EXERCISES IN IMAGE

Julia Palmer

AUTRE SUBJECTIVITE

Il y avait aujourd'hui dans l'autobus à coté de moi, sur la plate-forme, un de ces morveux comme on en fait guère, heureusement, sans ça je finirais par en tuer un. Celui-là, un gamin dans les vingt-six, trente ans, m'irritait tout spécialement non pas tant à cause de son grand cou de dindon déplumé que par la nature du ruban de son chapeau, ruban réduit à une sorte de ficelle de teinte aubergine. Ah! le salaud! Ce qu'il me dégoûtait! Comme il y avait beaucoup de monde dans notre autobus à cette heure là, je profitais des bousculades qui ont lieu à la montée ou à la descente pour lui enfoncer mon coude entre les côtelettes. Il finit par s'esbigner lâchement avant que je me décide à lui marcher un peu sur les arpions pour lui faire les pieds. Je lui aurais dit aussi, afin de le vexer, qu'il manquait un bouton à son pardessus trop échancré.

Queneau, R. (1947), *Exercices de Style*. Paris: Gallimard Editions.

ANOTHER SUBJECTIVITY

Next to me on the bus platform today there was one of those half-baked young fellows, you don't find so many of them these days, thank God, otherwise I should end up by killing one. This particular one, a brat of something like 26 or 30, irritated me particularly not so much because of his great long feather-less-turkey's neck as because of the nature of the ribbon round his hat, a ribbon which wasn't much more than a sort of maroon-coloured string. Dirty beast! He absolutely disgusted me! As there were a lot of people in our bus at that hour I took advantage of all the pushing and shoving there is every time anyone gets on or off to dig him in the ribs with my elbow. In the end he took to his heels, the milksop, before I could make up my mind to tread on his dog to teach him a lesson. I could also have told him, just to annoy him, that he needed another button on his overcoat which was cut too low at the lapels.

Queneau, R. (2009), *Exercises in Style* (B. Wright, Trans.) New York : New Directions Book. (Original work published 1947)

TABLE

CONTENT

IMAGE

T A B L E

ATTESTATION OF

AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.
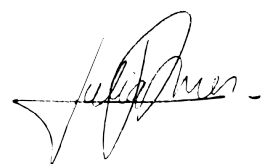
Julia Palmer

October 2010

INTELLECTUAL

PROPERTY RIGHTS

ACKNOWLE

DGEMENTS

INTROD

UCTION

This research engages with interpretation and communication, through video and multimedia, to express a personal point of view. The challenge that has driven this project is to share an idea or a sensation without using oral or written language. The research question that underpins this inquiry asks: *is it possible to communicate multiple visual interpretations of a story when an audience and a designer are thinking in different languages?* This project mainly engages with visual rather than written or spoken texts.

The origins of this research are based on personal experience. When I first arrived in New Zealand, I was held back by my lack of vocabulary and the differences between this culture and the very different education I grew up with. Editing pictures, videos and music seemed like the only way for me to explain my ideas when I first started designing in the context of a foreign language.

This research project is based on the concept of a French book: *Exercices de Style* (Queneau, 1947), in which the author devises ninety-nine versions of the same story to demonstrate the subjectivity of rhetoric. My interpretation of the book aims to

experiment with the possibilities and the understanding of visual communication. To answer this inquiry, I am using video as a narrative medium of broadcasting. The final design exhibited, is an audiovisual adaptation of *Exercices de Style* (Queneau, 1947), and takes shape in three subjective visions (inspired from each exercise developed in the experimentation) of one everyday event, using exclusively post-production tools.

The project methodology takes a hermeneutical approach as it interprets a literary text using creative practice and analysis of audience understanding. The structure of this project is based on the hermeneutical circle suggested by Gadamer (1900-2002). The hermeneutical circle is distributed into four interdependent phases: the interpretation of a text, the creative process, the audience's understanding, and the empirical[1] analysis. It ultimately results in three systematic methods of communication informing and then used in the practice framework. The first one is an exploration of cinematic codes through editing language in order to modify the audience's perception. Afterwards, intertextual references take over and recreate the narration. This process is achieved by primary visually quoting the inspirational parts of the experimentation. Finally, intertextual references are developed into an artistic and cultural appropriation. The design strategy uses globalised popular symbols as a visual dialogue.

In regards to the practice process, I opted to use video as the predominant medium to express my interpretations. In my estimation, audiovisual material is the most

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[1] Empirical: based or acting on observation or experiment, not on theory. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

effective and interactive way to direct the audience's attention to the project concept. The empirical design takes shape in virtual collages of general globalised references and personal filming. Sound support emphasises the visual message broadcasted by each interpretation.

In order to synthesise the overall research process, this exegesis is distributed into three chapters. The first chapter addresses the project methodology in a discussion of hermeneutics, the hermeneutical circle and the methods that have informed and driven the project's realisation. The second chapter draws a parallel between linguistics[2] as subjective interpretation, and visual communication as an alternative language. The third and final chapter reports on my process of experimentation and presents an evaluation of what has been discovered and achieved through this process.

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[2] Linguistics: the scientific study of language and their structure. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

1. PROJECT

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology of this research project is discussed: firstly in relation to the broader phenomenological framework that underpins this approach [see Chapter 1:1 and Chapter 1:2] and then in terms of more specific methods [see Chapter 1:3]. This project has been approached and articulated within a hermeneutical framework. Four areas of concern inform the general layout of the project [see fig.1:1, fig.1:2, fig.1:3 and fig.1:4]. The personal experience of designing in a foreign environment is the starting point that has motivated and challenged the research. From this questioning arises a set of theoretical elements that make up the context and approach to the project: hermeneutics as a branch of phenomenology [see Chapter 1], linguistics and visual communication [see Chapter 2]. The hermeneutical process is used as an approach that allows the combination of experimentation and analysis through a system of visual interpretation of a text [see Chapter 3]. A variety of visual references were used to inform and inspire this experimentation [see Appendix 2]. Finally, in the conclusion, analysis and presents the overall research findings are developed through a process of synthesis.

ORIGINAL IDEA
Personal experience of designing in a foreign language environment (fig1:1).

CONTEXT
Linguistics and Visual Communication (fig1:2).
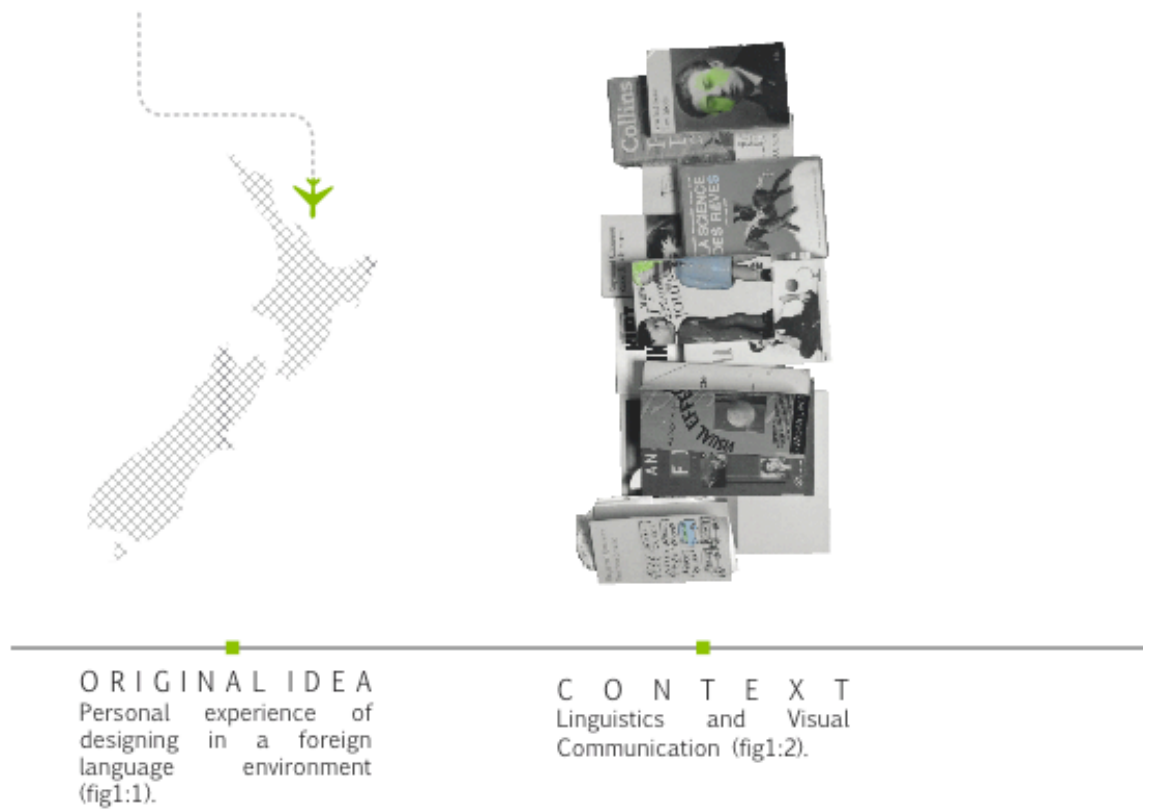
Fig.1:1/Fig.1:2/Fig.1:3/Fig.1:4 Julia Palmer. *Overview of the Project Orgqnisation*. Digital Photographs and Digital Illustrations, 2010.

