Other Means of Communication
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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Abstract

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Assistant Professor of Art, Culture and Technology
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pg. 63. Letter to Denis Roche by the author.

funds eiten orker predicts lower orners exploring etnatives

Martin Hess
EDITOR

A cut of MIT's yearly research
federal government, orker will have a signifi-
the Institute.
across-the-board cuts
defense spending as an unwanted conse-
Congress to make a budget
March 1.
With Science and Global
Development hosted a
of the federal bud-
ience research at MIT.
Maria T. Zuber, MIT's
search, William B. Bonvil-
Washington Office, and
With Science, who helped
on.
ience, made in April, would
it is unlikely to be
ence R&D will be cut by
defense R&D will be cut
t the National Science
ience a 2.1 percent
encies are still deciding an-
ity since many did not
h the cuts, expecting the
place. "The lack of guid-
caus ing frustration among
her.
research
nd decrease in the research
of about 3 to 4 percent"
he federal government

Course 18 moving
Temporarily relocating to E17, E18

By Anthony Yu
STAFF REPORTER

Handing in math problem sets
may now require more exercise.
In late June or early July, the en-
tire Department of Mathematics
will be moving to E17 and E18
their current space in Building 2
undergoes a significant renova-
tion. Undergraduate math ma-
jors have already experienced
the effects of the construction,
with their undergraduate lounge
moved to the Compton Room.
For the duration of the con-
struction, the lounge will remain
in the Compton Room. As for
the rest of the department, all faculty,
Consequently, some recita-
tions and professor office hours
will be farther away from main
campus. "I guess [the move] is
inevitable. I guess I can just take
the Tech Shuttle to Ames Street
and walk there now. Being able
to get food truck food is a plus," said
Jennifer J. Wu '16, an undergradu-
ate mathematics student.
One benefit of the new loca-
tion is the close proximity to res-
taurants in Kendall Square, where
students may choose to congre-
gate instead. "There might be a
cultural shift in the department
for the next couple years," said
Department Head Michael Sieper.
Graduate students will experience
the greatest improvement in office

Survey: Students, though
stressed, are glad to be at M

Results from the Student Quality of Life Survey are
available online. In early March 2015, Chancellor Eric C.
son PhD '80 invited all students enrolled at MIT to par-
pate. Over 54 percent of the graduate and undergrad-
population responded to at least part of the survey be-
closed on April 3, 2015.
90 percent of respondents reported being some-
or very satisfied with being a student at MIT, and al-
82 percent said they would choose to come to MIT if
could decide all over again.
Students were also asked to describe the atmos-
MIT across 13 dimensions. For each dimension, the stu-
dents were also given a rank of MIT's cli-
on a six point scale. For most word pairings, students
more likely to select positive words over negative w
such as "Exhilarating" over "Boring," and "Friendly/
"Hostile." However students were also much more
likely to select "Stressful" over "Calm" — 87 percent of stu-
chose 1, 2, or 3, on a scale of Stressful(1) to Calm(6).
Fig. 10. St. Luke, Gospels, Mt. Athos, Stauronikita 43.
Switch to Acrolite, the brand with the international demand. Acrolite is advertised in many countries in many languages. Acrolite still uses 100% safe non-flammable freon propellant. Not blends of propane or butane that reduce the weight, cost, and safety of the package. Always specify Acrolite, a brand that spares no expense to give you the best quality for the lowest cost! You get a full 20 ounces at NO EXTRA COST!

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or write office in RAHWAY, N.J.

RAHWAY, N.J., U.S.A. ROMA, ITALY GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
Fighting an even larger battle, Austrian philosopher Ivan Illich sought to expose the dangers of modern industrialization and its effects on education, medicine, energy, transportation, and economic development. Unlike Freire, Illich believed in capitalism, and rather than pronouncing its failure, warned of its perversions. Unchecked industrial monopolies, he wrote, destroy our tools for conviviality. Schools, in his view, represented a normalized monopoly, thereby sustaining the institutionalization of society, and need to be eliminated in favor of learning networks and informal one-on-one arrangements. As the title of his 1970 book indicates, he called for deschooling society.
FOR THE BLIND MAN...

