THE FUTURE OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION: WILL IMAGES BECOME THE NEW WRITTEN WORD?

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15421880

"
Words make division, pictures make connection
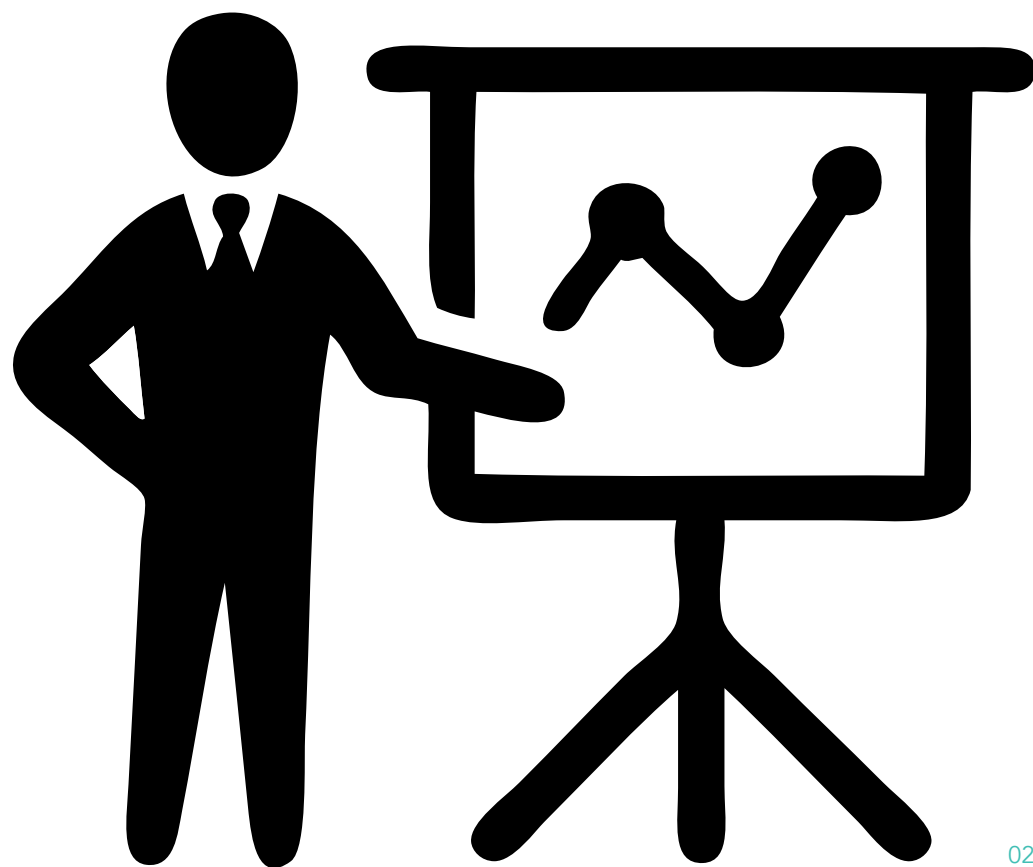*-Otto Neurath*
"

CONTENTS.

1

INTRODUCTION

In today's society there are over five thousand languages and dialects spoken by numerous people all over the world. Only a hundred of these are considered to be of major importance. Communication amongst these languages has proven to, not only be difficult, but in most situations impossible.

A universal language, understood by all, would be the ideal solution. In fact, more than eight hundred attempts over the last thousand years have been made to create an official second language. Some of these attempts created languages like Esperanto, Interlingua, Ido and Volapuk. *(Borysevicz, 2012)* They all combined existing elements of existing languages, which proved to reduce their efficiency, so none of them were a complete success.

It may seem however, that a new super star is taking the stage of intercommunication: the image. The greater part of living languages in the 21st century are dependent on alphabets, but this was not always the case when looking at the history of writing. And even today, pictographs are still in use as the main medium of written communication in cultures where illiteracy is high or in cultures that are completely non-literate. These examples show that there is a possibility and some advantages of an imaged based communication method over an alphabetic one.

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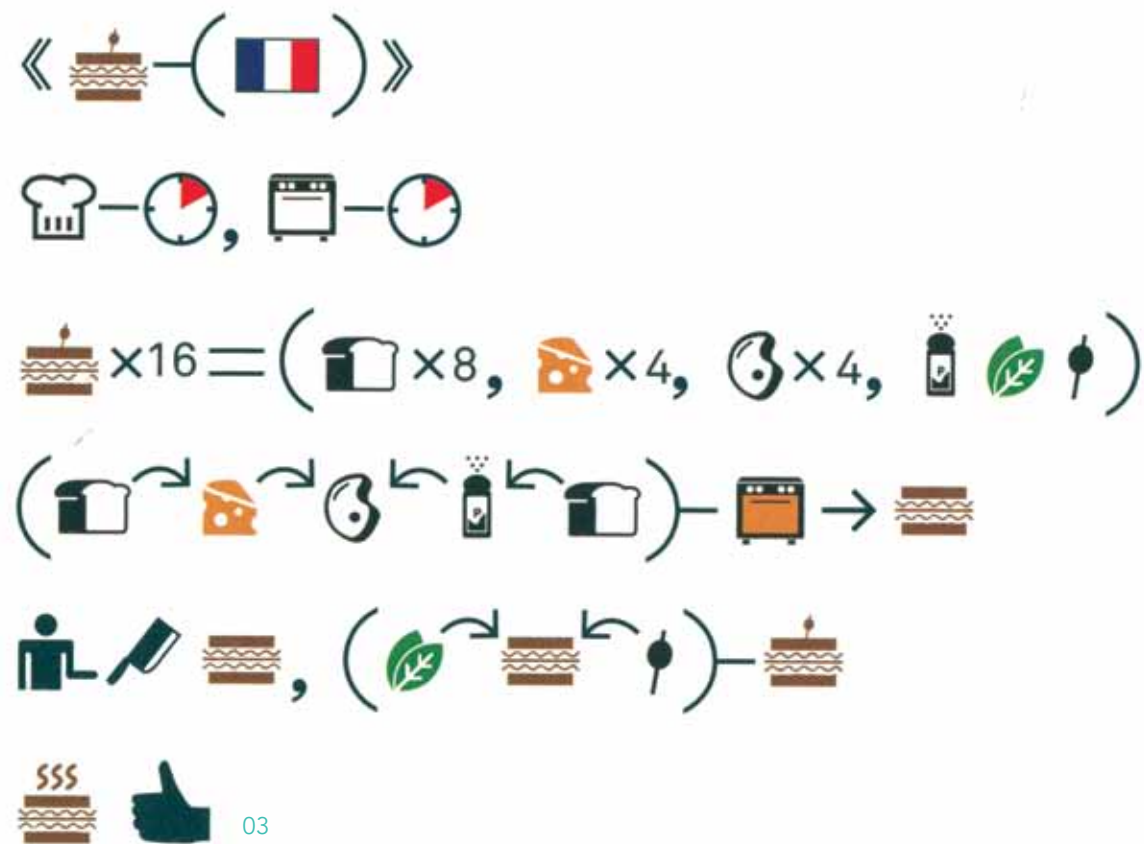
The aim of this dissertation is to explore the possibility of writing becoming completely image based. To do this it is essential to look at the history and rise of the written word and compare it to the history and rise of pictorial communication. Whit that information we can answer which of these systems became or is becoming the underdog and why that happenend.

Furthermore, semiotics, and its importance to the people living in a screen culture society, will be examined. As an extension to that, case studies of writing already being replaced by pictographs will help us to come to the overall conclusion of this dissertation.

In the final chapter it is important to speculate about the future of the written word and if it will indeed become pictorial, to do this, it is important to look at the developments of non-written languages today and how their audiences use them.

Before we start conducting research with this dissertation, it is important to first know the difference between image based communication and written communication.

Written communication is defined as a form of communication, which involves any type of interaction that makes use of the written word. *(Bonner, 2003)*

Image based communication is defined as a form of communication, which transmits information using symbols and imagery, whether it is a drawing, pictograph, television

Chapter 1 # **HISTORICAL**
OVERVIEW
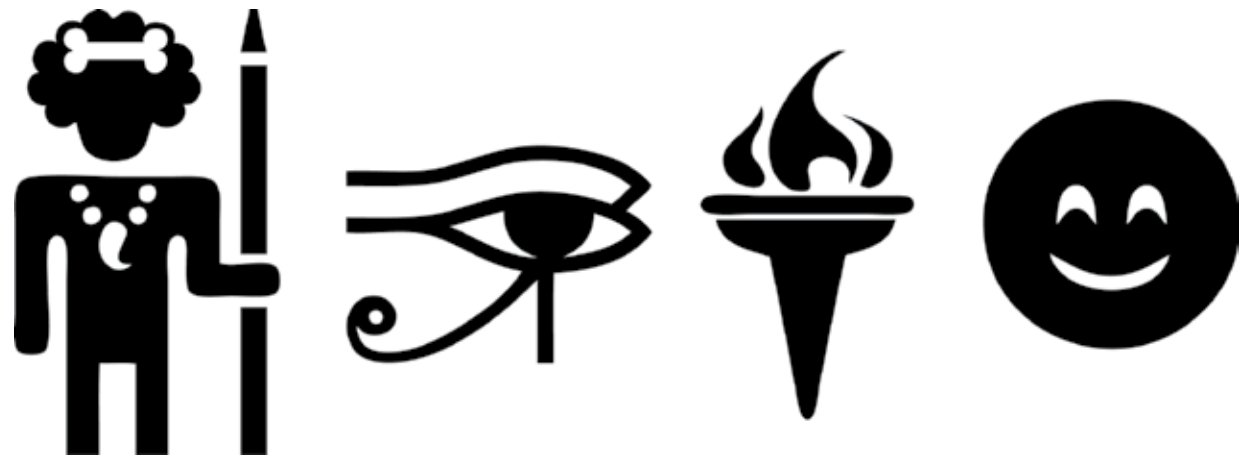
To gain understanding if images can become the new written word it is important to look how imagery as a method of communication has evolved until now. This might give us more insight on how it will further evolve during the future.
To get more insight in the development of image based communication throughout history. A literature review was conducted of visual and written communication systems. Starting with one of the oldest form of visual communication, cave paintings, up until the digital emoticons, which are currently used. This will help answering the question: How the role of communication through images and the written word has changed during the time period of 35,000 B.C. up to the 21st century and why.

PARIETAL ART
IN THE BEGINNING

When looking at the history of writing, it seems that the use of imagery as a method of communication has always co-existed with writing, as we know it.

So when looking at the dissertation hypothesis: "will images become the new written word?" it may only seem logical that writing will stay developing in that way. But to be able to fully answer that question, it is important to first look at how writing came to be.

Writing originated as an image based communicating system, however it must be underscored that this is heavily debated. Not everyone agrees that imagery was a form of communicating whole messages or emotions but rather was a way of expressing religion or environmental diversity. *(Miller and Robinson, 2003)* The most heavily debated extinct language, which scientist and archaeologist cannot seem to agree on, are images left in caves by our ancestors.

Cave paintings, which are also known as parietal art (cave art), are images found on cave walls and ceilings. They are the very first pictorial signs and originate from as early as 35,000 B.C.

Four teenagers discovered the most renowned of them, the Lascaux cave in France, located in the Vézère Valley, on the 12th of September 1940 whilst they were following their dog down a cavern. Our ancestors, who were formed in hunter/gatherer societies are said to have sought refuge in these caves. Where they eventually started leaving the imagery's we know as cave paintings.