AUTRE SUBJEC-
TIVITE
Il y avait
aujourd'hui
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forme, un de
ces morveux
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heureusement,
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finirais par en
tuer un. Celui-

SYNTHESIS
Presentation and synthesis
of the project (fig1:4).

EXPERIMENTATION
Application of the herme-
neutical circle described by
Gadamer using editing,
symbolic images and inter-
textuallity as practical
methods (fig1:3).

1.1 Hermeneutics: a methodology of interpretation.

The first philosophical theories are based on the personal perceptions and experiences of human beings confronted by a specific environment appear in the early twentieth century. Thinkers who contributed to the origins of Phenomenology, such as Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), emphasise the major influence of memory on our actions, choices and understandings. In *Film Consciousness: from Phenomenology to Deleuze,* Spencer Shaw (2008) defines Phenomenology as an "ontological[3] condition of understanding" (p.49). By this statement he assumes that Phenomenology is a human observation that involves both rational and subjective analysis. The subjects of phenomenological research can extend beyond the experience of things and places, to human actions and processes, like designing (Wang and Wagner, 2007). Phenomenology in design can be seen as an evaluation of decisions taken during practical development. For example, intuitive experimentation is always followed by a critical analysis of it. This process is recognised by Coyne and Snodgrass (1997) in Donald Schön's notion of "reflection-in-action". Through this reflective work process, I was able to identify the successes and failures of experimental works. This experience then affected further design development.

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[3] Ontological: the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

Hermeneutics is a subcategory of phenomenology. This philosophy of interpretation emphasises the psychological complexity involved in the use of different vocabularies. Such vocabularies can be textual, visual, aural, or involve other forms of sensory perception. Robert C. Ulin (1951) defines hermeneutics as an interpretative analysis of a text or an idea. This philosophy is often related to semiotics[4] and anthropology[5]. Robert C. Ulin (1951) has explained hermeneutics as « understanding an author better than he understood himself» (p.107). Understanding a text is to be aware of the contexts in which it is written and read. This theory is relevant to my project as the experimentation process attempts to understand visual language through a double interpretation: the designer and the audience.

Hermeneutics has some associations with Postpositivism. This philosophical movement stipulates that conceptual or scientific theories cannot be defined as an absolute truth. According to Steven R. Corman (May and Mumby, 2005), "objectivity is not a characteristic of individual acts of information, but instead an *emergent property* of system of 'organized skepticism[6]'" (p.29). In other words, each estimation should be

---

[4] Semiotics is the study of "signs and the their use, focusing on communicative mechanisms, and on the nature of knowledge and the pathways through which it is acquired." *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*.

[5] Anthropology: the study of mankind, especially of its societies and customs. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*.

[6] Skeptical/sceptical: inclined to question the truth or soundness of accepted ideas, facts, etc. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*.

questioned before becoming a postulate[7]. Therefore, Postpositivism can be related to the writing of Robert C. Ulin (1951), who suggests that experience and repetitive contextual analysis are synonymous with objectivity.

The creative experiments discussed in this project are interpretations of a literary text, translated through audiovisual media. The actual book the experimentation has been based on, is itself a response to hermeneutical theory. *Exercices de Styles* (Queneau, 1947) instigated the creation of the collective *OuLiPo* or *Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle* (Roubaud and Bénabou, n.d.). The main directive imposed by this discipline of literature was to write under linguistic constraint. This constraint aimed to develop a better understanding of ways to manipulate syntax[8]. According to the OuLiPo collective (n.d.), the structure of linguistics is a way to reinvent the signification of a text. Therefore, we can compare this approach to a hermeneutical analyse of rhetoric[9] through syntax. *Exercices de Styles* (Queneau, 1947) can be defined as a linguistic experimentation of interpretation. Indeed, the book tells the same "absurd" story ninety-nine times, using the art of rhetoric to give to the reader a new perception of the narration. This concept demonstrates the infinity of possibilities that interpretation offers.

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[7] Postulates: a thing suggested or assumed as true as the basis for reasoning, discussion, or belief. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*.
[8] Syntax: formal grammar.
[9] Rhetoric: a. The art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing. b. Language designed to persuade or impress with an implication of insincerity or exaggeration etc.. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

In regards to this project, hermeneutics is my overall methodological framework. The hermeneutical circle proposed by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) is the model upon which I have based my research organisation.

CREATIVE
PROCESS
The designer's empirical
interpretation of the text
through images. Experimen-
tation leads to anticipating

ANALYSIS
Self-critique and the question-
ing of methods used. The
designer can use the knowl-
edge they have learnt from
past experiments to interpret
the next test (fig.1:8).

INTERPRETATION
OF   A   TEXT
The understanding of a text
is dependent of the phe-
nomenological context in
which it is being written and
read (fig.1:6).

THE AUDIENCE'S
INTERPRETATION
Objective evaluation of the
designer's   interpretation.
The success of the experi-
mentation is based on the
visual codes recognised by
the audience (fig.1:9).

Fig.1:5/Fig.1:6/Fig.1:7/Fig.1:8 Julia Palmer. *The Hermeneutical Circle.* Digital Photographs, 2010.

1.2 The Hermeneutical Circle.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) was a major theorist of the twentieth century. He described hermeneutics as a social phenomenon linked to our "effective historical consciousness" (p.16). According to Gadamer (Snodgrass and Coyne, 1997), hermeneutical processes can be represented through an infinite circular schematic. The hermeneutic circle, in relation to this project, is considered in four, parts which are repetitive and linked to and back from each other. The articulation of the project refers to this model involving: the interpretation of a text [see fig.1:5], the creative process [see fig.1:6], the interpretation of an interpretation [see fig.1:7], and analysis [see fig.1:8].

- Interpretation of a Text.

The hermeneutical circle starts with the reading of a text. In this project I am using the French book *Exercices de Style*. Before considering the reader's point of view, the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) recognises the complexity and impossibility of fully understanding the author's angle. The hermeneutical reader needs to recognise this context. During the writing process, Raymond Queneau (1947) was subconsciously[10] influenced by his own historical and phenomenological context. Therefore, it is

---

[10] Subconscious: of or concerning the part of the mind which is not fully conscious but influences actions etc. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*.

impossible for the reader to assimilate the exact meaning of every sign[11] used by the author in the text (this idea is discussed further in chapter 2). This phenomenological parameter is common to every writer and reader. Therefore, the understanding of a text becomes inevitably subjective. When I read *Exercices de Style* (Queneau, 1947), the author's context confronts my social and historical subconscious. My interpretation is unique and inevitably, partially defamatory[12] in regards to the original intentions of the author:

> We are not simply 'objects' in the world, objects without a history as if isolated from the past, but are thrown into the midst of a network of understandings of practices, institutions, conventions, aims, tools, expectations, and a multitude of other factors that make us what we are. (Snodgrass and Coyne, 1997, p.16)

There is no perfect or purely objective way of reading a text. To do so would require me to ignore my personal experience whilst being fully aware of the historical and cultural context in which *Exercices de Style* (Queneau, 1947) was written. Interpretation is concerned with translation and representation, not veracity.

- The Creative Process.

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[11] A sign in linguistics indicates a word.
[12] By "defamatory" it is to be understood that my interpretation of a text is a misconception of the author's perception.

The next stage was experimentation conducted through a creative process of audiovisual design. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) argues that experimenting is anticipating. Snodgrass and Coyne (1997) suggest that designing is a hermeneutical or interpretative process. When I interpret Raymond Queneau's texts (1947), I invent meanings for all of the words chosen by the author. Composing visual versions of the book makes my interpretation more precise. "Understanding is in perpetual flux" (Snodgrass and Coyne, 1997, p.17).

In reviewing my year of research, I recognise the impact of self-critic as part of this hermeneutical process. Through hermeneutical experimentation, I have been able to develop a deeper understanding of how to visually read and translate the text. Using a medium different than written language offered and questioned a new perception of my initial interpretation.