This line of thought culminated in 1987 with French philosopher Jacques Rancière’s *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. In it, he argued how the traditional teacher-student relationship does nothing but reinforce inequality, stultifying the learner. A non-emancipated student is the one who ignores that he does not know what he does not know and ignores how to know it. The master is not only he who exactly knows what remains unknown to the ignorance, but he also knows how to make it knowable, at what time and what place, according to what protocol.\(^\text{18}\)

A student is held captive by his or her reliance on explanations, But the \(^\text{19}\) child who is explained to will devote his intelligence to the work of grieving: to understanding, that is to say, to understanding that he doesn’t understand unless he is explained to.
Introduction

The thesis deals with a subset of the great quantity of cultural productions that can be called means of communication. The three essays that follow are concerned with relationships between images, in the sense of pictures, and text, in the sense of meaningful strings of words apprehended visually. (Some examples of what is meant by these terms appear on the preceding pages.) The other part of the title is borrowed from Leo Steinberg. It means something like, “not the usual [—]”, or, “not the habitual [—].”

The primary questions guiding these essays are, What makes images images? What makes text text? Another way of getting at it with less of an existential charge: What is image-like? What is text-like? That is to say, what qualities are generally agreed upon as the defining characteristics of images and texts? And what does context have to do with it? In the 1970s, American philosopher and educator Nelson Goodman proposed to set aside the question “What is art?” in favor of “When is art?” We can make use of his formulation here. When is image? When is text? And where?


c The implications and affordances of particular geographical, institutional, and spatial contexts factor into the arguments in this document although they are rarely addressed head-on. For example, the title of Chapter 1, “Art in the Garden,” refers to a historically and geographically specific garden in the Pentland Hills of Scotland, but also offers a metaphor for
A second line of questioning comes into play whenever something is determined to be image-like or text-like: How image-like is it? How text-like? The promise of this question is not in quantifying likenesses (although there will be a few instances of tallying in the document that follows—never very scientifically), but rather in discovering continuities between image and text. When and how do images function like text; when and how does text function like an image? If we come upon something that is as much text-like as it is image-like—as much image-like as text-like—let us look closely at the conditions of its existence. How is this balance achieved? For artists and makers, this examination leads to another question, one for all time. “What else is possible?”

The three essays that follow arrive at these questions by different routes. “Art in the Garden” looks closely at several works by Scottish artist and gardener Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006), whose productions across multiple genres (many of his own invention), media (with or without art-making associations), and collaborative relationships offer a seemingly inexhaustible survey of forms and uses for words and pictures. Finlay identified as a poet above all else (what others called sculptures, he called poems) and much of his abundant poetic output made its home in his farmstead-turned-garden Little Sparta. The reader may compare to language-centered art practices emerging at the same time out of different impulses in the U.S. (practices retroactively consolidated under the title conceptual art).

The second essay, “A short history of pop, v.,” is concerned with the production and reception of advertising images, especially the ways in which color, illusionism, and foreground and background are implicated in techniques of persuasion. This essay makes it way to the questions “What are the functions of images?” and “When does text function like an image?” through the verdant fields of twentieth through twenty-first century American magazines, newspapers, and product packages.

The picture ground is also a subject of the third essay, “In or on the desktop,” which addresses the communicative and decorative properties of images and text in relation to background and foreground and suggests a comparison with medieval European representations of space.

the ‘environment’ of this document: a flexible, responsive space that accommodates diverse forms of life.

d For one convincing account of a fruitful encounter with this question, see for example Jerome McGann’s description of the artist and poet Bob Brown taking inspiration from his first reading of Stephen Crane’s Black Riders and other lines. McGann quotes Brown saying it gave him the first indications of “Moving Reading”, an idea that occupies much of the rest of his work. Likely the reader can supply more examples of revelatory encounters with promising new forms. Jerome McGann, Black riders: the visible language of modernism (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993): 107.
Models and precedents
Relationships between image and text are tested and theorized by philosophers, critics, historians, and makers whenever and wherever image and text are recognized as distinct categories of cultural production.* Image-and-text is the subject of two academic fields of study, epigraphy and emblem studies, and an important topic in many others, including textual analysis, documentation studies, advertising and marketing studies, cognitive psychology, semiotics and medieval and classical studies, to name a few that will be invoked here. Of course, text and image relationships are a chief concern of the artists, designers, and craftspersons who engaged in the emblem-making, stone-inscribing, book-designing, etc., in the first place.