These images are sometimes referred to as the first form of communication, although they do not seem to convey a clear message. *(Wilson, 2006)* Most cave paintings contain imagery of animals that were present during that time. They also showcase people hunting animals and in some cases contains plant live. These images cannot be read in a certain direction nor do different sets of images on the same place seem to be connecting to each other, therefore parietal art cannot be categorized as symbols or pictograms.

05 *Red Cow & First Chinese Horse - Photograph N. Aujoulat (2003)*

Not only did scientist and archaeologist find imagery that is clearly recognizable as either an animal or human figure, but they also discovered geometric signs.

These abstract shapes are not immediately recognizable as mundane objects and are also referred to as non-figurative images. The special aspect about them is that these signs appeared in 26 different shapes in prehistoric caves and portable objects all over the world. And they were also discovered in association with human and animal imagery. This leads to the suggestion that communication through (geometric) signs arose with early humans.

Some of these signs were found in as much of 70% of discovered parietal art sites, like the line symbol. [figure06] Other signs, like the dot and the open angle, both found in 42% of sites discovered, [figure07 & figure08] even transfer through time. *(Bradshaw, 2003)*

They are found in both the "young" and "old" discovered caves. Some of these shapes are bound to a certain time period. The Tectiform symbol, for example, [figure09] is only found in parietal art sites that are dated to be created 25,000 to 13,000 years ago. Unfortunately the meaning of these geometric signs cannot, and maybe never will, be deciphered.
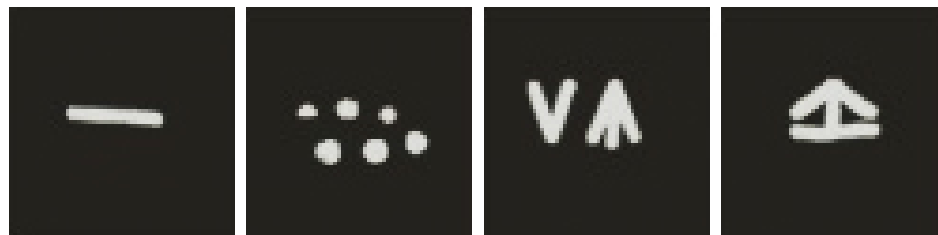
figure 06   *figure 07*   *figure 08*   *figure 09*

[10] *Panel of the Lions, Chauvet Cave, France. Image via Bradshaw Foundation*

HIEROGLYPHS

LANGUAGE OF THE GODS

Fortunately, when looking at other forms of extinct writing, it is not always that we cannot decipher them.
With the discovery of the Rosetta stone in mid-July 1799, which contained Egyptian hieroglyphs, by a demolition squad of French soldiers and with the (partially) decipherment of the stone in 1814 by Thomas Young, an understanding about the meaning behind these complex characters begin to grow. The full breakthrough was in 1823 when Jean-Francois Champollion publicized his view on the Egyptian code. *(Robinson, 2007)*

The writing system of Egyptian hieroglyphs is a mixture of logograms, also known as semantic symbols, which are symbols that can stand for words and ideas, and phonograms, which represent one or more sounds.
Some hieroglyphs are recognizable as objects, which means they are pictographs, but they do not always have the exact meaning of the object that is displayed.
For example, a picture of a hand doesn't always have anything to do with the meaning "hand." It can also be a phonogram that would mean "t." Depending on the hieroglyphs used in the same context a pictograph may function as a logogram or as a phonogram, so a pictograph in Egyptian hieroglyphs may have more than one function. *(Collier, M. and Manley B. 2003)*
Egyptian hieroglyphs are a perfect example of a language that functions only on the use of imagery.
And although Egyptians had a written language as well, this co-existed next to Hieroglyphs, the language of the gods, rather then being part of it.
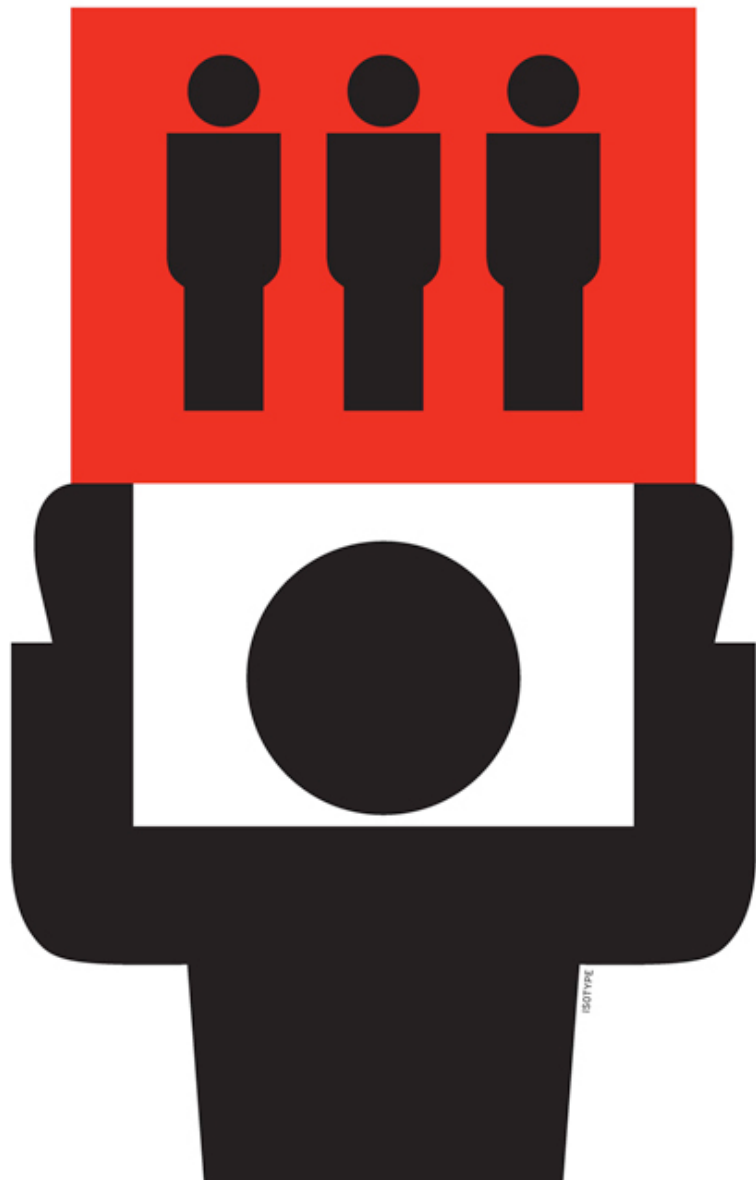
11 *Portrait of Thomas Young (1773–1829) National Portrait Gallery*

Papyrus on display at the Egyptian Museum in Turin. Image via AP

AFTER NEURATH

ISOTYPE

INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM OF PICTURE EDUCATION

Now it is necessary to make a jump through history to more recent times in order to fully answer this chapter hypothesis. The sociologist Otto Neurath developed ISOTYPE, which means International System of Typographic Picture Education, in the early 1930s. He was heavily inspired by Egyptian hieroglyphs and their ability to communicate a story. *(Neurath, 1936)*

This can be seen in his way of indicating the most important image in the context. The biggest image being the most important (Egyptian Hieroglyphs depicted the most import being, usually the pharaoh, as the biggest image in the context). And in his way of numbering, each image representing a specific amount.

ISOTYPE was an image based language developed as a method for visual statistics and to cross cultural barriers. But the prime motive behind ISOTYPE was to be visually educating people. Otto Neurath was not hoping to replace written language but rather creating a helping language, which was accompanied by verbal elements. *(Arntz and Annik, 2010)*

Lets take a look at the Olympic games from 1936, 1964 and 1972, which used the same form of ideology as Otto Neurath when it came to creating a helping language that existed through imagery.

The first Olympic games to use icons as a method of universal intelligibility were the Olympic Winter Games in Garmisch Partenkirchen, Germany in 1936. These icons still used verbal elements, written German language, and were only used to showcase the individual sport elements. Figure16

When looking at the Olympic Games of 1964, which were held in Tokyo, Japan, a slight shift in how these images were being presented to the public, can be seen.

Designed by Masaru Katzumie and Yoshiro Yamashita, the icons on display were the first to communicate both sports and services, communicating information to visitors and participants who had diverse cultural and language backgrounds. These included 20 pictographs displaying the different sports and 39 general information pictographs. And although the sport pictographs did not contain any form of verbal language, the general information signs were still supported by the use of an underline written in English. Figure15 and Figure17 *(Wagner, 1999)*

16*Symbols used in the 1936 German Games. Image via Olympic Museum Juergen Wagner, Germany*
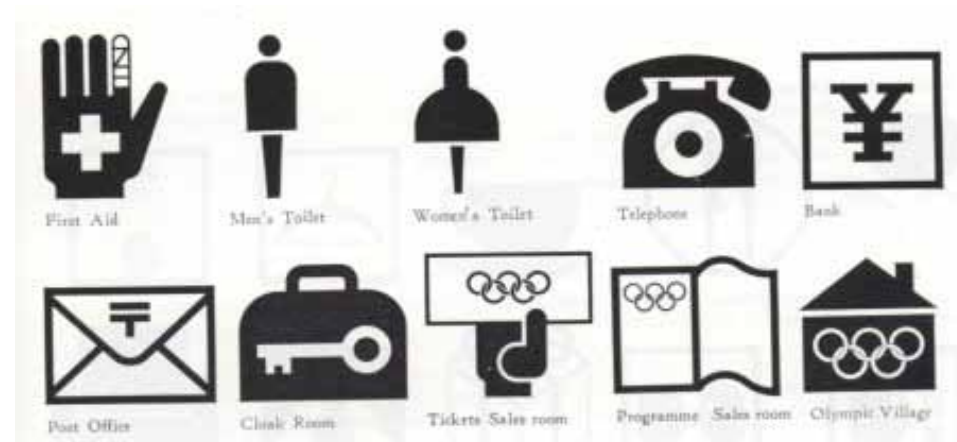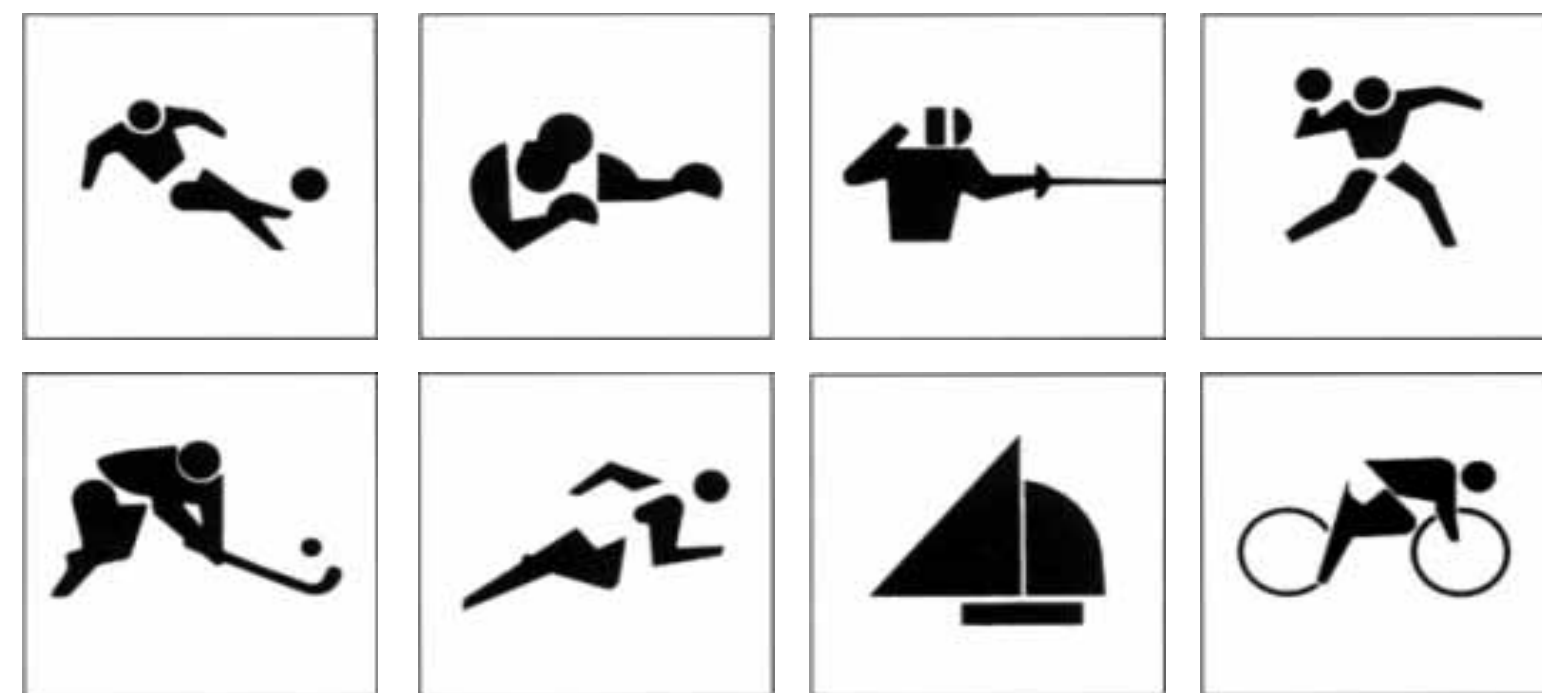
17*Symbols used in the 1964 Tokyo Games. Image via the Organizing Committee for the Games of the XVIII Olympiad*