- Interpretation of an Interpretation

Rediscovering a text is both an empirical and subjective act. As it is explained above, the understanding and the translation of a book require the reader to be aware of the phenomenological context of the author and the designer. Communicating a French text through visual tools for an English speaking audience is trickier because the interpretation becomes doubled. The design I am experimenting with intends to be shown to an audience who speak and think in another language. The viewer has to determine the meaning of my perception of a literary concept. The effectiveness of the

experience becomes conditional. According to Gadamer (1975), the deciphering of a message is random:

> The way in which one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own turnings and reaching its own conclusion, may well be conducted in some way, but the people conversing are far less leaders of it than the led. Understanding or its failure is like a process which happens to us. (Gadamer cited in Snodgrass and Coyne, 1997, p.18).

The success of a dialogue results from the codes we are using. These codes convey the approximate idea we are trying to communicate. This is why, with regards to my project, meanings created by visual culture are privileged. For example, in the third experimentation [see Chapter 3, Exercise 3.1], I am applying a social custom. An image of a person whistling while she is lifting her arm is superimposed on the character I filmed. The immediate code understood is that the character is engaging in contact with someone who is out of her area of proximity. Audience perception of my interpretation is the clue to my next design approach. It determines the perspicuity of the visual translations I am experimenting with.

- Analysis

Analysis is the stage that closes and restarts the hermeneutical circle. In *Is Designing Hermeneutical*, Snodgrass and Coyne (1997) suggest, "all understanding is self-understanding." Being able to evaluate, to self-critique and to change my design

approach is conductive to a new interpretation. This interpretation induces a new creative approach and then to a more substantial understanding of the dialogue between the audience and the designer. The knowledge assimilated during the design process leads to a better anticipation of failures which could interfere with the research purpose. The hermeneutic process is potentially infinite since it is based on subjective methods that are changing.

The hermeneutical circle used in this process involves juggling between interpretation, experimentation and reflection. In order to test different visual interpretations derived from Raymond Queneau's writing (1947), specific methods of communication are informing and then used within the framework's practice. The audiovisual 'language' system is approached through editing, intertextuality, and appropriation.

1.3 Audiovisual language and methods.

Communicating visual interpretations of a story to an audience who is thinking in a different language is possible. In my design process, the idea of a visual dialogue between an artwork and its viewer requires a medium reproducing a comparative reality and experimenting several subjective interpretations. Art video is "an object of study" (Mondloch, 2010, p.4) that reinvents time and space in an interactive context. The fusion between recording sounds and moving images engages the audience to observe and analyse a new reality. The first stage is the editing process, which is the essential method in making the non-verbal communication possible through montage, intertextuality and visual associations. Then, the perception and identification of the concept depends on the installation's parameters. The practical research is conducted through the development of five audiovisual creative exercises [see Chapter 3].

- Editing process

Editing has been a key method used to emphasise the structure of the storyline. Intertextuality and association through appropriation of image are two aspects that have informed and affected the way I have developed these practical experimental creative works.

Editing emerged as a deductive visual language at the beginning of the twentieth

century via the creation of silent films (Rohdie, 2006). The practice process of my project uses similar techniques as silent films, in relation to logical visual structure and the support of sound effects. The art of montage was first mastered by Eisenstein (1898-1948), who manipulated the audience's imagination through visual associations. In *October: Ten Days That Shook the World* (Einsenstein, 1927) the director alternates the shot of a crowd running, the shot of an aggressive soldier's face, and the picture of a gun barrel. These three images evoke a fictive and logical narration to the audience: the beginning of Russian Civil War. Thus, editing allows the designer to synchronize several parameters in order to suggest a story without written or oral language. The deductive narration reconstituted by the audience is based on this metaphoric approach to editing. In my experimental works, I use different audiovisual collages to create several interpretations of identical scenes. Sound is another underlying editing medium which underpins the visual messages broadcasted in the project. On one hand, music is used in motion pictures to set a "contextual", "spatial", "temporary", "symbolic", "metaphoric", or "ironic" atmosphere (Dick, 2005). On the other hand, sound effects in films are mostly faded beneath the action as a literal or iconic indicative element of the visual narration. In my design approach, sound structures the image meaning, and contributes to suggest an idea without naming or categorising it. Montage and sound editing are used as a method of construction that organises and strengthens the narration in a suggestive way.

Besides editing methods, intertextuality and appropriation are two complementary approaches that generate visual messages understandable by a multilingual audience. Intertextuality is a literary concept applied as a method of research in various arts. According to Julia Kristeva (1941) intertextuality is both a reconstruction and an analysis of the development of a text. The structure of a text is the result of a multiplicity of "quotations" (or appropriations) the writer has absorbed through observation. In an interview for the collection of essays *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction*, Julia Kristeva (in Smaller, 1985) compares "creative subjectivity" to a "kaleidoscope". Each artistic composition is a subconscious reconstruction of written or visual experiments we have been confronted with. Intertextuality involves instinctual and pre-verbal parameters which influence the writer and the reader's perception (Chapman and Routledge, 2005). This concept informs my creative experimental work to help compose a visual collage. References and inspirations are deliberately revealed and appropriated as a contemporary creative process of interpretation.

Appropriation is recognised as an art approach, which "takes from, reproduces, or appropriates material found within popular culture" (Appropriation of Art Coalition, 2010). It generally takes shape as a hybrid collage, drawing images from mass culture through the symbolic and singular interpretation from the artist. Knowledge of audiovisual media history has been absorbed by modern and post-modern societies. In *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall define

globalised culture as the " 'map of meaning' which we learn and unconsciously internalize as we become members of our culture" (1997,p.29). When a symbolic image is appropriated in an artistic context, the designer interacts with audience memory and the associations involved with cultural conventions. The diversion of popular images is a non-verbal tool of communication used often in cinema and advertising (e.g. the American dollar is usually associated with capitalism). Association and appropriation take shape through different forms in my own practice. I have used familiar images and sounds as communication clues, but the audience is led to identify and to recollect the information in an unaccustomed context. The symbol of a popular image is emphasised and metamorphosed at the same time.

Contemporary audiovisual and cultural language elements are used to interpret and to answer the research question that underpins this inquiry. Logical codes set by cinema history and popular culture are reproduced and transformed through appropriation and intertextuality based hermeneutical design methods.

- Installation

In order to question the impact of audiovisual language towards an audience that potentially does not think in a similar dialect, the staging of my experimentation has to be discussed as a significant part of the project. Time and space are the design methods physically engaging with the audience, and therefore, influencing the way she/he interprets the video.

In *Screens*, Kate Mondloch (2010) describes media installation art as "hybrid spatial and temporal art objects" expanding our perception of reality (p.4). She compares video to an immaterial sculpture deconstructing time and space. The physical interaction of the viewer with an untraditional narration opens his/her reception to an unconventional and multiple interpretations. For example, the duration of an art video installation is most of the time indefinite, which leads the audience towards "infinite possible points of entry and exit and views" (Mondloch, 2010, p.47). Regarding my project, the loop is used to emphasise this "infinite" idea of time. Even if the individual interpretations are organised on a minute timeline, the overall approach is aimed to be a repetitive and progressive critic. Kate Mondloch (2010) develops this idea by explaining how synchronisation of several videos is "facilitating comparisons between two points of view that overlap only rarely"(p.49). In the context of my design approach, this method is another way to engage the re-evaluation of reality and visual language. Strengthening the comparison between different subjective approaches of one same video basis, leads the audience to recreate the designer's process: observation, interpretation, analyse and adaptation.

In other words, duration and space are the final parameters helping the designer communicate in a minimalist way, whilst helping the viewer interact with the artwork in an uncommon way.

2. LINGUISTICS CO

& VISUAL MMUNICATION

The research question of the project requires the evaluation of visual communication between two people from different cultures: the designer and the audience. To address this problem it is necessary to better understand the correlation between linguistics and image. This chapter will reflect on the influence of social education on our understanding and our perception. It explores different theories about how image can be understood as another language through suggestive art and visual semiotics[13].

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[13] Semiotics is the study of "signs and the their use, focusing on communicative mechanisms, and on the nature of knowledge and the pathways through which it is acquired." (*International Encyclopedia of Linguistics , Ed.2*).

2.1 Thinking Through a Culture.

- Language and Culture

Thinking in and through a native or a foreign language frames and even confines our perception. The linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (Chapman and Routledge, 1968) claims that we are unable to reflect without the vocabulary that we remember from our birth. History has a major influence on our verbal choices or written language. The connotation of a word is indicative of a specific culture. For example, "versatile" is generally understood by French and New Zealand customs as something variable. However, this word is used in different context depending on the language spoken. In one hand, French people define "versatile" as something or someone unstable and capricious. In another hand, New Zealanders qualify a person competent in several areas as "versatile". Every language contains various levels of objectivity and subjectivity.

The philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson extends this theory claiming: "We do not see things the same, we simply read the labels on them," (Bergson, 1899 cited in Perrin & Rosenbaum, 2007, p.53). Bergson categorised words as being the imprisonment of the mind (Podoroga, n.d.). He suggested that the ineffable[14] exists and that the art of "pure perception" (a perception which doesn't respond to linguistics) can be used as a way

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[14] By "ineffable" it is understood: which cannot be named.

to detach us from all form of prejudice created by social language. Emotional intuition leads the artist to emancipate himself from the perception formatted by culture. According to Bergson (1899), the artistic process shouldn't be related to word because by speaking the language of a society we do not just communicate an idea or a desire, we think through this society. This position informs the project as I am experimenting with a creative communication medium, which could eventually be accessible to different social languages. Nevertheless, my design process cannot be related to a pure ineffable approach because of the popular culture context underpinning the methods of communication.

• The Communication System of Language

The theory of ineffable art, as a pure emotional interpretation free from linguistics and cultural codes, is disputed by the followers of Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel believes that it is impossible for humans to think without words (Chapman and Routledge, 1968). Every gesture, every idea, cannot exist in our mind without having been named. In *The Philosophy of Mind* (1830) Hegel insists on the theory that language is a human process. According to this philosophical perspective, we cannot learn to develop a concrete feeling or recognise an object without finding it a name. Hegel identifies linguistic systems as a form of linear evolution (Chapman and Routledge, 1968). The thought of an object or concept is automatically associated with an image and then a word by the human brain [see fig.2:1, fig.2:2, fig.2:3 and fig.2:4].

IDEA / THOUGHT (fig.2:1) IMAGE (fig.2:2) SYMBOL (fig.2:3) SIGN / WORD SOUND (fig.2:4)
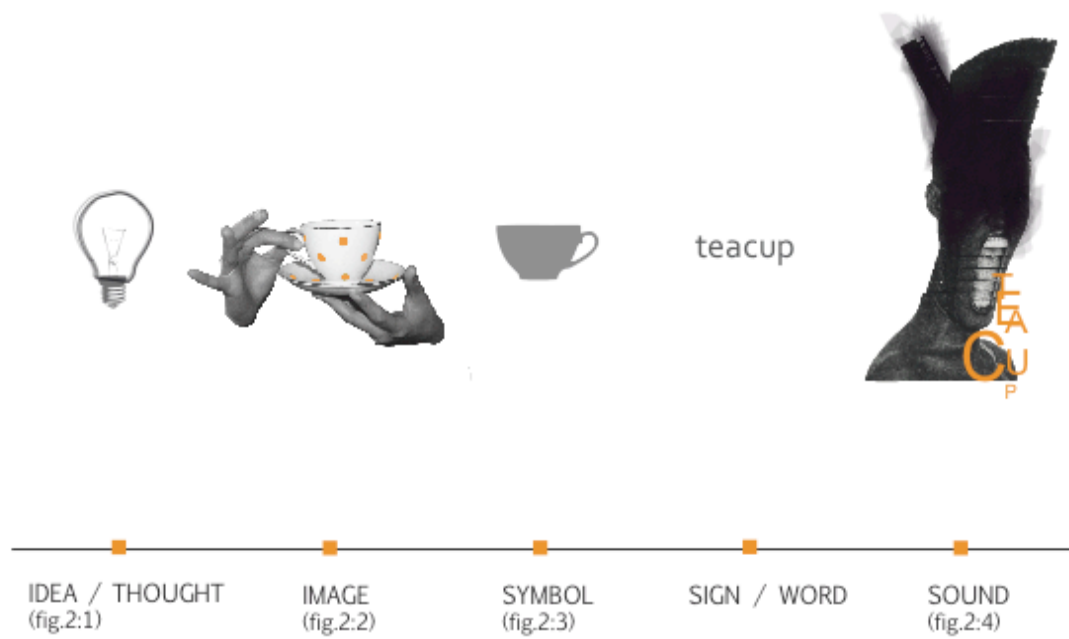
Fig.2:1/Fig.2:2/Fig.2:3/Fig.2:4 Julia Palmer. *Hegel's Linguistic System*. Digital Photographs and Digital Illustrations, 2010.

In my practical framework, Hegel's linguistic system was helpful in terms of discovering an eventual solution for broadcasting a message. If we recapitulate the theory of Hegel (1770-1831), the human brain pictures a thought before associating it with a symbol, a word and then a sound. Throughout all of my experiments, I have tried to interfere with this linear process. Firstly I provide the idea I want to communicate and then develop a visual interpretation of it. The viewer receives the designed information, pictures it, and associates it with a signification. Finally, the audience finds a linguistic equivalent to what they understand from the experimentation. I draw a general visual narration using common symbols, while the audience create an individual storyline by giving the images a meaning and then a word characteristic to his or her native language.

This experimental process leads the researcher to pose a further question: does creating a unique and subjective language by translating a book as a picture composition transgress or overwhelm the impact of words on our interpretation? In regards to the project development, this question originated from the evaluation of linguistics' importance in visual communication. Each creative exercise demonstrated that translation through image leads the audience's interpretation towards a panel of definitions but then reach to a general and common understanding of the message transmitted. The design approach I am considering cannot represent precisely a word but approximately guides the audience toward a collective discernment.

2.2 Transmission of a message.

- Translation is an interpretation

As discussed previously in the methodology chapter, a text is effected by both the author's and the reader's contexts. However, the effect of these contexts is disputed by theoricians. The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (Chapman and Routledge, 1968) thought that minimalist writing was objective enough to represent the "real world"[15]. Roland Barthes (1915-1980) rejected this position by claiming that it is impossible to escape from the ideological and personal meaning of a sign. In his essay, *The Death of the Author* (1968), he proposed that the reader appropriates the text for him or herself by understanding it in a unique way. The author is "killed" because we cannot read his words as he thought them at the moment he wrote it. Therefore, literature is a phenomenological dialect. Forty years later, in an artwork called *"Prenez soin de vous"*, Sophie Calle (2008) transposed this idea by asking to one hundred and seven women to react and answer to a breakup letter that the artist was never able to respond to. The piece of prose is interpreted in a very singular approach each time. Personal experience was obviously involved in this process. Thus, interpretation is more influenced by the way we are reading a text than the writer's particular intentions. In my own experimentation, each visual test is a hermeneutical reading of the same story.

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[15] By "real world" Sartre (1905-1980) suggests the existence of a pure perception delegated from cultural stereotypes.

The aim of the project is to share with the audience individual perceptions of a literary concept. The message transmitted requires an empirical understanding from each viewer. If interpretation is unique and plural at the same time, can replacing words with images affect the audience's understanding of an experimental idea?

According to Hayakawa (1962), "visually the majority of us are still "object-minded" and not relation-minded… The language of vision determines, perhaps even more subtly and toughly than verbal language, the structure of our consciousness" (Hayakawa cited in Barry, 1997). In other words, for Hayakawa, image has a more substantial communicating impact than speech or narrative. Noam Chomsky (in Barry, 1997) speaks of "deep structures" as the visual language creating emotion and intuition for the receiver. Thus the audience is awakened by the image and its logic. There is a parallel between this theory and my research in that the manipulation of image is a tool of trans-linguistic communication. By superimposing images and sounds, I am attempting to give specific information to the audience despite my verbal vocabulary and ability. Visual media allows me to communicate emotions instead of literal information. This process is suggesting, instead of naming. This inquiry leads the research process to question itself in relation to the link between symbol and signification asking: Can semiotics in linguistics and semiotics in visual communication, be approached in a parallel way?

- Semiotics.

Saussure (Chapman and Routledge, 1968) uses semiotics to explain the nature of language. He divides the sign (the word) into two parts: the signified and the signifier. The signified is part of a spoken and written word, while the signifier defines the concept and meaning attached to the same word. As noted previously, some languages have similar signifiers without having the same signified, and vice versa. Thus, the translation of a text requires a subjective interpretation during its process. Converting words from a culture to another generates a contextual analysis based on personal perception of the two languages. Asymmetry existing between two signifieds from different cultures occurred during my experiments. As observed in the first stage of the design process [see Chapter 3, Exercise 1], words produce a multiplicity of undercurrent meanings, which cannot be literally translated into an analogical[16] image. Through this observation, we can conclude that image responds to a specific semiotic that is different from the sign, the signified and signifier.

Visual communication has a particular semiotics system. Peirce (1839-1917) was the first theorist to divide visual semiotics into three categories: the iconic sign (which is similar to the real), the symbolic sign (which is associated with abstract cultural, political or religious norms) and the indexical sign (which interact with our logic and our memory) (Alexenberg, 2004). In a modern interpretation of Peirce's theory, Roland

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[16] By 'analogical' it is understood: an image that is a similar representation of a word.