Among the artists and makers I have studied, of particular importance to the thinking-through of this document, directly or in-, are Ian Hamilton Finlay; David Reinfurt and Stuart Bailey, artist-publishers engaged in an ongoing experiment with just-in-time production and twenty-first century Masters of Arrangement, Composition and Editing as ways of making meaning; Italo Calvino, especially his suspenseful account of ‘production’ and ‘reception’ If on a winter’s night a traveler; French fluxus artist, one-time United Nations economist, and former proprietor of La cédille sourit (“an English bookshop under the sign of humor”), Robert Filliou; American artist Allen Ruppersberg, proprietor of Al’s Cafe, 1969 (“small dish of pine cones and cookie, $1.50”); and the thoughtful and articulate graphic designers I interviewed for “A brief history of pop, v.”, Mark Melnick and Brendan Dalton.

These essays use terms and concepts from the work of artists, philosophers, historians, and critics. Roland Barthes’s numerous analyses of the production and reception of visual “messages,” especially photographs, by many accounts, the earliest examples of a reflexive relationship between language and image are instances of ekphrasis, “the verbal representation of visual representation” in ancient Greek poetry and rhetoric. The most oft-cited example is the poet’s vivid description of the Shield of Achilles in the Iliad. The definition of ekphrasis is not fixed, however, as W.J.T. Mitchell shows; it may refer to more or less specific modes of verbal representation of visual representation, for example “giving voice” to a mute object. W.J.T. Mitchell, Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 109, 153.

provide useful frameworks for analysing uses of images in popular media and the "connotative procedures" that constitute their production. His terms "anchorage" (describing text that "anchors" or fixes the meaning of an image) and "relay" (when text and image each offer new meaning to the other) are basic models for understanding image-text relationships.

Barthes’s and Michel Foucault’s recasting of the author played a role in the thinking-through of these essays (not to mention in the authoring of them), and Barthes’s delination of "readerly" and "writerly" texts makes a brief appearances in second essay.

Foucault discusses interdependences between words, images, and word-like images in the paintings of contemporary painters René Magritte, Paul Klee, and Wassily Kandinsky in his short essay *This is not a pipe.* Foucault’s primary concern is with relationships between *words* and *things*, and this interest parleys into pertinent insights about representation in art-making and elsewhere.

Barthes’s and Foucault’s theories are shaped by the system of semiotics articulated by Ferdinand de Saussure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as part of his theory of structuralism. Saussure’s most basic formula, of *signifier* and *signified* together constituting a single *sign* or unit of written or spoken language, is used throughout the essays in this document.

Among art historians and critics, textual critic Jerome McGann and media and literary theorist W.J.T. Mitchell provide broadly insightful historical-theoretical accounts of the exploitation of the “the materialities of expression” in contemporary literature and (so-called) visual culture—a phenomenon that McGann describes in one instance as “the ascension of the signifier.” Theorist and artist Johanna Drucker’s terms “marked” and “unmarked” are useful shorthand for describing self-consciously expressive


j Michel Foucault, *This is not a pipe*, illus. René Magritte, trans. James Horkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

k For a general theory of semiotics, see Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983).

l McGann, Black Riders, 83.
versus conventional forms of texts." Going back one generation, art historian Meyer Schapiro provides useful accounts of medieval picture-making and iconography.

Studying Ian Hamilton Finlay is an exhausting task by itself. I permitted my study to be limited to the abundant material readily available through the MIT and Harvard library systems, making only a few overtures to distant sources for important-seeming or intriguing documents. I relied on Yves Abrioux’s comprehensive illustrated monograph, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A visual primer*, for many of the representations of Finlay’s work reproduced here; on reproductions of publications from Finlay’s Wild Hawthorn Press accessible via UbuWeb and the Wild Hawthorn Press website; on published interviews and collections of Finlay’s letters for a sense of his voice and account of his intentions; and on the numerous published essays and articles by historians, critics, and collaborators (with some overlap between roles) to fill out the picture of his artistic practice.

“A short history of pop, e.” draws on twentieth-century American magazines and newspapers, interviews with graphic designers, and histories of the advertising and marketing industries in order to show how the term “pop” indicates assumptions about the arresting image as a particularly persuasive form.

For “In or on the desktop” I looked to studies of medieval European representation of space and iconographic picture-making systems, depending especially on the writings of Margaret A. Hagen and Meyer Schapiro.