The director of the Higher Institute of Graphic Arts, Otl Aicher, designed the pictographs used for the Olympic Games of 1972 which were held in Munich, Germany.
Heavily inspired by the Olympic games of 1964 and after consulting Masaru Katsumie, Otl Aicher created these icons with a series of grid systems and an exceptionally bright colour palette. Figure18 *(Rathgeb, 2006)*
The use of universally understandable icons from the Olympic Games of 1964, proved to be so successful that all succeeding Olympic Games would not be possible without these pictographs. In this the desire of the human brain to process clear visual imagery can be clearly seen.
Rather then to translate written words and learning in the progress, our brain requires very basic information for us: is this dangerous or is this safe? This also includes human emotions. Is this person dangerous and should I stay away or is he/she friendly and should I approach? A pictorial set of languages developed based on basic information that our brain needs and understands the most quickly, are emoticons.

[18]*Symbols used in the 1972 Munich Games. Image via ERCO GmbH Lüdenscheid*
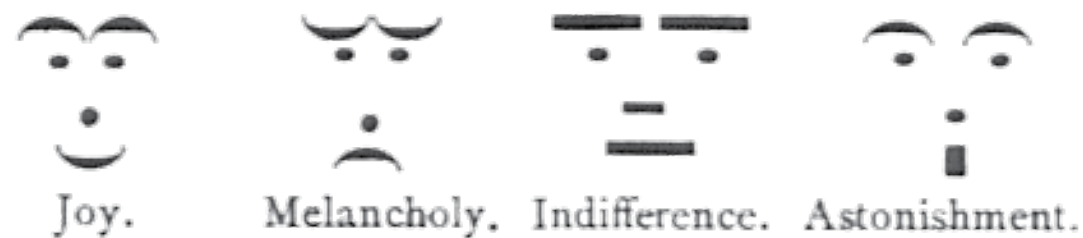
EMOTION ICONS

VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

When looking at "emotion icons" or "emoticons" for short, it is commonly thought that these are a modern invention, but in truth, they originate from as early as the 19th century.
There are examples of printed emoticons in the 1881 copy of the U.S. magazine Puck. These emoticons formed very simplified human emotions in a satirical article. Figure19
When looking at digital emoticons, usually referred to as emoji, which is a loanword from Japanese language made up from the words picture "e" and character "moji", it is heavily debated when the first emoticons appeared on the Internet. Some say it was in 1979 by Kevin Mackenzie, *(Jones, 2002)* others claim it was around various dates in the 1980s.

When the emoticon first originated it was a glyph to express someone's feelings or emotions. A smiley face depicted that the person using it was happy. *(Benski, and Fisher, 2013)*
In the present day emoticons have evolved to, not being a single state or emotion, but to a new medium of writing. This new form of pictorial writing seems to be more accepted by society as well. The Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year 2015 was a pictograph. Officially called the "Face with Tears of Joy."Figure20 *(Oxford Dictionaries, 2015)*

[19]*Typographical Art, Studies in Passions and Emotions. Image via Puck, no 212, p65, 1881*

[20]*Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year 2015. Image via Oxford Dictionaries*

How can it be that an image has developed in such a way that it is processed as a word? The most logical assumption seems to be the digitalization of our lives; in today's society it is not a strange sight to see a toddler with a mobile phone or tablet. From a very early age they learn to use these devices and with that, the "language" that was developed for such devices: emoticons. These emoticons are images that, in some way, are very similar to Egyptian hieroglyphs. These pictograms have a meaning when they stand alone, but can have different meanings depending on the context of the sentence.

For example we take the "eye emoticon" and place it in different sentences, in which, the same type of emoticon has a different meaning. Figure21 and Figure22

[21]I do not like to go dancing
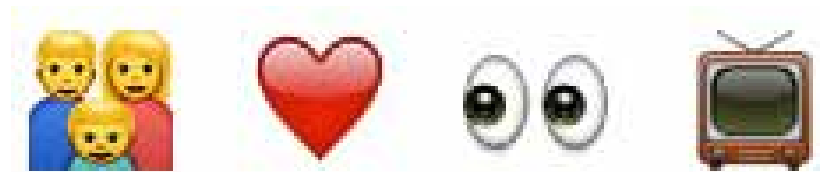
[22]They love watching television

In the first sentence the "eye emoticon" means "I," which does not have anything to do with the visual representation of an eye. The pronunciation of the word "eye" is similar to the pronunciation of the word "I" and therefore used in this way.

In the second sentence the "eye emoticon" means "watching," which still has nothing to do with the visual representation of an eye. In this example "watching" is something you can do with your eyes and therefore used in this way.

Since humans process images more quickly than written words, they become more familiar with these images at a much younger age. These youngsters are the new generation of our societies, there ways of living become intertwined with the older generations lives as well.
Nowadays, even people from 60 and above have a smartphone and use Facebook as a way of communicating and with that, use the way of communication developed for those devices/services, emoticons.

CONCLUSION

WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE

When looking at the overall evidence of this chapter, we can conclude that writing is not necessarily evolving into a pictorial state but rather making a come back from its primal state.

The first signs of written languages were image based and it developed into something that we know as writing today: written words. With recent developments and the aggregation of cultures, image based communication becomes something we all understand because it is in our nature to process images more quickly.

And language becoming pictorial is maybe not a human invention but is based on how our brain works, and in that way, language becoming pictorial, is not something we can stop but is how we humans are evolving as a species.

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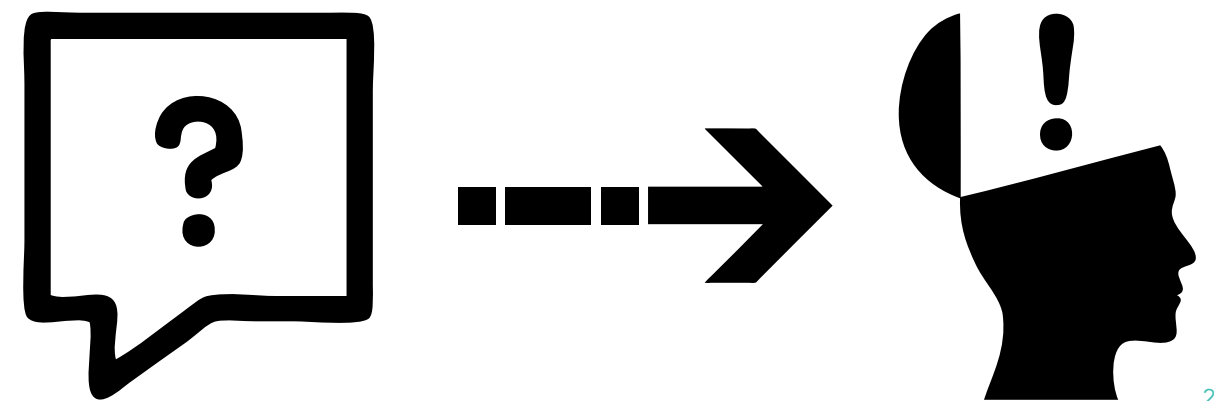
Chapter 2 # SEMIOTICS
WRITING REPLACED &
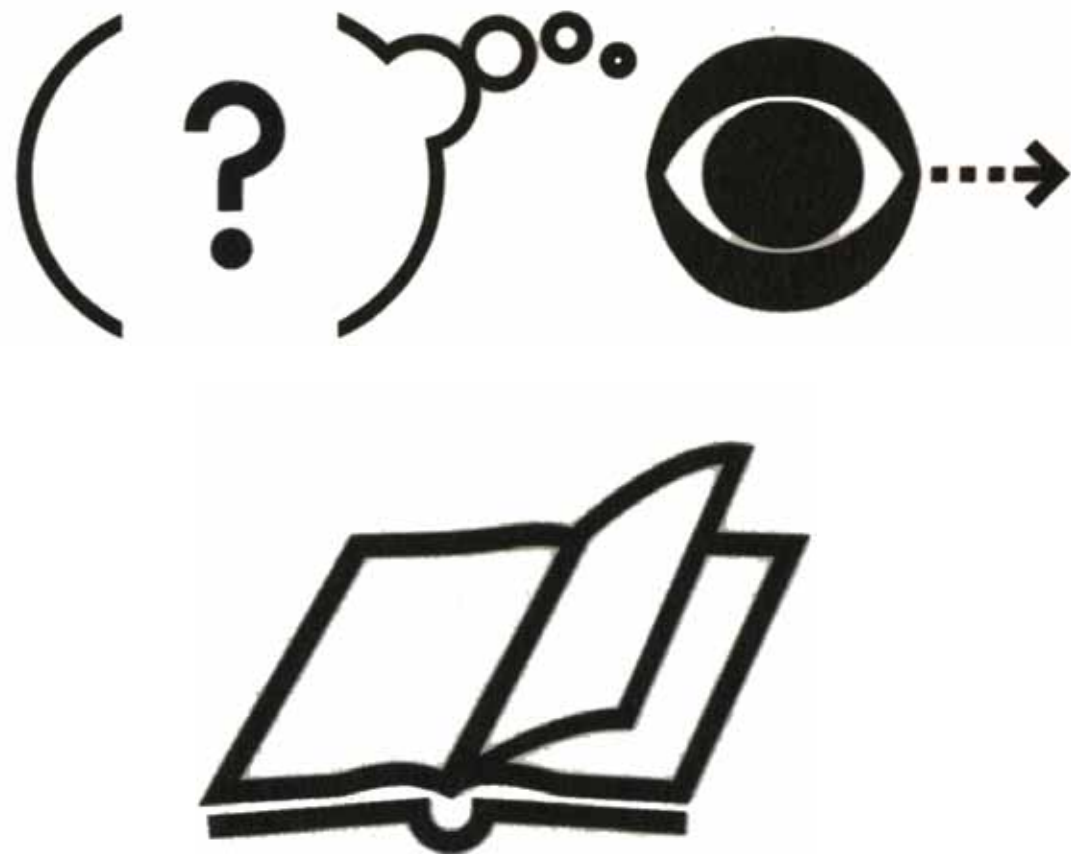
In the first chapter, which was a historical overview about the uprising of the written word and pictorial communication, the conclusion was made that writing is not so much evolving into a pictorial state but is rather making a comeback from its original form. As an extent to this conclusion it is wise to look at how imagery, as a form of communication, is represented in today's society. These findings will support in answering the question "where is writing replaced by pictorials as a form of communication in the 21st century?"

