaningful content would ‘be waiting for you when you wake up’.”⁸⁵

This is from an article which talked about Instagram has changed the chronological ordering of posts to an algorithm-driven feed as organized by its own formula. This change seems small, just “some” social media company made a decision to modify their product. However, this “some” social media company runs the most popular image sharing platform in the world right now. So this “small” change, in fact, changed the way of many people seeing and reading the images, at least on Instagram. Some people are not so happy with this change, more for the sake that there are no other options to change the order of the post to chronological which you can do on Facebook. However, don’t forget, most of the old school media - - newspapers, TV programs, radio broadcasts... the content you see or hear on them are all arranged as well. At least Instagram dared to make a vow of making sure its users can see “the best, most meaningful content” in the morning when they wake up.

In this project, I transferred my morning browsing Instagram experience to an “Opening a Package” experience, a package with different two-dimensional graphic works which made with the images I gathered through Instagram. As you are opening this package, you are supposed to experience what

⁸⁵ Elle Hunt, New algorithm-driven Instagram feed rolled out to the dismay of users, 7th June,2016, The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jun/07/new-algorithm-driven-instagram-feed-rolled-out-to-the-dismay-of-users>

I visually experienced on my Instagram account on the morning of the 19th of February, 2018 for 24 minutes⁸⁶.

I took screenshots of all the images that I had encountered in that 24 minutes. While I was checking the feed, I was following the Instagram algorithm ordering of the images. But also I clicked into some image makers' accounts and checked other images in his or her account, as well, I checked some hashtags which interested me, there were also advertisements appeared while my browsing.