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o Margaret A. Hagen, *Varieties of Realism: Geometries of Representational Art*
Making a study of relationships between images and text inevitably leads one to acts of *categorization* and *cataloging*. None of these essays aspire to a hyper-rational view of the word-and-image field; I wish to take up the task of appointing categories only as far as necessary in order to make useful comparisons. Where pattern-identification was called for, in addition to the terms and concepts cited above, I referred to two contemporary taxonomies of image-text relations, “A taxonomy of relationships between images and text” by Emily E. Marsh and Marilyn Domas White and “Criteria for Describing Word-and-Image Relations” by A. Kibédi Varga, rooted in documentation studies and literary studies respectively.\(^p\) Schematic representations of the taxonomies produced by these authors (one table and one diagram) are reproduced in the Illustrations.

In first paragraphs of her article outlining “criteria for describing word-and-image relations,” Varga points out how easy it is forget that encountering written text is a visual experience. She describes it as “like looking at at a plain white wall” and “not noticing that even such an uninteresting wall does have a color.”\(^q\) Indeed, as soon as texts are set down they become light-reflecting objects of the visible world. According the terms I propose here, the “plainer” or more “uninteresting” text partakes less in its ‘image-ness’ than the “marked” (Drucker) or “readerly” (Barthes) text. What happens next—the continuing operation of reception—is determined by the thing’s status as more or less text-like or image-like. The following pages bear evidence that the cultural life of text and images depends on these identifications.


\(^q\) Ibid., 32.
Art in the Garden

“As you will appreciate, there is a comparison being made”

The small bronze medal *Terror. Virtue* is one of Ian Hamilton Finlay’s most recognizable works. Commissioned by the British Art Medal Society, designed by Finlay and cast by Nicholas Sloan in 1984, the medal commemorates a dispute, the “Little Spartan War,” between Finlay and the local tax authority over the status of an outbuilding at Little Sparta, the 4½-acre garden in the Pentland Hills of southern Scotland created by Finlay and his wife Sue Macdonald Lockhart Finlay beginning in 1966. The short version of the story is, Finlay, having formally declared that an outbuilding previously identified as an art gallery (and, before that, a cow byre) had been converted to a Garden Temple, claimed that it was exempt from taxes on grounds of being a religious building; the Strathclyde Regional Council protested, and, after two years of aborted negotiations, in February 1983 the

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2 The garden was known as Stonypath, the name of the property on which it was built, until Finlay renamed it Little Sparta in 1983 in the midst of the tax dispute. The reference to Sparta is in relation to the nineteenth-century of Edinburgh as “the Athens of the north.” Ibid., 7-9.
(Gertrude Stein.) Silence is not hurt by attending to taking more reflection than a whole sentence.
(The Sheriff Officer.) I have not made any arrangements to call as at the moment such a visit would be inappropriate as some of your correspondence is not being ignored.
(Gertrude Stein.) Some people are heated with linen.
(Councillor Sanderson.) A warrant sale will take place because the goods have been removed to a place of sale.
(Gertrude Stein.) A simple melancholy clearly precious and on the surface and surrounded and mixed strangely.
(Douglas Hall.) I think that all possible means to this end should be considered by all the parties concerned.

A corner of the Garden Temple, Little Sparta, after Strathclyde Region’s Budget Day Raid.

Wax-drippings are from the stolen candlesticks TERROR and VIRTUE. Accompanying documentation, la liberte ou la mort 1789 (centre), is a study of the rhetoric of the Revolution by the French poet Roche. All the works stolen were separated from their written parts (integral to them) and so were left as fragments. Photograph by John Stathatos. Published by The Committee of Public Safety, Little Sparta.

Melon Joy, 1984

Terror/Virtue: After Strathclyde Region’s assault on the Garden Temple, Little Sparta, 1983
card, with John Stathatos
The events of the Little Spartan War are recounted in more or less detail in many accounts of Finlay's life and work. For a detailed eyewitness account by landscape historian Patrick Eyres, see *New Arcadian Journal* 15 (1984).
caption for clarification. “Accompanying documentation, *la liberte ou la mort 1789* (centre), is a study of the rhetoric of the Revolution by the French poet Roche.” Finlay’s caption continues, righteously: “All works stolen were separated from their written parts (integral to them) and so were left as fragments.”