This is done by first looking at a few case studies about semiotics, define what semiotics are, how they are used, why they are affective as a way of communicating a message and discus the strengths and weaknesses of this subject. Furthermore the screen culture of digital media and how this increases our exposure to imagery over the written word will be discussed. Finally it is important to look at symbols and labels on products and whether or not the written word plays a supportive role in these mediums to being able to come to a conclusion.
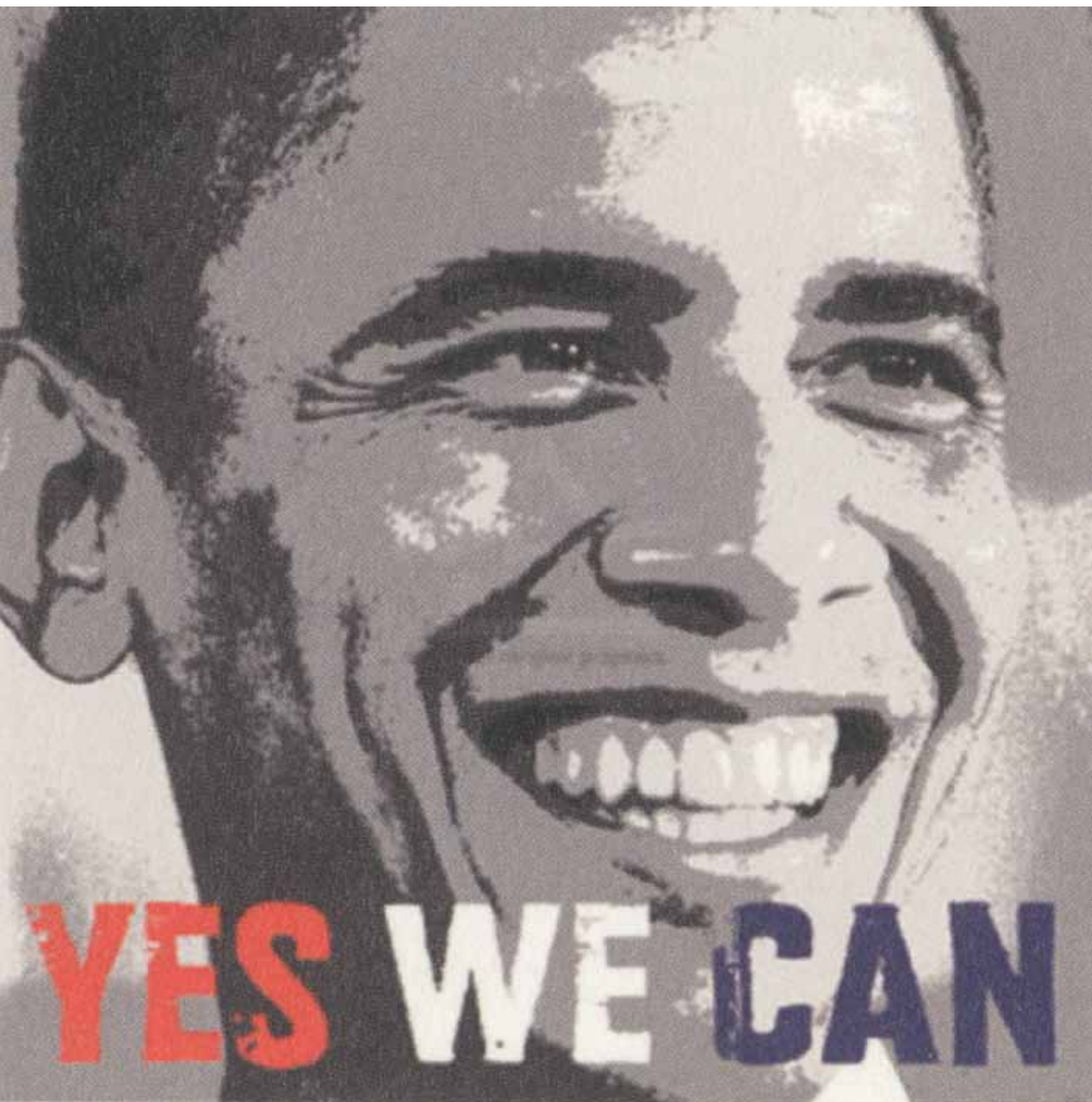
SEMIOTICS

AN EXPLANATION

A very important aspect to look at when deciphering the meaning of importance of images and signs in today's society is semiotics. But what exactly is it that is called semiotics?

The most basic definition of the term would be "the study of signs." However, there are a wide variety of definitions among semioticans as to what the subject involves. In 1974, semiotics was defined "as the science of the life of signs in society" by Ferdinand de Saussure. When looking at this definition of semiotics, everything in a culture can be seen as some sort of communication, even comparable to written or verbal language. But only if it is submits to a fundamental set of rules or principles. *(Hodge & Kress, 1988)*

In 1976 semiotics was described as "a study that is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign" by Umberto Eco. *(Chandler, 2002)* This means that semiotics not only involves the study of what we refer to as "signs" but also anything, "which stands for" something else.

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Let's look at this image as an example. This painting by Lucas Granach, depicts Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Eve, who is tempted by Satan, which has taken the form of a serpent, plucks the apple, which is fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, and gives it to Adam. Because of this, Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden of Eden.

In this painting the apple (which is refered to as the signifier[1], does not just represent an apple, but can be defined as "Temptation" (which we refer to as the signified[2]).
In the bible it is specifically not mentioned that the fruits from the Tree of Knowledge are apples.
Then why is it that an apple was chosen to represent "temptation" while any other fruit could have been used?

[1]a symbol, sound, or image that represents an underlying concept or meaning

[2]a concept or meaning as distinguished from the sign through which it is communicated

This painting is only successful in terms of communication because people already have a very strong connection between the appearance of an apple and the idea of "temptation." This is however not something that was born with humankind but came to humankind because someone used the apple in this representative way. It was successful, therefore copied by others and used in this context so many times that people began to make the connection between apples and temptation.

> " Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else.
> This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands in for it. "
> -Umberto Eco

[26]Image via Hall, S. (2007) This means this, That means that. A user's guide to semiotics.

The first image was an example of semiotics in a classical art painting. Now it is important to take a look at how semiotics works in modern advertising. When looking at this advertisement from Volkswagen we see a hedgehog sitting in between of a couple of goldfish in plastic bags.

In this image the hedgehog (signifier) does not just represent an insectivore but can be defined to as a "car" (signified). People know this because the company representing this advertisement sells cars.

This advertisement differs from the first image in the way that there is more than one signifier and signified present. The goldfish in plastic bags (signifier) do not just represent that but can also be defined as "cars" (signified). This shows that even two different signifiers can have the same signified meaning.

This image works in a way that is successful transmitting the message because of its use of humour. Everyone can imagine what would happen if the hedgehog, which has pointy spikes on his back would not be able to park perfectly between the plastic bags with goldfish. Having said this, we now experienced first hand how images can take over the written word. You may not have noticed this at first glance but it is known what the images tries to get across without the support of a written message.

Precision Parking.
Park Assist by Volkswagen.

[27]Image via Advertising Agency: DDB Tribal Berlin, Germany

Now that a research on examples of semiotics in classical art and modern advertising has been conducted, lets take a look at how an iconic relationship between a signifier and signified works.

When looking at this icon ^{Figure28} it is known by all that is represents a tree. It is also known that not every tree only has 9 leaves shaped like the ones on the icon and are precisely that shade of green with a trunk that splits into 3 branches. Still this icon is recognizable as a tree because all trees have trunks (mostly some shade of brown),
and have leafs (mostly green). So in this case the "tree icon" (signifier) effectively represents a "real tree" (signified).

For an icon to work correctly there must be some degree of resemblance between the signifier and the signified. This resemblance can either be very detailed or very low.

A few other examples of an iconic relationship between a signifier and a signified are:
Sound effect of footsteps (signified) resembles footsteps (signifier).
A chemical mix (signifier) resembles the taste of cheese and onion (signified).
A sculpted portrait in clay (signifier) resembles the person portrayed (signified). *(Hall, 2007)*

The subject of semiotics has important texts, is heavily debated, even has an academic history and publications but is still a diverse and wide-ranging subject.

This diversity in terms of its methods comes form the many different areas that it uses for inspiration. A few of them are: linguistics[1], anthropology[2], psychology, philosophy, sociology, art history, communication and media studies and material culture. As a result, the subject of semiotics has both weaknesses and strengths. Its main weakness is that there is no system of which semiotics can be certain, but this weakness is also its strength.

The absence of such a system gives semiotics the freedom to explore new ways of thinking. Another way to phrase this is: because semiotics does not have the conservative way of thinking, semiotics can be actively applied rather than moderately learnt and digested.

In semiotics we do not just decipher a meaning and get an answer from it and that is that but we must continually reinterpret and rethink the meanings that we found. That is what makes semiotics such a rewarding and extraordinary subject to examine. *(Hall, 2007)*

[1]*The study of the nature, structure, and variation of language*

[2]*The scientific study of the origin, the behavior, and the physical, social, and cultural development of humans*

[29]*Image via Borysevicz, M. (2012) The Book About Xu Bing's Book From The Ground.*

DIGITAL MEDIA
BANISHMENT OF WRITING

Now that it is established what defines semiotics, we will look at how pictorial images are used in today's society.

When thinking of the concept of "images replacing words" most people find this not something that will happen in the distinct future. It is science fiction that will not occur in our generation or the generation after.

But if we look closely to how our society functions, this already happened sixty-nine years ago with the introduction of the full-scale commercial television in America in 1947. Within eight years the television had already taken over half of all American homes. Which is a remarkable given if it is reconsidered that it took seventy years before the same amount of people had embraced the telephone *(Stephens, 1998)*

The rise of the television also meant that more and more people stopped reading and got their information through digital imagery, which as a result contributes to the rise of the image and the downfall of the written word.

"
Perhaps it was John F. Kennedy's handsome face or the opportunity most Americans had to watch his funeral. Maybe the turning point came with the burning huts of Vietnam, the flags and balloons of the Reagan presidency or Madonna's writhing's on MTV.
But at some point in the second half of the twentieth century-for perhaps the first time in human history-it began to seem as if images would gain the upper hand over words.
"

-M. Stephens, 1998

Digital media causing the downfall of writing is certainly true when you take a look at some facts.

> " *By the time a child reaches 18, he or she will have spent more time watching TV than in the classroom.*
> *-Rideout, Roberts & Foehr* "

Kids aged 8 to 18 spend an average of 3 hours a day watching television. This number is even higher (up till 4 hours a day) when videos, DVD's and pre-recorded shows are included. Next up is the interactive media (computers), where they spend over an hour a day, outside of schoolwork and 50 minutes a day playing videogames. While kids ages 8 to 18 only spend an average 43 minutes a day reading. *(Frith & Mueller, 2010)*

With this information we can almost certainly say that children in this century learn more about the world through broadcasted imagery rather then through any text based media.