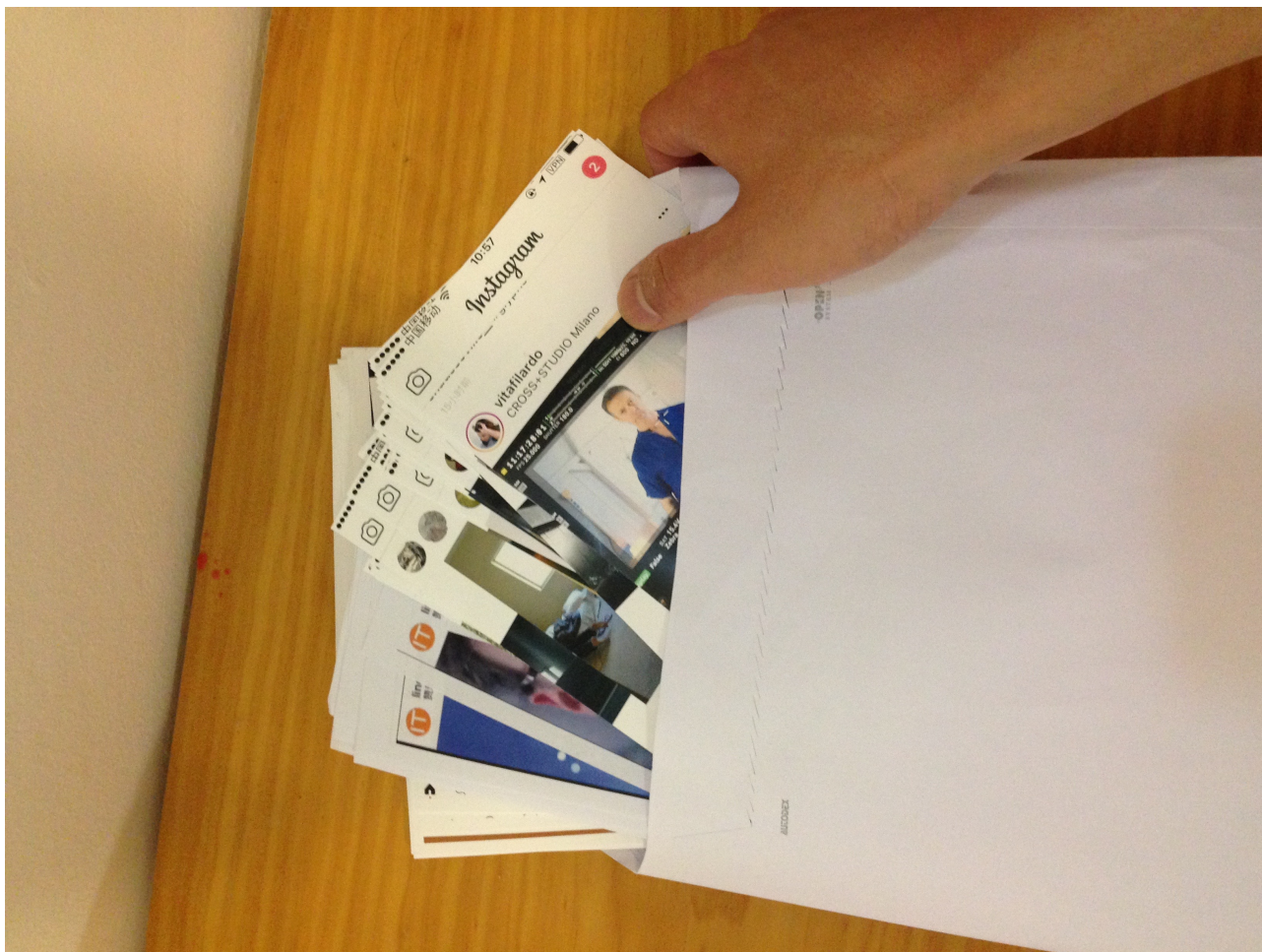


Image 89

The Package

Chao Fang, A “ Good Morning” Package, 2018, 26 x 37 cm

⁸⁶ “Instagram, owned by Facebook, says its users under 25 spend “more than 32 minutes a day on Instagram,” and users 25 and over “spend more than 24 minutes a day” on the app.”
<https://instagram-press.com/blog/2017/08/02/celebrating-one-year-of-instagram-stories/>



Image 90

For the images were posted by the people whom I know personally I printed them as photographs

Chao Fang, A “ Good Morning” Package, 2018, Photographs, 12.7cm×8.9cm each



Image 91

For the images were from the people whom I do not know personally I made their images as postcards

Chao Fang, A “ Good Morning” Package, 2018, Postcards, 14cm × 9cm each



Image 92

Ads were made as leaflets and handouts

Chao Fang, A “ Good Morning” Package, 2018,
Leaflets, 14cm × 9cm each



Image 93

For videos I made brochures with
how many frames that I had watched

Chao Fang, A “ Good Morning” Package, 2018,
Brochures, 14cm × 9cm each

Conclusion

The image is a rather special medium that we possess, and it has multifunctions, we put it in the human communication field in this dissertation to talk about it as a tool for us to passing information to each other. Even though there are so many methods of communication, the image, special as it is, shows its uniqueness and irreplaceable from our general research. The qualities and features of the image as a medium to deliver information have been well used throughout human history. Despite who had the privilege to make better use of it, no one can take away this special gift that we have by nature from us. Like running water, there are still people at this moment do not have running water at home, but that does not change what running water can do to people. Moreover, when the technology and the situation allow people to have one resource in their hands, anyone naturally is able to use it and benefit from it. In the digital age, we are lucky enough to have the image like the running water in service to us. So in this dissertation, we did the studying about how are the people nowadays using the images to communicate with the assist of the more advanced technologies. After the theoretical and practical research, we also did some visual research and experimented with the images we gathered from the internet. By the end, there are some thoughts on “Talking in Images” this research brought to us, and we would like to share them here.

The free but not free images

At the beginning of the 20th century, Walter Benjamin pointed out that “mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual.”⁸⁷ The images take a big role in the artistic world, so in another word, the “mechanical reproduction” also emancipates the images from the “parasitical dependence on ritual.” However, they were still under the aura of art. In the digital age, what the digital reproduction accomplished is to make the images ubiquitous, which is not only taking off the aura of art from the images but also democratizing the images to a level that anybody could use any image that is available in the digital world. From our research, we can see that from how the masses are freely using iconic images to recreate visual messages for the sake of expressing themselves. So in this way, the images are relatively quite free.

From our experiments on the images which we gathered from social media, for instance, those Facebook profile photos, we can see that there is an intention that people are using the images to express something very abstract, trying to reach the internal world of themselves and using the images as a medium to output and materialize the unspeakable feeling and experience. But some of

⁸⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Translated: by Harry Zohn, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, Schocken/Random House,1998), IV

the images they chose to express their abstract feeling are those historically iconic images which are actually full of codes - - cultural codes. We can not deny that we are freely using lots of the reproductions of the images from before, especially those classic ones, those iconic ones, but sometimes we probably are just borrowing the inserted ready-made codes in the image, more than using the actual image itself. So in this way, the images are still not free - - not free from the cultural codes. But I guess they will never be free from those cultural codes since the civilized us are always living in some culture.

The symphony of the masses

From this research, we can see the sound of the masses has different volume throughout human history. Although our ancestors had their ways of using the images to “talk” for themselves, like the ancient casual carvings and graffitis, those were not mean to “speak” loud. However, in the digital age, the situation is quite different with the help of the internet and social media. The voices of the masses are rather loud, and in a way, with the help of this genius media - - the images, some voices could cross language, culture, and even time. Like the viral South Korean video clip, as an example, millions of people from all around the world have seen it, this kind of achievement in the communication field, none of the methods in human history before could compete.