Barthes (1915-1980) suggests that visual communication uses "denoted" and "connoted" iconic messages as a language system. In *Rhetoric of the Image* (Barthes, 1964), the denotative image is described as the literal identification of objects that are part of a frame. In the context of mass culture, the denotative image is detected as an illusion: if the image looks true then the message is true. This approach inspired the project in regards to the audience interpretation. "Real" parameters are intended to be recognised by the viewer and to strengthen the psychological identification of the video with their own experience [see Chapter 3, Exercise 3]. Barthes (1964) stipulates that a "denoted image" doesn't exist individually in photography (and by extension in video). "Connoted iconic images" broadcast information using cultural and symbolic stereotypes. Globalisation stereotypes lead the audience towards the fundamental message of an image. In my experimental work, I use the association between "denoted images" and popular and iconic image to create an "indexical" visual language (as Peirce would call it). The perception of a symbol in a creative context leads the audience to adapt and to define for themselves their own interpretation. This theory is the main reference which has structured the design development in terms of narrative transmission through a visual collage.

3. REVIEW OF

EXERCISES

3.1 Creative research.

Designing in a foreign language is an experiment in communication. This personal observation initially emerged from my experiences in completing my Honours degree year in 2009. Verbally and theoretically describing my project became a challenge as I could only think through the French culture and the language I grew up with. The association of visual media into this discourse proved to be a perceptive solution for my communication difficulties. These intuitively developed videos made over the past year show how image can be used as a rhetorical tool. By superimposing a sentence on to an image I emphasised the impact of the message transmitted. This design "accident" led to this research: to explore communication possibilities offered by image when it is manipulated as a language.

To answer to this research question, I chose, as stated previously, to interpret a French book in order to introduce it to an Anglo-Saxon audience using the hermeneutical circle as a structural model. The concept of *Exercices de Style* (Queneau, 1947) inspired the overall research as the author experiments different linguistic ways to describe a short story. Raymond Queneau gives ninety-nine stylistic

Fig.3:1 Julia Palmer. *Design Diary - Colour Researches for Exercise 2.* Photomontage and oil pastel, 2010.

interpretations to demonstrate how perception can be manipulated by linguistics. My experimentation is an adaptation of this concept as I intend to explore visual dialect, instead of verbal or written language.

In a design context, hermeneutical methodology means that practice and analysis are boundlessly responding to each other. Analysis has emerged from audience criticisms which was composed of two academic supervisors (Laurent Antonczak and Frances Joseph) and a heterogeneous group of New-Zealanders. The audience feedback is recorded in a design diary [see fig.3:1] as a pedagogic[17] way to archive the results and the evolution of concepts or aesthetic ideas being experimented with. The reflective process following the experimentation determines the approaches chosen. Editing, intertextuality, and appropriation of cultural icons are explored through an interpretative and scalable design process. This chapter presents a chronological review of five different experimental exercises summarised through critical analysis.

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[17] The term "pedagogic" is used here in a hermeneutical context. The experimentations' results become tacit knowledge, which induce the ability of anticipating the subsequent interpretation.

T   E   X   T
Translation of "Meta-
phoriquement" word /
image. (Fig.3:2)

S T O R Y B O A R D
Structure of the narra-
tion: split   screen
(Fig.3:3).

E X E R C I S E   1
Right: action of the
story interpreted in a
literal way.
Left: visual transposi-
tion   of   metaphors
(Fig.3:4).

Fig.3:2/Fig.3:3/Fig.3:4 Julia Palmer. *Exercise 1*. Photocopy of the draft which preceded
the visual experimentation, storyboard and frame extracted from the video test. 2010.

EXERCISE 1

The first creative attempt was an informative failure that has influenced and determined the design approach of the following exercises. This interpretation was a literal translation of "Metaphoriquement" from *Exercices de Style* (Queneau, 1947, p.11). In this chapter, the novelette is a succession of burlesque metaphors[18] narrating a banal quarrel between two characters in a bus. My first approach was to develop a list of visual equivalents, which would correspond to the syntax and the rhetoric of the text [see fig.3:2]. The literal translation of idioms[19] used in the text showed some complexities as the linguistic signification of the language responded to particular signifiers [see Chapter 2:1].

This issue led to a general adaptation for each metaphor. For example, to picture the arrogance of a character I preferred the image of a rooster instead of the term "chicken" which is used in the text. Then, I elaborated a storyboard [see fig.3:3] in order to clarify the narrative structure. The split screen[20] [see fig.3:4] is the editing method which is manipulated as an object of comparison between the essence of the storyline and a visual adaptation of the text's rhetoric. One part of the screen tells the

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[18] Metaphor: the application of a name or descriptive term or phase to an object or an action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable. *(The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary).*

[19] Expression specific to a culture and a language.

[20] Split screen: "the process of dividing a film frame into segments which each then contains a separate image. Split screens may be obvious, [...], or an invisible joining of two similar images" (McAlister, 1993).

action of the story while the second part is a transposition of metaphors drawn from *Exercices de Style* (Queneau, 1947). The association between a pair of images usually led the viewer to a metaphorical deduction (for example, the picture of a chair juxtaposed to people running is the way I attempted to communicate the notion of racing for a seat). However, the experimentation did not engage with the audience logic as it was expected. The split screen did not concur with the appropriation of popular films, as they were not adapted to a new creative context, but placed side by side. This observation identified a lack of coherence between the narration and the visual medium. The first exercise generated number of ideas for the audience as the intertextual structure was unstable and confusing. Through these imperfections, I understood that visual language cannot be broached as a symmetric adaptation of linguistics. Analysing the inadequate approach experimented, I reached the conclusion that visual translation requires the designer to focus visual interpretation on non-linguistic parameters and anticipating symbolic messages generated by intertextual images.

EXERCISE 2:

Hermeneutical philosophy assumes that a designer is constantly exposed to self-critique regarding his or her interpretation of a text or a phenomenon [see Chapter 1:2]. After analysing the unsuccessful parameters of the first experiment, I had to question the methods and approach taken. The second exercise [see fig.3:5] is a more empirical and suggestive vision of *Exercices de Style* (Queneau, 1947) as a whole. The concept is an asymmetric adaptation of the book: instead of one narrator telling several versions of one story, each character in the scene becomes an individual narrator of one scene. Their interpretations are transposed into a succession of thoughts. The exercise consists of creating diverse and eclectic points of view of a common experience.

The single shot is a travelling[21] shot progressively showing the imagination of fictional characters riding the bus. This picture composition is mostly created with Adobe After Effects as a series of layers. Despite the use of a "virtual" montage technique, it was important to maintain an effect of "collages", as the concept of cultural appropriation is constantly present in my interpretative approach [see Chapter 1:3]. Audiovisual elements are cut, modified, superimposed and then faded into the scene. Each frame

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[21] A travelling is a shot "which follows the silhouette of a subject as it moves through frame. By conforming to the exact shape and position of the subject for each frame of the film, the matte is said "to travel". (McAlister, 1993, p.144)

Fig.3:5 Julia Palmer. *Exercise 2* (sequences). Photomontage animated. Fragment of picture animations, acrylic, paint, oil pastel, 2010.

is an assemblage of popular references that generate a logical narration using cultural symbols as a language. For example, in the second exercise, I juxtaposed to the last scene an image of a car crash and the sound of broken glass, in order to dramatise the altercation between two characters. The audiovisual association amplifies the connotation of the shot's message: the representation of an excessive impact induces the notion of surprise and shock while the noise of broken glass implies that one of the characters is hurt. The symbolic impact conducts the audience to deduce and anticipate the narration through an empirical point of view: the conflict between the two characters is inevitable.

This test demonstrated that intertextual references can communicate a symbolic and indexical message if represented via a cinematic structure. However, the realisation revealed numerous problems in terms of the distribution of information. For example, the composition of colours distracts the viewer's eye from the action, the pace of the travelling is rushed, and the imagination of the characters is not distinguishable from the scenery. Although this exercise was not totally successful, it did prove that two images and one sound are sufficient to communicate a human emotion. The second exercise was a rewarding design process transition between the first pedagogic mistake and the later concepts. It led the experimentation to deepen the approach of "collage" and reinforced my aesthetics choices and increased my understanding of connotation codes.