LABELS & SIGNS

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

The television and other forms of digital media are not the only places where we are confronted with imagery. Even the simplest of things, like the washing labels in our clothes are constructed almost solely from pictographs. There are both pros and cons in this use of imagery. Lets take a look at [Figure30] as an example.

These icons can be regularly found in clothing and are used as a washing manual. Do you know what they mean? Even without the proper knowledge some of them can be deciphered with practical thinking. But how will someone who does not know what a washing machine is, or uses one for the first time decipher their meaning? The flaw of these icons is that they require some knowledge from the user beforehand.
Now lets take a look at this other image. [Figure31]

This set of icons is much more user friendly due to the clearance of instructions in writing. Now that we know that the triangle with cross means "do not bleach" we know, by looking at the other icons, that the triangle stands for "bleach" and the cross for "do not do this." So now that we have seen this example of a clothing label and learned/deciphered its contents we are now able to use the first image [Figure30] in the future.
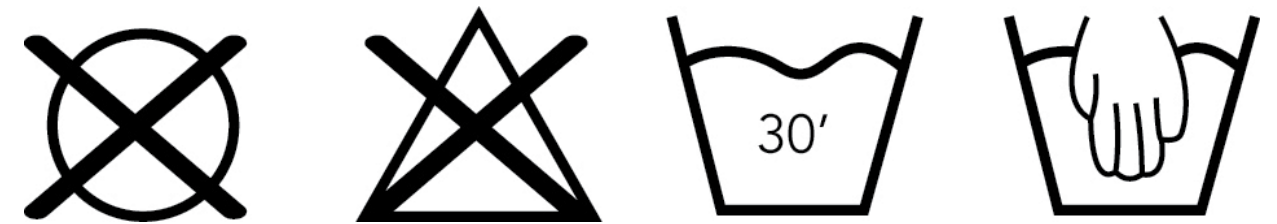
[30]*Washing symbols, ed1. Image owned by author*

[31]*Washing symbols, ed2. Image owned by author*

The following image is an example of road signs for cycling from four countries across the world; it means no entry after this point. These images all have the same meaning and have a comparable look, so without knowing the language of the country, most people would know the meaning of these signs.

Other than with the first example from clothing labels , the meaning of these images is clear without the necessary support of writing. We can even assume that the first two signs are more effective in conveying the message because of their lack of writing.

Red is mostly used for something forbidden or dangerous so even if the understanding of these signs is missing most people won't go near that point, so we can even say the writing added on the signs in the USA and AUS is unnecessary. Still this is an effective example of creating cross-cultural understanding.

32 *Image via Bicycle Dutch, NL Cycling*

33 *Image via Bicycle Dutch, NL Cycling*
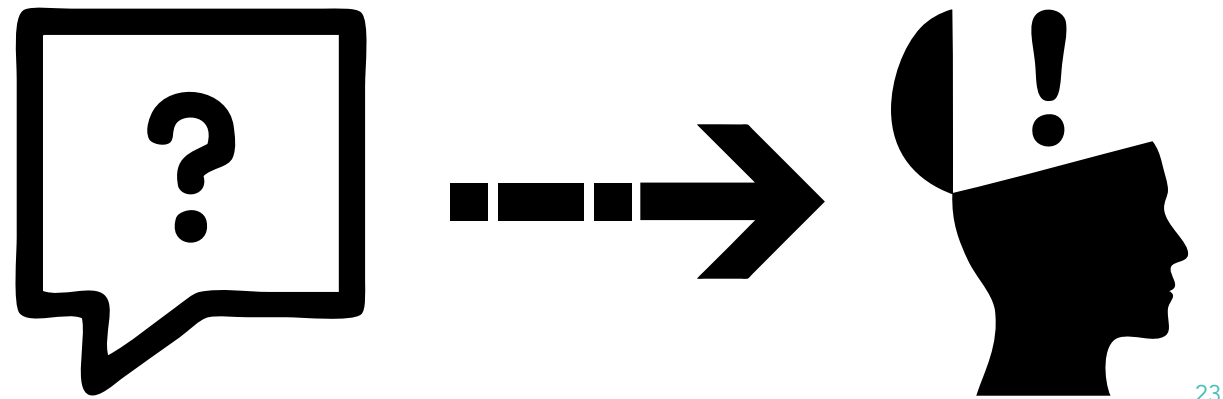
CONCLUSION

When looking over at the information we have about the subject, it is now possible to answer the question, "is writing, in some places, replaced already?" and the conclusion is: no, writing isn't replaced by pictographs yet, but there are some cases where the written word is inferior to imagery.

When looking at some of the cases, it may seem that writing has become almost completely image based, but the truth is that, in most cases, it still needs support from the written word.
It is true that almost all human beings know the meaning of some symbols, like the danger symbol on some products, but we are not born with knowledge. If they would be told the danger symbol stood for something different, for example, do not litter; it would become the common understanding.
The reason for writing not being able to become wholly pictorial maybe lies in our shortcomings as a species.

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THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATION
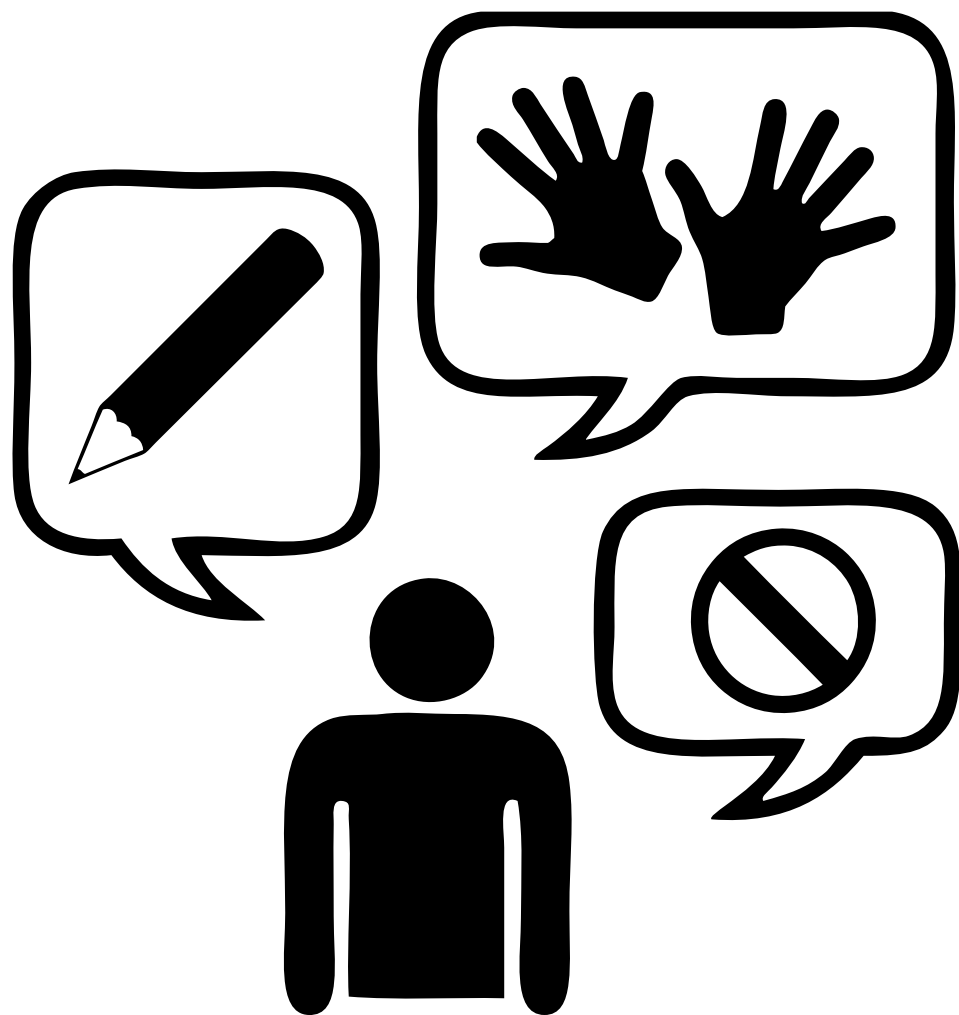
Now that it is concluded that pictorial writing is making a comeback from its original form (chapter 1) and where the written word is already replaced by imagery in the 21st century (chapter 2), the only thing left to do is to speculate about the future of the written word and if it will become completely image based one day.

Looking at different case studies of replaced writing in today's society and speculating how it will change its form in the future will help from the last chapter's conclusion.

At first, logos and their effectiveness of conveying a message and if they can be used to communicate in a different matter in the future will be examined. It is also important to take a look at how public information signs from around the world communicate to their users and how they are subjected to cultural diversity. Finally we will take a look at Xu Bings Book From the Ground and Book From the Sky, as well as the importance of the Noun Project to contemporary designers to come to a conclusion for this chapter.

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LOGO DESIGN
TELLING A STORY

When taking a closer look at logo designs they are basically pictographs, which tell a story. The story of the brand, the story of the company it represents, the story of the cause it is justifying. The most remarkable about this is that logo's almost never use any form of written explanation apart from the company's name.

When looking at the WWF logo specifically, it is definitely telling a story. It represents the company's message (the preservation of wildlife) by showcasing an animal that is at the bare of extinction. The inspiration for this logo design came from the giant panda named Chi-Chi, which had arrived at the London Zoo in 1961, the same year WWF was founded. With their new mascot, WWF could overcome all language barriers and spread their powerful message.
The initial logo sketches, designed by Gerald Watterson
Figure36, gave Sir Peter Scott the opportunity to create the very first WWF logo. Figure35
Its most powerful design improvement was in the year 1986, when, with the use of negative space, the audience was left to fill in the logo themselves in order to complete the symbol. *(Kuyper, 2011)*

1961   1961   1978   1986

2000   35

When looking what the logo looks like today is a very meaningful pictograph that is known globally. The only downside about this logo is that, if the giant panda does become extinct, WWF will almost completely lose their credibility as a wildlife preserver organisation. And in this lies the danger of choosing a mascot to represent a company's interests.


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Maybe one of a logo's greatest weaknesses is that they are subjected to (design) trends. Where a logo needs to successfully convey a message it must also be appealing to ones eye. As a result of this we see more and more logos, especially coming form young/new starting companies, who fail to communicate a clear message due to their fashionable appearances.

So will this pictorial communication system be the key to pictorial communication among humans? When looking at how logos are formed and what they are supposed to communicate it is easily said that this will not be the case. Since logos are heavily influenced by design trends, and fashion also knows a great cultural diversity, and they only communicate the message successfully when the audience permits it, it is almost certainly that logos will develop to be our way of communicating in the (near) future.