From the visual research on Youtube, we can see a nice variety of different ways of using the images to express oneself. Not only the volume of the sound of the masses is a lot higher than before, but also there are so many different sounds of the masses as well. We are like in an age that the masses are cheerfully making and playing a “symphony” of the images. But on the other hand, sometimes we also see people say things that they may be not interested in saying, and just say it for the sake of they may get more audiences to listen to them.

Can we have a dialogue in images now?

Technically we can, as we can see that in the case study of those visual artists using only images to communicate with each other. And in our daily life, with Messenger, WhatsApp... those chatting applications, anybody can achieve an image to image conversation formally. But what about the content of the image dialogues, content-wise, can we have a fluid and meaningful dialogue in images now?

From studying about the Talking in Images of the artists, we can see the image has some unique talent to help the talkers to start a conversation easier, and due to it is visible so the conversation could connect to one’s personal experience more direct in a way. In addition, the image has this nature of bringing Visual Adventure to us, so Talking in Images could be quite playful and inspiring.

As well, lots of the images we encountered during this research also showed some very personalized idiolects within them. And the image also has this specialty when it serves as a medium for self-expression, it could sometimes go rather obscure and abstract. On the one hand, people are having fun with experimenting with the images and forming their own personal idiolects. But at the same time, if the other people could easily understand those image-idiolects to a communicable level, that is still a question for now.

In this dissertation, we borrowed quite some terms from the linguistic field, like “dialogue” “conversation” “talking” ... However, as we know, differ from the image, there are some rather strict syntactical and lexical rules towards language. With language, we made up the signifiers for the aim to represent the signified for us to communicate with each other. In contrast, with the image, everything is the signifier and the signified simultaneously⁸⁸. More than that, one image could contain a huge amount of signifieds, and they are not consecutive. That’s why “all images are polysemous; they imply, underlying their signifiers, a "floating chain" of signifieds, the reader is able to choose some and ignore others”⁸⁹ which means the reader could make any combinations with the “floating chain of signifieds” according to his understanding and personal experience, which could make millions of possible meanings.

From the objective purpose of communication, the image is definitely a rock star with delivering a big amount of information in a short amount of time. But from the perspective of who are using this tool to communicate, like us - - humans, we may still not able to decode such heavy amount of information in no time.

So, at this moment, a simple image dialogue definitely is something we can do, but maybe not that much a fluid and fluent visual conversation yet.

At Last

“Here, by a remarkable regression, we have come back to the level of expression of the Egyptians ... Pictorial language has not yet matured because our eyes have not yet adjusted to it. There is as yet insufficient respect for, insufficient cult of, what it expresses.”⁹⁰ Walter Benjamin did not agree with comparing the film with hieroglyphs, which he thought it was trying to mystify the pictorial language. The pictorial language overall is just another tool for us to communicate. We could

⁸⁸ “The signifieds of this third message are constituted by the real objects in the scene, the signifiers by these same objects photographed, for, given that the relation between thing signified and image signifying in analogical representation is not “arbitrary” (as it is in language), it is no longer necessary to dose the relay with a third term in the guise of the psychic image of the object.”

Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text* (Fontana Press, 1977), 35-36

⁸⁹ Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text* (Fontana Press, 1977), 38-39

⁹⁰ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Translated: by Harry Zohn, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, Schocken/Random House, 1998), VII

appreciate it but there is no need for such respect or cult of a tool. Besides, the mystification may affect what the tool can actually do. However, no matter the hieroglyphs or the film, they all belong to the same language - - the visual language. And not only back then “Pictorial language has not yet matured,” even now “our eyes have not yet adjusted to it” still, after almost a century since Abel Gance made that comparison.⁹¹ Well, how much more our eyes have evolved to be able to adjust to the pictorial language, that is something I can’t answer without the knowledge of biological science and neuroscience. But from an image maker’s point of view, I would say I feel so lucky to live in the digital age as an image maker.

Like forming any new system, in the beginning, it is always the freest time. We can see how free we are using the images and how much fun we are having with them. Because there is still no universal metal rules had settled for using the images yet. And with the assistance of the technologies, we are progressively exploring the possibilities of the images, especially in the art and human communication field, we can see various of ways of organizing and using the visual elements. At the moment, we are relatively at the beginning of forming something new for the images, this “something new” might be a new system of using the images, might be something could change our perception, or might even be something completely beyond our imagination and take us to another level of communication. We may still not be able to see the shape of this “something new” very clear yet. However, we could experience the incomparable freedom and the spirit of creativity in this early age, so it is indeed an exciting period for the images, and for us, who are experimenting with the images.