EXERCISE 3

The third and last exercise is divided into several variants; as *Exercices de Style* (Queneau, 1947) is decomposed into several versions of a story. Each variant is a subjective interpretation of a scene I filmed. The basic video is a long take and an "objective shot"[22] of people waiting at a universal[23] bus stop. The camera is an external eye, as if the witness of an everyday event. The scene is deliberately filmed in a seemingly 'authentic' way: lighting is natural, setting is realistic, and the character's actions are 'improvised'. All those "real" parameters established in a contemporary context, should be recognised by the viewer and strengthen the association between the video and the audience's everyday life. The role of the camera is similar to documentary films, as it suggests an observation rather than a creation. Subsequently, the "denoted" shot is dissected into a multitude of visual elements, which become the mechanical parts of my creative exercise. When the narration is defined, the research focus is on the intertextual references, which will interact with the audience's understanding. Finally, the editing assembles and synthesises the design concept.

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[22] Term used in *Anatomy of Film* (Dick, 2005) to qualify an external and objective view of the scene for the audience. The "objective shot" is contrary to the "subjective shot" which "represent what the character sees" (Dick, 2005, pp.40-43).

[23] "Universal" implies that there is no cultural element to indicate if the bus stop had been filmed in New-Zealand, France, etc.

• Exercise 3, Variant 1

The first variant of the final concept is an improved version of the previous test [see Exercise 2]. In this exercise, I explore further the rhetorical nature of popular images [see Chapter 2:2]. Before reaching this stage of the inquiry, I initially researched a design solution to delineate with clarity the "real" scene from the fictional imagination I assigned the characters with. The editing choices regarding the original shot are minimised. It is a simple moving effect using Adobe After Effects that establishes a chronological distribution of information and which collectively makes up the interpretative narration. The background music reproduces the natural environmental characteristics of an urban atmosphere. The 'authentic' shot is a rational observation of unknown and inactive characters as they are waiting at a bus stop. At first sight, it is difficult to identify their particular personalities, as their appearances are not stereotypical. Then, each interpretation of the characters' imagination is drawn with black and white shots, which appear almost as edgy and fickle thoughts [see fig.3:6]. A crackling sound reinforces the notion of ephemeral fantasies communicated to the audience. The audiovisual montage structures the composition, leading the audience to interpret the images' symbols. In this exercise, the connotations induced by intertextual references are recognised as intuitive codes by the viewer. The superimposition of popular, symbolic or iconic silhouettes adds a collective and intimate narration, which heightens the audience's engagement. For instance, on the occasion of the postgraduate conference organised by Auckland University of Technology (2010), I

Fig.3:6 In Palmer, J. (2010). *Exercise 3.1 (frame)*. Digital collage: motion picture filmed at a bus stop and appropriation from cinema culture, 2010.

projected this experiment to a varied audience[24] in order to evaluate the impact of symbolic image applied to a "realistic" perception of a simple event. Basically, the audience understood the relationship between the characters and the "imaginative" interpretation I had drawn. However, each perception brought a personal point of view: one person interpreted the montage as a game played by the designer while another understood the video as a temporal comparison. This reaction demonstrated that image can be a metaphoric and versatile language that enables the audience to read, in a rational and an empirical way, a suggested story. From this exercise, I established a personal conclusion: image is a subtle language that involves instinctive creativity between the designer and the audience.

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[24] By "varied audience" it is understood an audience, which is made up of people from different, disciplines, cultures and backgrounds.

Fig.3:7 Palmer, J. *Three frames from Exercise 3.2.* Digital editing, 2010.

• Exercise 3, Variant 2:

As discussed earlier in the methodology chapter [see Chapter 1:3], music is also approached using an editing method to anchor the message held by the image. The second variant of the third exercise dissects the editing process by synchronising the spatial distribution of the scene with a classical piece of music. I selected the *Interlude* from Carmen's opera (Bizet, 1845) because of its beauty and its distinct instrumental hierarchy – a parameter that was relevant during the editing process in terms of organisation. The music was an inspiration to magnify the action of the narration in a fictional and theatrical context. The design approach attempts to transpose the lyrical mood of an expressive piece of music into an aesthetic and poetic visual interpretation. To achieve this challenge, I decided to experiment with an editing technique that focused on the action and the emotion narration instead of the logical narration. This decision led me to compose the frame as a destructured set of images, interpreting the images in a geometrical[25] way. Each character is associated to an instrument. The shots are digitally divided into several dynamic stripes [see fig.3:7], with the purpose of orchestrating the sound in a visual and emotional form. In this experimentation, editing is used as a way to transform an ordinary scene into a poetic adaptation. One moving body responds to a particular sound. The representation of the violins' cadence in the *Interlude* is an example relevant to the editing setting of

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[25] By "geometrical" it is suggested that each images part of the original video become literal physical shapes.

this test. Three steps of one of the characters are repeated continuously, functioning as a mimetic reflection of the music. The timing, the orientation, and the transparency translate different levels of rhythms and instrumental moods. The characters are metamorphosed into dancing puppets as gestures are segmented and choreographed. The audience's perception is not longer intellectual but emotional as the bodies are assimilated into abstract moving shapes. In this design process, the visual experimentation does not communicate a narration. It is exploring the concept of montage as an artistic method of composition. This observation generated a wish to push the boundaries of visual interpretation further, leading the project to another step and another question: Is it possible to exaggerate my subjective adaptation of a generic scene and be able to communicate with the audience?

- Exercise 3, Variant 3:

Through experimentation, I have interpreted various ways to manipulate the audience's perception. The two previous variants proved that it is possible to give symbolic or poetic parameters to an improvised scene. This third variant is an evaluation of a paradoxical approach: how to disturb the audience's sensorial orientation, and communicate a concept at the same time. To test this idea, I structured the narration through what is generally called "asynchronization" (Dick, 2005). Asynchronization is when what is heard and what the viewer sees are not aligned. The experimental video starts with a black screen so the audience can focus and anticipate the nature of the ambiance that the audio creates. The music is extracted from the movie *Dancer in the Dark* (Windeløv, 2000). Bjork (2000), the soundtrack composer, transposed industrial machinery disposing, cutting, and transporting items into articulated rhythms. In variant three, the atmospheric sound influences temporal and spatial parameters. By choosing this sound of a manufacturing environment, I interact with the audience's general knowledge and presuppositions that the exercise will involve an image using similar representation codes. However, when the images appear, the audience is confronted with two different sensory dialects. Units of measurements, fittings, annotations[26] and anatomic fragments are taking over the "real" frame. The sound is reminiscent of

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[26] Notice that in this experimentation, typographic elements are manipulated as an image, not a linguistic message.
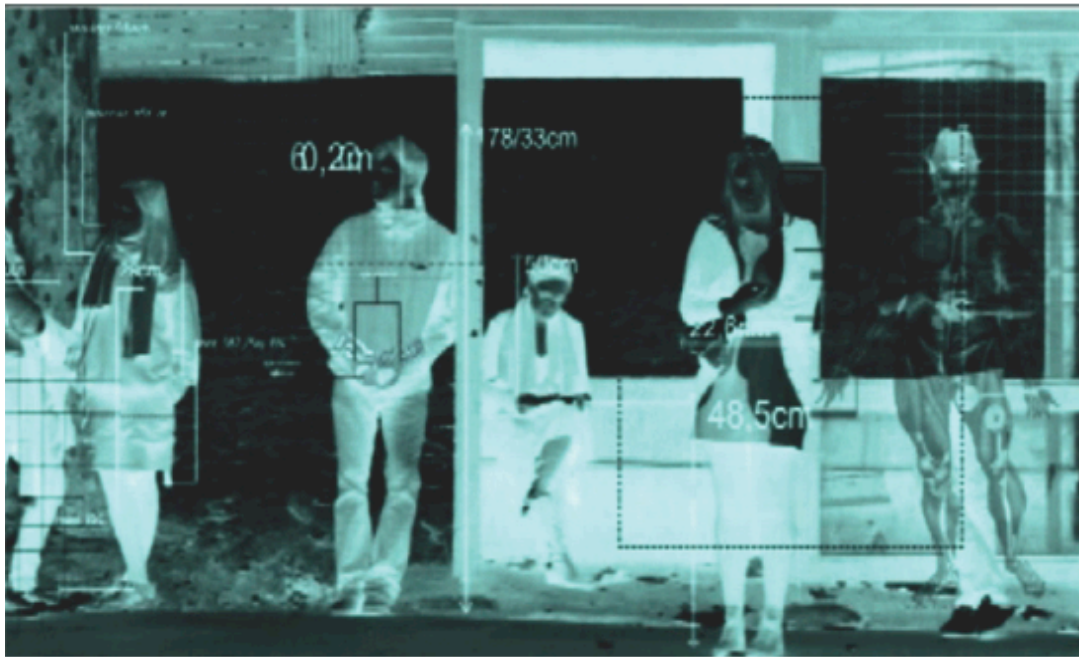
Fig.3:8 Palmer, J. *Frame from Exercise 3.3.* Digital editing, anatomic still pictures and animated typography. 2010.

industrial factories whilst the image is an anatomical observation of ordinary human beings. Bodies are transformed into dislocated mechanical objects, indirectly referring to human dissection. The metallic rhythm emphasises the abstract and metaphoric nature of the editing approach. The number of connotations that could be associated to variant three is excessively broad, due to the absence of narrative structure (the interpretation could be historical, as it could be a critique of aesthetic surgery). Through this exercise, the musical atmosphere dominated the visual message. This was shown to be disappointing in relation to the audience's interpretation, and by extension, the research question. However, this test induces an interesting artistic questioning which will be taken into consideration in future experimental work: if visual translation is sensorial instead of intellectual, does the dialogue between the audience and the designer go beyond the notion of language?