" Today, logos are fashion statements and clients' symbols have become fashion statements. They have become messages whose medium has been altered forever. In the crowded world of cyberspace, there are icons for the grabbing. Everywhere you turn, symbols confront us. But now, as never before, the personality embodied by the mark itself has superseded that mark's communication of the company's function. "
-Mednick, S.
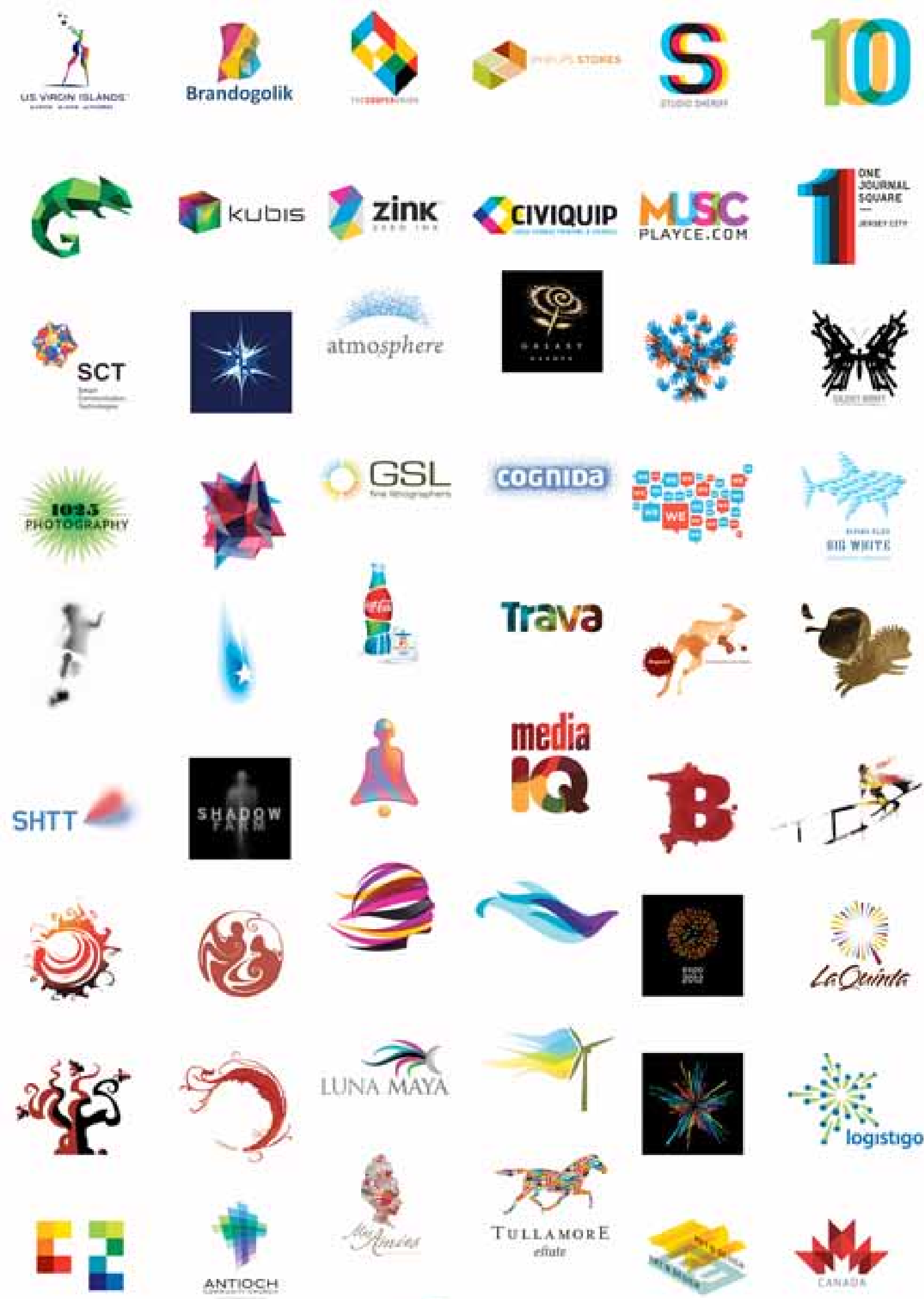
INFORMATION SIGNS
PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Having taken a closer look to logo designs and their communication method, another form of (public) communication, which is not influenced by design trends, will now be discussed. Public information signs are so intertwined with our everyday lives that nobody really pays attention to them anymore. Only when visiting a place where the commonly spoken language is different then your own, the importance of these signs are noticed. And even though most signs have a universal meaning, the designs of these signs are heavily influenced by the culture of the country in which they are used. The most notable about these public signs is, that even though the cultural differences are shown, this is not done by any support of writing.

When looking at this image, ^{Figure38} first viewing the left symbol, can we say that the meaning directly clear to the audience? If it were shown to a native Indian person, then yes, the meaning of this sign would be directly understood. Now look at the right sign, is it more easily to decipher the meaning of it now? They both are "male toilet symbols" the left one being from India and the right one being from the United States of America.

With this example it is shown that public information sign systems have the tendency to reflect and reinforce the cultural persona that characterizes the society it is
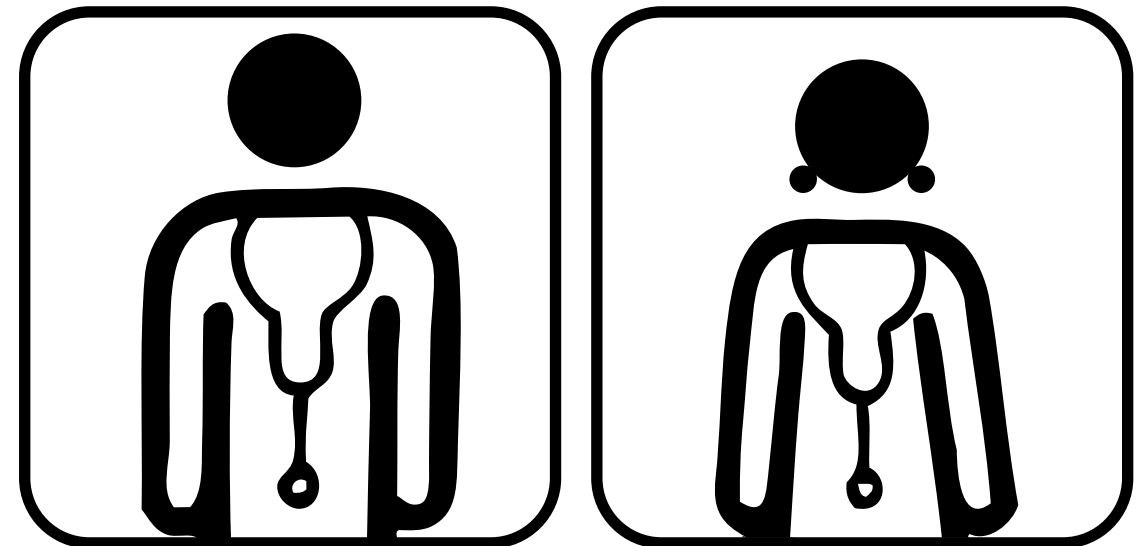

38
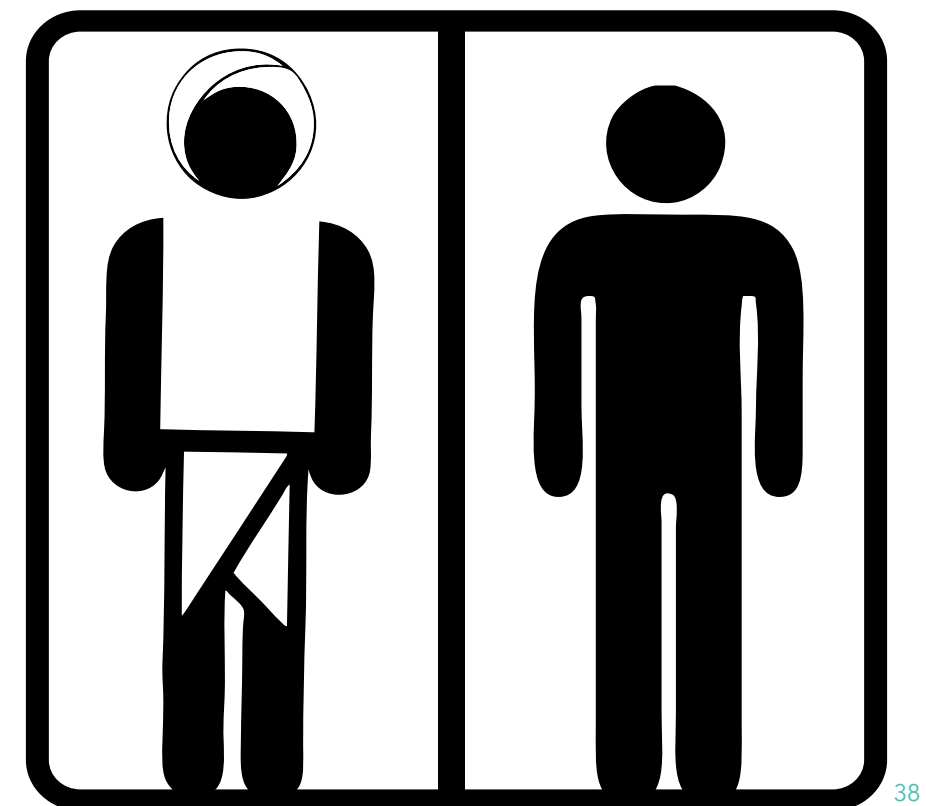
In some countries the need for pictorial language is higher than in most western cultures.

When we look at India, where more than 14 different languages are spoken and illiteracy is high, pictorial signs are a must in public communication. Not only does illiteracy and great language diversity play a part in pictorial communication in India, communication is further suppressed by traditional disunity between sexes, religions and social classes. Therefore, a number of signs, which are unknown to western cultures, take form there.

This is clearly seen when looked at the design of the sign system of Indian hospitals. In Indian society, man and woman are separated in most public places, so a male doctor examining a feminine patient would be out of the question. Therefore a couple of signs exist, showcasing a "male doctor" and a "female doctor" Figure39 there are also signs for a "ladies queue" and a "men's queue." Figure40

Public signs exist to convey a clear message to its users and these signs are effective because there is no question about their meaning. So pictographs are a great way in communicating certain actions but are, unfortunately, in some cases, made to complex to effectively demonstrate cross-cultural communication as well.

39

40

XU BING
BOOK FROM THE GROUND

Although cultural diversity among signs is not only rarely seen, the possibility of these signs becoming a new pictorial language is not as farfetched as one would think.
When looking at Xu Bing's Book From the Ground, which is a telling a story with the use of pictographs only, and trying to read it, it is challenging at first but it not impossible to decipher the message of these pictographs. If so, when humans are capable of reading a book which contains no writing whatsoever, why couldn't writing be replaced in all the written sources that exist today? The answer to that may be very simple. Again, looking at Xu Bing's Book From the Ground, it is possible to decipher its meaning, yes, but when reading something so complex as a story the outcome of the meaning given to these pictographs differ per person.

As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, what words exactly leaves some room for speculation. Xu Bing was however confident that everybody, whatever their cultural background, could read Book From the Ground without many problems.