⁹¹ Abel Gance, for instance, compares the film with hieroglyphs: “Here, by a remarkable regression, we have come back to the level of expression of the Egyptians ... Pictorial language has not yet matured because our eyes have not yet adjusted to it. There is as yet insufficient respect for, insufficient cult of, what it expresses.” Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Translated: by Harry Zohn, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, Schocken/Random House,1998), VII

Bibliography

General Bibliography

Barthes, R. (1981). *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard. New York, USA: Hill and Wang.

Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-Music-Text*, essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath. London, UK: Fontana Press.

Benjamin, W. (1998). *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, translated by Harry Zohn, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, ed. by Hannah Arendt. New York, USA: Schocken/Random House.

Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. London, UK: British Broadcasting Corp and Penguin Books.

Valéry, P. (1964). *Aesthetics*, translated by Ralph Manheim. New York, USA: Pantheon Books and Bollingen Series.

Specific Bibliography

Max-Neef, Manfred A. Elizalde, A. Hopenhayn, M. (1991). *Human Scale Development: Conception, Application and Further Reflections*. Muscat, Sultanate of Oman: Apex Press.

Castells, M. (1999). *The Information Age, Volumes 1-3: Economy, Society and Culture*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Morris, I. (2010). *Why the West Rules--for Now: The Patterns of History, and What They Reveal About the Future*. New York, USA: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Rota, Lila Maya, S. (2011). *Describing the Self Through the Photographic Medium: the Autobiographic Fictions of John M. Coetzee, Roland Barthes and Edward Said*. University di Pavia.

Verderber, Kathleen S. Sellnow, Deanna D. Verderber, Rudolph F. (2016). *Communicate!* Boston, USA: Cengage Learning.

Webgraphy

Grundberg, Andy. *Death in the Photograph*:
<http://www.nytimes.com/1981/08/23/books/death-in-the-photograph.html?pagewanted=all>

Hunt, Elle. *New algorithm-driven Instagram feed rolled out to the dismay of users*, 7th June, 2016, *The Guardian*:
<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jun/07/new-algorithm-driven-instagram-feed-rolled-out-to-the-dismay-of-users>

Identity document, Wikipedia:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_document

Masterson, Kathleen. *From Grunting To Gabbing: Why Humans Can Talk*:
<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129083762>

Manuscrit Biblia. Pentateuchus (Pentateuque dit d' Ashburnham ou de Tours):

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53019392c/f306.item#>

McCabe, Hugh. The Rhetoric Of The Image – Roland Barthes (1964):

<https://tracesofthereal.com/2009/12/21/the-rhetoric-of-the-image-roland-barthes-1977/>

Meyer-Delius, Harald. The 20 types of videos that get the most views on YouTube (Text: Harald Meyer-Delius, Research: Luna Giontella):

<https://blog.printsome.com/top-20-types-of-videos-with-most-views-on-youtube/>

Moreau, Elise. 10 of the Best Memes of All Time:

<https://www.lifewire.com/top-memes-of-all-time-3485903>

Pareto principle:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareto_principle

Photo identification, Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photo_identification

Roy, Debjani. (2014). "Cinema in the Age of Digital Revolution":

<http://www.ijims.com/uploads/8173db12811b1899bcf52014418.pdf>

Sandhu, Sukhdev. Ways of Seeing Opened Our Eyes to Visual Culture:

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/sep/07/ways-seeing-berger-tv-programme-british>

Smith, Roberta. An Exhibition Worth Thousands of Words (The New York Times, July 6, 2017):

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/06/arts/design/an-exhibition-worth-thousands-of-words.html>

Talking Pictures: Camera-Phone Conversations Between Artists:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2017/talking-pictures>

The Ancient Graffiti Project:

<http://agp.wlu.edu/Graffiti/>

The Art of War (Chinese: 孙子兵法; literally: "Master Sun's Military Methods"):

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Art_of_War

The Flying Spaghetti Monster:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flying_Spaghetti_Monster

The Information Age:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_Age

The Mogao Caves (Chinese: 莫高窟):

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogao_Caves#Murals

The Zizhi Tongjian (Chinese: 資治通鑑; literally: "Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance"):

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zizhi_Tongjian

Voyager – Golden Record:

<https://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/golden-record/>

Ways of Seeing, a 1972 television series:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ways_of_Seeing

Weston, Thomas. Practice and Knowledge:

<http://marxistphilosophy.org/Intro/WhatPracticeIs.htm>