3.2 The exhibited work.

The exhibited work summarises the past researches into four editing experimentations of an everyday situation. Each of these exercises is based on the same shot. A fixed video camera has recorded the video, as it was my intention to get a perception as neutral as possible. By getting an "objective shot" and using full shots[27] the audience can refer the visual basis to the style of documentary. The framing focuses on people that will later become the actors of my editing scenario. The setting is organised as an imaginary urban theatre stage, where each character comes into the scene of a story he/she is not aware of. The repetitive use of time-based media with fixed duration brings a cohesive link between each interpretation. The short duration (a minute long each) aims to facilitate the comparison between the exercises and thus the understanding of the concept developed. The work is organised as a triptych (see Exercise 4, Variant 1, Variant 2, Variant 3), and an extra video (see Exercise 5), which is an introduction of future experimentations I intend to produce.

EXERCISE 4:

Each visual approach extends individual perceptions of an everyday moment. The original concept is a re-interpretation of exercises developed and analysed previously (see Exercise 3, Variant 1, Variant 2, Variant 3). As the project is based on a

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[27] Shot showing the whole body.

hermeneutical process, there are few alterations made during the execution of the exercises.

Firstly, the authentic[28] video is an "objective shot", reusing some parameters specific to documentary films. The camera is part of the frame, which indicates to the audience that the objective is a neutral witness of the scene. It established the notion that nothing is hidden or directed. The subliminal message communicated to the viewer expands on Roland Barthes's theory about the "denoted" image: what the camera is showing is an authentic reality.

Secondly, the bus stop chosen is deliberately visually indicating that the video is taking place in New Zealand. I had the desire to explore my French interpretation regarding the country my research took place in.

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[28] "Authentic" is a term used to define an image reproducing the real with the most simplicity and objectivity as can be possible.

Fig.3:9 Julia Palmer. *Frame from Exercise 4.1.* Digital collage: motion picture filmed at a bus stop and appropriation from cinema culture. 2010.

- Exercise 4, Variant 1:

Exercise 4 is approaching fantasy narration through eclectic intertextual references and appropriation. This exercise has been interpreted previously in *Exercise 2* and *Exercise 3 Variant 1*. The choice to subtract the use of travelling is aimed to keep a cohesive link between each exercises proposed for the exhibition. The symbolism of each video appropriation is extended to a metaphorical and poetic level. The first association seen by the viewer is the image of a young girl reading a book and an extract of the movie *Latcho Drom* (Ray-Gavras, 1993) picturing a Gypsy dance from the eleventh century. The anachronism creates an intriguing relationship between the two images. Then, what could be considered a simple couple's kiss becomes a timeless moment through Martin Arnold's (1998) perception. The mimicry characterizing a woman waiting at a bus stop and the silhouette of Bettie Page (Klaw, 1995) leads the audience to the portrait of a fictional contemporary character. To finish, *J'ai Toujours Revé d'Etre un Gangster* (Delbosc and Missonier, 2008) is a reference to Raymond Queneau's absurd[29] writing.

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[29] Absurd writing is defined in literature as a narration, which does not follow a classical logic. It is usually used as a humoristic parameter.

Fig.3:10 Julia Palmer. *Frame from Exercise 4.2.* Digital editing. 2010.

- Exercise 4, Variant 2:

Music and sound are used a complement the image in the overall project. This observation led to collaboration with a sound artist (Marler, 2010). Within the framework of the *Exercise 4, Variant 2*, the rhythmical dynamic has been exclusively composed with original recordings of an urban environment[30]. The lack of structure of the melody proves to be more challenging regarding the editing of the image. Unlike the first attempt (*Exercise 3, Variant 2*), the choreography constituted operating on a dissymmetric model. Thanks to this latest structure, the visual takes over the sound by suggesting the audience to focus on a particular rhythm, which builds in an unexpected narration. This exercise has shown interesting results, as the interpretation was double: the music was a perception of my original demand, which led to a visual interpretation.

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[30] By "urban environment" I suggest sound parameters specific to the scene filmed.

Fig.3:11 Julia Palmer. *Frame from Exercise 4.3.* Digital editing, anatomic still pictures and animated typography, 2010.

- Exercise 4, Variant 3:

See *Exercise 3* as this exercise is an improved version of *Variant 3.*

Fig.3:12 Julia Palmer. *Frame from Exercise 5.* Digital animation, 2010.

EXERCISE 5:

The last exercise proposed is a test experimenting some areas I didn't have time to explore and that I intend to develop in future research. *Exercise 5* is an animation combining craft collages and digital reconstitution of movements. The narration refers to burlesque theatre. The objective of the interpretation was to approach the authentic video as an imaginary and outrageous storyline. The action takes shape as a dynamic cardboard stage design. Each character has a symbolic role: one is the main protagonist while the others are whispering the dialogues. *Exercise 5* explores the concept of illusion thought interpretation as it uses juxtaposition and comedy codes as a way to modify the audience's perception.

CONCL

U S I O N

The research question investigated improved the understanding of visual communication possibilities. In order to answer to the inquiry raised, I organised my approach into three interdependent parts. Hermeneutics has informed the project structure dividing the research process into four interpretative and decisive stages. The collection of theoretical references led the project towards a deeper understanding of the context I have explored. The relationship or dissociation between linguistics and visual communication influenced the evolution of experimental design work. Evaluating, demonstrating, testing through the practice framework conducted led to the conclusion: visual language can offer multiple potential interpretations of a story to an audience who think through different cultural perspectives.

However, the 'exercises' developed through this research followed specific criteria in order to systematically explore this issue. Regarding the overall framework, cinematic codes, intertextual references, and appropriation of symbols anticipated and supported the design process.

There were three main finding from this research: Firstly that image can communicate narrative independently of verbal and written language, as long as, the designer is

aware of the editing language structuring the information. The translation of linguistics into image is a complex interpretative process combining rational and subjective parameters. As developed in the theoretical investigation and demonstrated in the experimentation of this project, artistic images, supported by sound, form an emotional language based on poetic representation and suggestive narration.

Secondly, my personal experimentation of symbolic and common codes understood by the audience questioned the strategic use of intertextual references. Popular cultural imagery can be an effective tool of communication when globalised symbols are adapted into an artistic collage of messages. Understanding the visual representation of influences and using this knowledge to underpin the creative approach is a way to transform the audience's perception through their senses and their reflection.

Finally, appropriation extends the concept of collective language as it guides the viewer's understanding towards a poetic interpretation of connotative images. Suggesting, instead of naming, an idea leads the audience to compose their own significations. The interaction between message and interpretation generates a new type of communication, accessible to audiences from different cultural background.

If image is an interpretative language accessible to people thinking through different cultures, it must be asked whether this research could be relevant to audiences from other countries educated through similar popular knowledge? This inquiry could generate further research about universal nature of visual communication in a world

where media is influencing our social life. It is recognised that further investigation of non-verbal communication as an alternative and creative way to promote literature towards international audiences is a topic that has a great potential of ongoing research beyond this thesis project. The possibility of interacting with several dialects could lead to the development of a suggestive and alternative approach to broadcasting multicultural exchanges.

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Bizet, G. (1845). *Entr'acte, Act 3* [Recorded by the French National Orchestra]. On Carmen [CD]. France: Radio France Choir.

Bjork (2000). *Cvalda* [Recorded by Bjork]. On Selmasongs: Dancer In The Dark [Motion Picture soundtrack]. London: One Little Indian.

Calle, S. (2008). *Prenez Soin de Vous* [exhibition]. BNF, Paris.

Delbosc, O., Missonnier, M. (Producers), & Benchetrit, S. (Director). (2008). *J'ai toujours rêvé d'être un gangster* [Motion picture]. France: Mars Distribution.