" Book From the Sky was a book that nobody could read, Book From the Ground is a book that virtually everyone can read "
-Xu Bing

The inspiration to create Book From the Ground came to Xu Bing began in the airport. It was not the airports immediacy that fascinated the artist but its ability to communicate through language barriers through the use of symbols, icons, signs and pictographs. Perhaps the most profound of this discovery might be that this understanding came to him while looking for the bathroom, the most humble of all places.
In the airport the bathroom is accompanied by the omnipresent symbol of a man and a woman, the woman dressed in a triangular dress and the man standing proudly naked.
And while we see the symbols for both man and woman we immediately read this sign as "toilet." So these symbols do not signify the toilets function but rather state who uses this room. With this we see a clear disconnection between the signifier (man/woman symbol) and the signified (toilet). Figure42

Because Xu Bing spend much of his time flying cross-continentally, being a native Chinese who immigrated to the United States, he began to pay attention to the safety cards found in the back pockets of airplane seats.
These cards instruct what to do in the event of a crisis.
In 1990 Xu Bing started to collect these safety instructions from different airlines and noticed that over the years the amount of written language heavily decreased on these cards, making pictographs the dominant communication system. His on-going collection of safety cards made Xu Bing aware of the abundance of symbols, pictographs and logo's that are used as a way to communicate to each other on a daily basis. (Borysevicz)

In 2003 Xu Bing came across a sign printed chewing gum package, which had three simple images conveying an important message: wrap the used gum and dispose of it into a trash bin. Figure43 Through this, Xu Bing became to realise that a single icon is used to explain a simple message but several icons together can be used to narrate a long story.
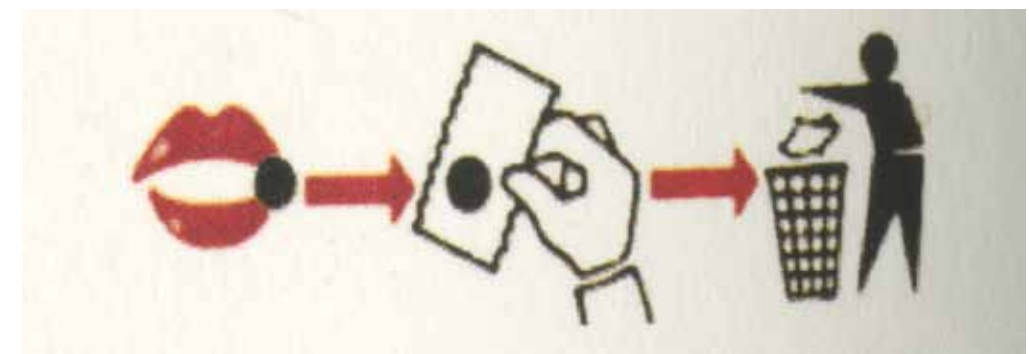
43Gum wrapper. Image via The Book About Xu Bing's Book From The Ground. Borysevicz, M.

42Public Toilet sign. Image via ICliparts

6) Be willing to help other passengers away from the plane.
7) Be at least 15 years of age.
8) Be with no one that requires your care, such as a small child, or someone physically or mentally unable to care for themself.
9) Be able to understand the passenger safety information card and oral commands from the crew.
10) Have no nondiscernible condition which would prevent you from performing these functions or a condition that might cause you to suffer bodily harm while performing these functions.

You must be able to do all of these things by yourself and without harming yourself.

Thank you for your assistance in meeting these FAA requirements.

Duties and Responsibilities of Exit Seat Occupants:
If you are seated at an emergency exit, you must be ready, willing and able to open the exit, as shown, and to quickly lead other passengers to safety in the event of an emergency. If you cannot comply, please ask the crew for a different seat.
Be Prepared... To assist crew members in an emergency, and follow the guidelines below. A passenger should open an exit only if a flight attendant cannot reach the exit.

1) Know where all the exits are located on this aircraft. Study the briefing card and know how to open the exit closest to you.
2) If an emergency evacuation is necessary, and if a flight attendant cannot get to the exit in your row, you may have to open it. **First, look outside.** If fire, smoke, or water could come into the cabin through the exit, **don't open it.**
3) If it is safe to open the exit, do so as quickly as possible. Keep the pathway to the exit clear. If the exit cannot be opened, go to another exit.
4) The exit has an inflatable emergency slide that you may have to inflate. Check the briefing card to see how. When the slide's inflated, shout "Come this way!" Then go out the exit as quickly as possible.
5) If there is no immediate danger, wait at the bottom to help people off the slide. Hold onto the slide to stabilize it.
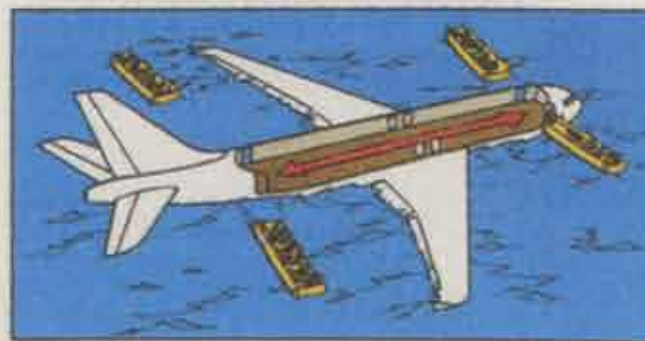6) Move away from the aircraft as soon and as quickly as you can.

A life vest is located under each seat.
Los chalecos de salvavidas se encuentran debajo de cada asiento

Inflate life vest as you exit.
Favor de inflar chaleco de salvavidas al salir del avion

Passenger Safety Information
Informacion de Seguridad

jetBlue®

A320

It is a federal requirement to comply with all instructional signs, placards and crew member instructions
Es un requisito federal el cumplir con todos los avisos de instrucción, carteles e instrucciones del personal

Final assembly of this aircraft was completed in France

For the safety of others please do not remove card from aircraft
Para seguridad de otros favor de no quitar esta tarjeta del avion

[44] Airport Safety Cards collected by Xu Bing showing that from 1990 standard language has been slowly replaced by pictographs. Image via The Book About Xu Bing's Book From The Ground. Borysevicz, M.

CITYJET
Safety Instructions
BAe 146 / Avro RJ85

OXYGEN

Please do not remove from aircraft

CITYJET
Safety Instructions
BAe 146 / Avro RJ85

EXIT
ROTATE AND PUSH OPEN
EXIT
EXIT

Continuing his research on this form communication systems, Xu Bing and his studio began to develop an archive of pictographs, over the course of 7 years, by extracting images from magazines, newspapers, instruction manuals, etc. These images were then catalogued, digitized and duplicated into a software program that could translate Chinese and English writing into a language of icons.

From this icon language Xu Bing created the Book From the Ground, which follows the daily live of so called Mr. Black, over the course of 24 hours. His days are filled with trials and the pursuit of dreams, all while searching his true love in a technophile, metrosexual world of corporate brand identities. The book is divided into 24 chapters, each chapter representing an hour of the day.

47 *Book From the Ground page 2. Image via Book From the Ground, Xu Bing (2013)*

48 *Book From the Ground page 4. Image via Book From the Ground, Xu Bing*

> "
> *To change the written word is to strike at the very foundation of a culture: To reconstruct language cuts to the heart of one's being and should be called a "culture" revolution. The term is absolutely fitting*
>
> *-Xu Bing*
> "

Twenty years earlier Xu Bing created Book From the Sky, the communicative counterpart of Book From the Ground, a book that no one could read. This iconic piece was a reaction to the nationwide switch in writing systems, introduced by the People's Republic, which transformed traditional Chinese characters into a more simplified version. Chairman Mao believed that this would make literacy more accessible to the masses and would unite the country as a whole.

This sudden change in writing left a deep impression on Xu Bing and in 1987 he created the artwork that set the foundation for all his work to come, and on which Book From the Ground is heavily inspired.

The book was constructed out of four thousand Chinese characters (this amount is considered as a standard for Chinese adult literacy) and was hand carved into woodblocks, as well as printed on rice-paper rolls.

When exhibited the rice-paper scrolls were strung up like banners and gracefully enlarged the exhibition space. Upon closer examination of the scrolls one could see that these graceful beacons of writing where written on by garbled characters. None of these characters used were real but were instead, created by the artist himself. These characters did represent the Chinese language but it was deliberately deconstructed. This assault on language was Xu Bing's reaction to China's manipulation of the truth through the state owned media.

Although these artworks were created 20 years apart from each other, they do share some similarities. While comparing his own books Xu Bing noted: These two books appear totally different but share some commonality, i.e. whatever language you speak, however you were educated, both are equally possible of impossible for everyone in this world to "read."

[49]Book From the Sky (1987-1991) by Xu Bing. Image via 20 MINUTOS EDITORA, S.L.

THE NOUN PROJECT
UNIVERSAL PICTURE LANGUAGE

Now that we know the importance of signs and pictographs as a form of communication by looking at Xu Bings' work it is also important that we look at other mediums that help contemporary designers cross cultural boundaries by the use of icons. The one thing that comes to mind when thinking of a medium like this, the Noun Project being the most renowned of them today, is that they support the creation of an united visual language.

In 2011 Edward Boatman started off the Noun Project as a Kickstarter campaign. His idea was to create a website which contained an accessible and free collection of symbols, used by designers all over the world.
Today the Noun Project has grown into a user-friendly symbol database free to use to incorporate into design projects, including websites, user interfaces and print design. It is interesting to note that on the Noun Project's own website they showcase a video suggesting that imaged based communication is much more effective than written language, and that signs and symbols must be treated as a language of its own.

In the beginning, humans created symbols. Symbols that explain their world, recorded history and stood the test of time. Then we created languages and things got complicated. Many words, one symbol. Symbols have shared culture and spurt innovation, helped us understand the universe and make our planet a better place. The Noun Project community is building a global visual language that is helping to unite the world. A language that allows quick and easy communication, now matter who you are or where you are. We are creating a siled language that speaks louder than words, a silent language visible to the world. A language that connects people, one word, one symbol at the time.
-The Noun Project

Although the Noun Project is very popular and used by designers all over the world there is some disagreement about its legibility.
To help spread a visual language, Boatman decided to make every icon free to download for whoever wants to.
And although the Noun Project features many symbols designed and elaborated by designers it also includes symbols from the U.S. National Park Service, American Institute of Graphic Arts, Modern Pictograms and health care symbols from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
Edward Boatman himself claims that the symbols on the website are licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution or are used in the public domain already. It seems that, although this cause is just, image based language is heavily suppressed by copyright claims, and is therefore stopped in its uprising.
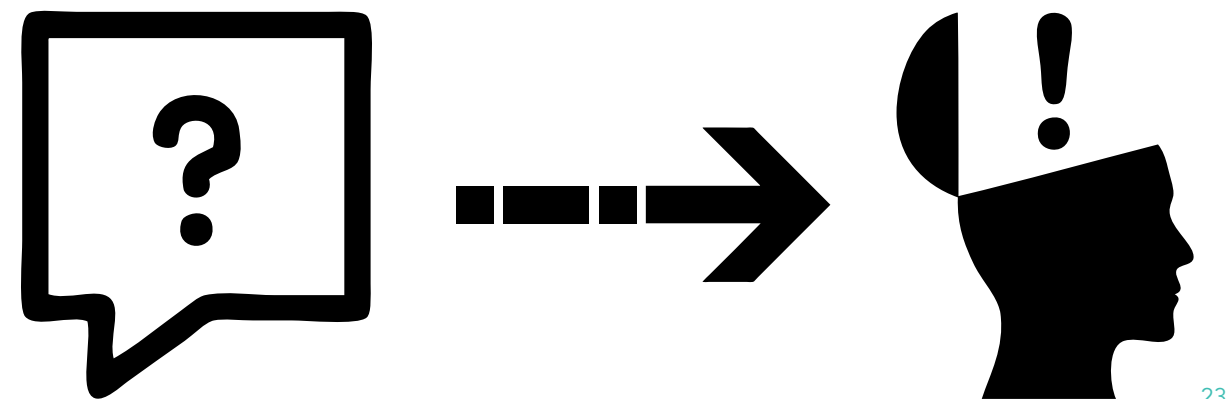
CONCLUSION

WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE

Is it possible to now make a conclusion about "writing
becoming completely pictorial one day?"
When looking at the evidence gotten from this chapter it would
seem that there is a great possibility of writing becoming
pictorial. Even though these forms of communication differ in
usability and even medium. But, what must be considered is the
great numbers of people who do not rely on writing to become
completely image based in order to effectively communicate
with their surroundings.

It would seem that in todays society there is no need for writing
to become pictorial for the larger part of human kind and it
will therefore not develop into such a state. While it is still
impossible to look into the future and see how writing would
have developed 5000 years from now, with the evidence this
chapter provides, the written word will not become completely
pictorial in the near future.

23

CONCLUSION
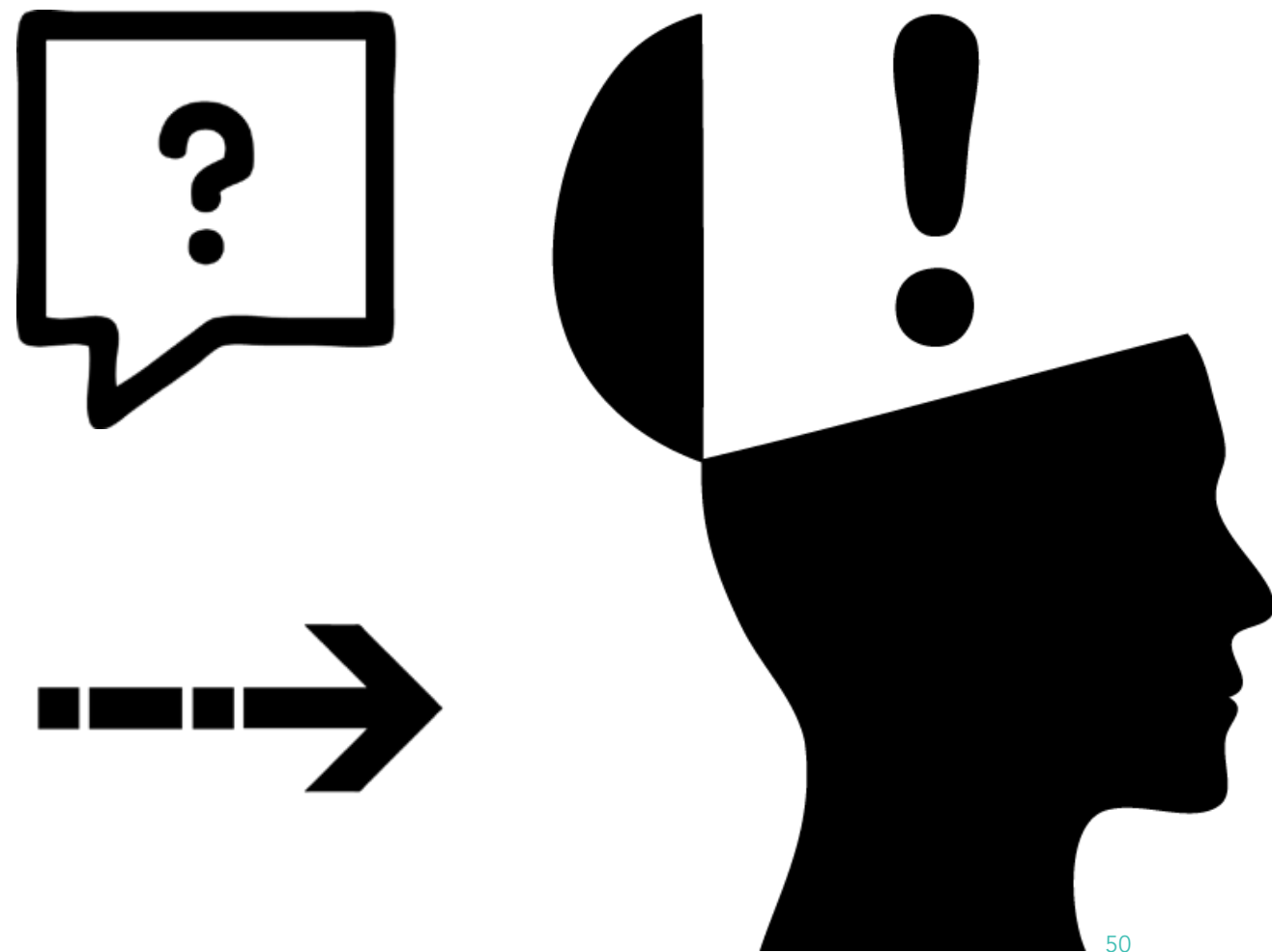
50

The hypothesis of this dissertation was to conduct research on the topic of written communication becoming completely image based. Now that we have delved deeper into the aspect of written and imaged based communication, lets take a look at answering the dissertation's hypothesis.

In this first chapter, by looking at the history of image based, and written based language developments, it was concluded that the written word is not evolving into something we call image based communication but rather coming to closure with its primal state. We saw that writing sprouted as a pictorial form of communication and later developed into the written word. Now that imaged based communication is widely spread and used in most, if not all, cultures, and the new generation is becoming more exposed to this form, the written word is more and more dominated by other forms of communication. However this process is developing slowly but it still is highly possible for an imaged based language to sprout from these changes.

In the second chapter we looked at semiotics and where writing is already being replaced by image based communication. And in this case it was concluded that the

written word is not replaced by pictographs completely, but, in some cases, is being inferior to image based communication. Especially when we look at everyday objects we humans interact with, we can see that writing is being repressed by symbols and pictographs and mediums that require quick explanation/communication (when it is used on a small surface). It is also shown that image based communication has the possibility to become a cross-cultural communication system. On the other hand, it was also concluded that image based communication, in most cases, still needs support from the written word.

In the third and final chapter the possibility of language becoming completely image based was looked at more thoroughly and it was concluded that, with the help of different case studies, writing could not become completely pictorial in the near future. It is however possible, with further development in (pictorial) writing, that a new image based language is created, but this would never truly replace the written word.
We already see the complexity of interpreting different kind of image based communicating systems, which can be highly affected by cultural backgrounds or are even being subjected to fashion. And is therefore still not developed enough to take

the stage as a universal language.
After having looked at the different conclusions we could conduct during the research for the dissertations hypothesis, we are now able to answer the question: "will images become the new written word?"
With what was concluded in this dissertation it is likely that the written word can never be fully replaced by image-based communication. However, this dissertation has left me with questions that would help answering this hypothesis even further, but requires more research to fully grasp its complexity. So I would like to continue my research to get a better understanding about this topic.

" **Pictures are a better means of communication than words** "

-Otto Neurath

APPENDIX

BOOK FROM THE GROUND - TRANSLATION

Page 8, Book from the ground, Bing, X. (2013) Translation
Mr. Black anxiously waits in line, moving forward slowly, step by step. Fifteen minutes have already elapsed but there are still people in front of him. He becomes more and more anxious. Finally it's his turn. He prompts the vending machine, inserts his money, and the ticket is ejected. He lets out a deep sigh of relief and then runs, swipes himself into the station, and takes the escalator down to the platform. The doors of the subway car are just about to close but Mr. Black manages to slip in. lucky! Leaning against the door of the car, he lets out a breath and suddenly sees a sign on the door: "Caution, Do Not Lean on Doors." So he moves into the centre of the car and grabs the strap.
He sees that he'll have to switch to the blue line after three stops. The car is crowded and passengers on both sides of Mr. Black are squishing him with their backpacks. The train approaches the next station and Mr. Black sees an empty seat. He moves towards the seat, but a girl moving faster has already taken it.

Page 2, Book from the ground, Bing, X. (2013) Translation
Mr. Black get up, shuffles over to the bathroom and sits on the toilet. He sits on the toilet for a long time. "En…er…ugh… en…" as much as he tries nothing comes out. "What's wrong down there?" He ponders. Still waiting on the toilet, he takes out his smartphone and proceeds to go online. He checks his

Twitter, Google, rss and Facebook. Suddenly, "Ah!" He feels something, he pushes hard and finally, a poop is released. He lets out a long breath of satisfaction! Finishing up with the toilet paper, he has a look at this creation and then flushes. He then proceeds to take a shower, blow-dry his hair, shave, and brush his teeth. Then he walks out of the bathroom.
In his wardrobe, Mr. Black puts on underwear, an undershirt, pants, a shirt.

Page 4, Book from the ground, Bing, X. (2013) Translation
Opening the door he finds an Amazon deliveryman. The book he ordered has finally arrived. He takes the box, closes the door, and begins to open the package. He takes out the book and starts to read. He reads while he drinks his coffee, getting more and more absorbed.
Suddenly he smells something burning. He sees black smoke coming from the frying pan. "Oh no! The eggs are burning" He ingeniously pours his coffee into the frying pan. Soaked with coffee, his breakfast is impossible to eat. What a shame. He throws the burnt meal in the trash. Mr. Black is so hungry that his stomach growls. He looks for something in the fridge. There's some beer, soda, ketchup… "Ah!" He finally finds a carton of milk, takes it out and drinks it, but he's still hungry. Then he finds a bag of popcorn. He puts the popcorn in the microwave and sets the time and temperature. The sound of popping emanates from the microwave.

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Images

Fig 01. *Transportation icons -* The Book About Xu Bing's Book From The Ground. Borysevicz, M. (2012)
Fig 02. Introduction - Designed by Gregor Črešnar, downloaded from The Noun Project
Fig 03. *Mini Croque Monsieur -* The Book About Xu Bing's Book From The Ground. Borysevicz, M. (2012)
Fig 04. Owned by author
Fig 05. *Red Cow & First Chinese Horse –* Photograph by Aujoulat N. (2003)
Fig 06. *Line –* Bradshaw Foundation
Fig 07. *Dot –* Bradshaw Foundation
Fig 08. *Open Angle –* Bradshaw Foundation
Fig 09. *Tectiform –* Bradshaw Foundation
Fig 10. *Panel of the Lions –* Bradshaw Foundation
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Fig 12. *Papyrus on display at the Egyptian Museum in Turin -* AP
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Fig 15. *Tokyo Games 1964, Service Pictograms –* Olympic Museum Juergen Wagner, Germany

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Fig 18. S*port Symbols of the Olympic Games 1972, Munich –* ERCO GmbH Lüdenscheid
Fig 19. *Typographical Art, Studies in Passions and Emotions –* Puck, no212, p65, 1881
Fig 20. *Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year 2015 –* Oxford Dictionaries
Fig 21. *Eye, Red cross, Right arrow, Dancer emoticons -* Apple
Fig 22. *Family dad mom son, Red heart, Watching, Television emoticons -* Apple
Fig 23. *The conclusion -* Owned by author
Fig 24. *What are we reading? -* The Book About Xu Bing's Book From The Ground. Borysevicz, M. (2012)
Fig 25. *Yes we can -* The Book About Xu Bing's Book From The Ground. Borysevicz, M. (2012)
Fig 26. *Temptation in Eden -* Lucas Granach - This means this, That means that. A user's guide to semiotics. Hall, S. (2007)
Fig 27. *Volkswagen advertisement -* Advertising Agency: DDB Tribal Berlin, Germany
Fig 28. *Tree on a hill -* Owned by author
Fig 29. The Book About Xu Bing's Book From The Ground. Borysevicz, M. (2012)
Fig 30. *Washing symbols, ed1 -* Owned by author
Fig 31. *Washing symbols, ed2 -* Owned by author
Fig 32. Bicycle Dutch, NL Cycling
Fig 33. Bicycle Dutch, NL Cycling
Fig 34. Designed by Stephanie Wauters - The Noun Project
Fig 35. *WWF initial logo sketches -* Gerald Watterson
Fig 36. *WWF Logo -* Peter Scott
Fig 37. *Logo collection 2012 –* Oikos
Fig 38. *Male toilet signs –* World without words. Evamy, M.

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