Eisenstein, S. (director). (1927). *October: ten days that shook the world* [Motion picture]. Soviet Union.
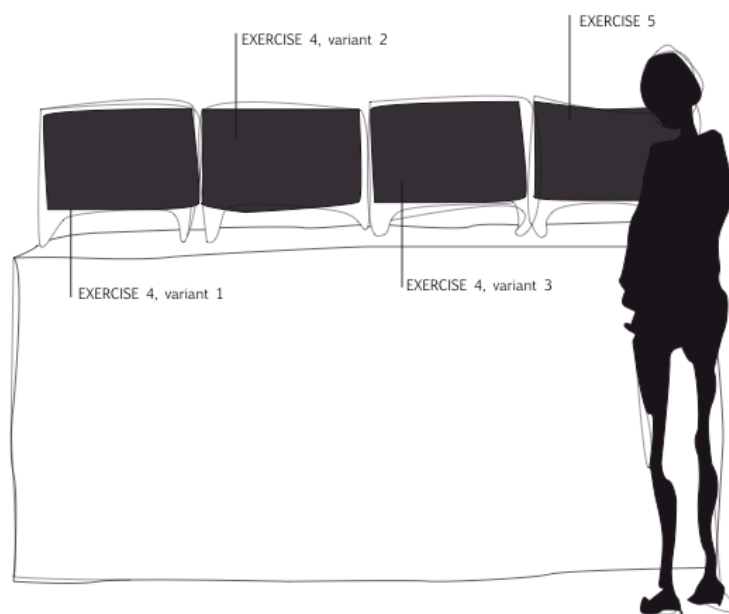
Goldman, I. (Producer), & Kounen, J. (Director). (2007). *99 francs* [Motion picture]. France: Pathé Distribution.

Klaw, I., Klaw, P. (Producers), & Klaw, I. (Director). (1955). Teaserama [Motion picture]. United States.

Marler, T. (composer). (2010). *Untilted*. [soundtrack]. Auckland.

Ray-Gavras, M. (Producer), & Gatlif, T. (Director). (1993). Latcho drom [Motion picture]. France.
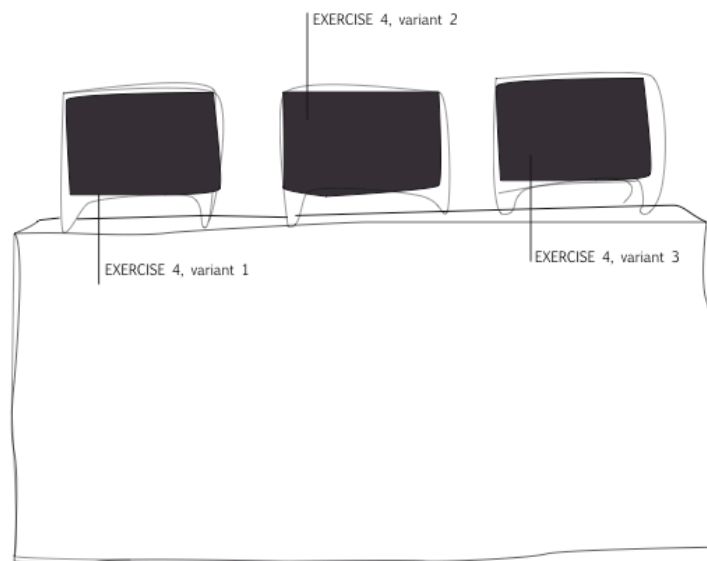
APPENDIX 1:
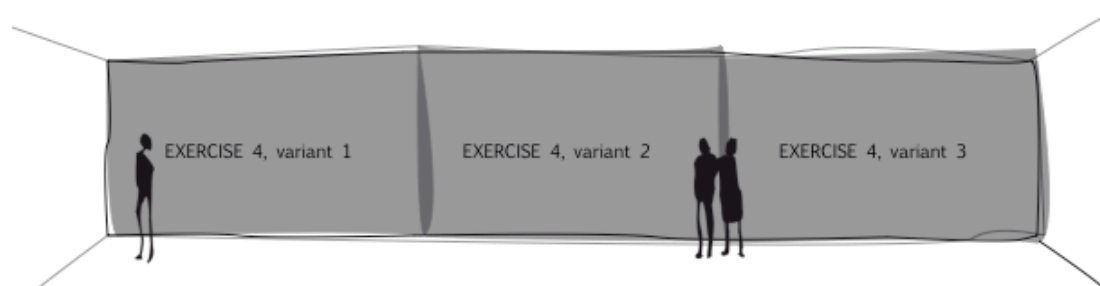

Appx.1:1 Palmer, J. *Final exhibition*. Auckland. 2010.

EXHIBITION

The "final" exercises presented at Auckland University of Technologies' exhibition was organised as an improved retrospective triptych, followed by the inception of a new experimentation.

The installation was linear and minimalistic as I intended to focus the audience's attention on the possibilities of visual language using comparison as an interactive communication tool. Because of a restrictive budget, using four computer screens installed at eye level was the most effective way to display the videos one after the other [see appx.1:1]. During the examination, it was noted that the concept's communication would be more cohesive if the installation was focusing on the triptych [see appx.1.2]. An ideal spatial solution for the triptych's projection has also been discussed: the use of three human sized panels would enable the audience to merge with the image and interact with the "objective" scene as if they were physically part of the exercise [see appx.1.3].

EXERCISE 4, variant 2

EXERCISE 4, variant 1

EXERCISE 4, variant 3

Appx.1:2 Palmer, J. *Final exhibition after feedbacks.* Auckland. 2010.

EXERCISE 4, variant 1   EXERCISE 4, variant 2   EXERCISE 4, variant 3

Appx.1:3 Palmer, J. *Ideal installation*. Auckland. 2010.

APPENDIX 2:

[1] Empirical: based or acting on observation or experiment, not on theory. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

[2] Linguistics: the scientific study of language and their structure. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

[3] Ontological: the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

[4] Semiotics is the study of "signs and the their use, focusing on communicative mechanisms, and on the nature of knowledge and the pathways through which it is acquired." *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics.*

[5] Anthropology: the study of mankind, especially of its societies and customs. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

[6] Skeptical/sceptical: inclined to question the truth or soundness of accepted ideas, facts, etc. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

FOOTNOTES

7 Postulates: a thing suggested or assumed as true as the basis for reasoning, discussion, or belief. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

8 Syntax: formal grammar.

9 Rhetoric: a. The art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing. b. Language designed to persuade or impress with an implication of insincerity or exaggeration etc.. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

10 Subconscious: of or concerning the part of the mind which is not fully conscious but influences actions etc. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary.*

11 A sign in linguistics indicates a word.

12 By "defamatory" it is to be understood that my interpretation of a text is a misconception of the author's perception.

[13] Semiotics: semiotics is the study of "signs and the their use, focusing on communicative mechanisms, and on the nature of knowledge and the pathways through which it is acquired." (*International Encyclopedia of Linguistics , Ed.2*).

[14] By "ineffable" it is understood: which cannot be named.

[15] By "real world" Sartre (1905-1980) suggests the existence of a pure perception delegated from cultural stereotypes.

[16] By 'analogical' it is understood: an image that is an similar representation of a word.

[17] The term "pedagogic" is used here in a hermeneutical context. The experimentations' results become tacit knowledge, which induce the ability of anticipating the subsequent interpretation.

[18] Metaphor: the application of a name or descriptive term or phase to an object or an action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable. *(The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary).*

[19] Expression specific to a culture and a language.

[20] Split screen: "the process of dividing a film frame into segments which each then contains a separate image. Split screens may be obvious, […], or an invisible joining of two similar images" (McAlister, 1993).

[21] A travelling is a shot "which follows the silhouette of a subject as it moves through frame. By conforming to the exact shape and position of the subject for each frame of the film, the matte is said "to travel". (McAlister, 1993, p.144)

[22] Term used in *Anatomy of Film* (Dick, 2005) to qualify an external and objective view of the scene for the audience. The "objective shot" is contrary to the "subjective shot" which "represent what the character sees" (Dick, 2005, pp.40-43).

[23] "Universal" implies that there is no cultural element to indicate if the bus stop had been filmed in New-Zealand, France, etc...

[24] By "varied audience" it is understood an audience, which is made up of people from different, disciplines, cultures and backgrounds.

[25] By "geometrical" it is suggested that each images part of the original video become literal physical shapes.

[26] Notice that in this experimentation, typographic elements are manipulated as an image, not a linguistic message.

[27] Shot showing the whole body.

²⁸ "Authentic" is a term used to define an image reproducing the real with the most simplicity and objectivity as can be possible.

²⁹ Absurd writing is defined in literature as a narration, which does not follow a classical logic. It is usually used as a humoristic parameter.

³⁰ By "urban environment" I suggest sound parameters specific to the scene filmed.