Let us take stock of what we have encountered. We have a caption in a book indicating the title, year executed, medium, and joint authors of an artwork; a representation of that artwork: a card encompassing another title, a photograph, and another caption; within the photograph, missing candlesticks (another artwork), a third title, and a stack of papers identified in Finlay’s caption as “documentation” that itself has a subject (“the rhetoric of the Revolution”), an author (“the French poet Roche”), and a relationship of dependence with the absent candlesticks.

To take the accounting further, we have the paragraphs you are reading now and every other paragraph written about *Terror/Virtue*, including some helpful ones in the February 1984 issue of *The Medal*, the journal of the British Art Medal Society.

We should add to the tally the *Terror/Virtue* medal itself, as it is what led us here, and the emblems and inscriptions it bears on two sides. In addition, the medal comes with an “accompanying text” written and printed by Finlay and illustrated with a sketch by Sloan (the whole package was available for order from the British Art Medal Society). The “accompanying text” is reproduced on page 26.

This all amounts to a great network of differentiated relations between text, image, and object. How to make sense of it all? The question resonates beyond the accumulation of signifiers at hand. It is the motivating question of this and the following essays, as it applies to art (including many works much older than Finlay’s and some newer) and to common features of everyday life: shop windows, road signs, computer desktops, books, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, etc. By starting with Finlay we are in a sense going in through the back door: here we find the question
already answered. Finlay’s body of work is the outcome of a strenuous and sustained effort to ‘make sense of it all’, to create, in his oft-quoted phrase, “a model of order even if set in a space which is full of doubt.” This is a metaphor with which he described concrete poetry (he later employed it as a motto accompanying a picture of a guillotine in a Wild Hawthorn Press card created in 1991). Finlay’s model of order is an exhaustive set of terms and forms—a veritable language—flexible enough to accommodate multiple cultural and historical fields of reference and pointed enough to express sharp, often controversial criticism of contemporary culture. The space filled with doubt is, of course, the world outside the artist’s purview—a space we will enter in the following two essays, bearing Finlay’s model of order in mind.

Beyond interdependence
Returning to the collection of relations between the stack of papers, the candlesticks, the card, the titles, the captions, etc., the question of how to find sense remains. Finlay offers a clue by naming—that is, categorizing—the stack of papers in the black and white photograph as “documentation,” and declaring it “integral” to the artwork. Separated from these papers, Finlay’s caption says, the stolen works become fragments.

His terms, ‘documentation’ and ‘fragments’, indicate a relationship of interdependence—not exactly unity—between a text (specifically, a study of French Revolutionary rhetoric, so we are told) and a pair of objects (two ceramic candlesticks in the shape of Corinthian columns bearing the labels “Terror” and “Virtue”). Relationships of interdependence recur throughout the set of texts, images, and objects enumerated on pages 23-24, for example, between the forms and labels of the missing candlesticks, between the missing candlesticks and the documentation in the space of the photograph, between the photograph and the title and caption in the space of the card, between the reproduction of the card and its caption in the space of the page from the monograph; and between the reproduction of the page from the Visual Primer and the sentences before you here in the space of this essay.

Interdependence is easy to identify: it is a matter of recognizing first that a relation exists between parts and second that the relation changes

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THE GUILLOTINE represents (of course) Terror, the classical columns (a visual ‘rhyme’ borrowed from Puvis) not only Terror’s reverse - here obverse - Jacobin Virtue, but the true Revolutionary mode.

"In the system of the French Revolution, what is immoral is politically unsound, what corrupts counter-revolutionary." ROBESPIERRE

"There are besides, two little columnes or pillastres of this Throne; love appears on the right hand, and feare of Thy justice is to be seen on the left." HENRY HAWKINS

"A republican government has virtue as its principle, or else terror. What do they want who want neither virtue nor terror?" SAINT-JUST

"Terror is the piety of the Revolution." IAN HAMILTON FINLAY

Bibl.: Saint-Just, Selected Writings; Hawkins, The Devout Hart; Wattenmaker, Puvis de Chavannes; Roche, Liberty Or Death 1789; Korngold, Robespierre.
the status of the parts (the latter is the primary assumption of these essays). The real critical labor lies in understanding the precise nature and particular effects of relations between parts. The artistic labor, meanwhile, lies in creating or shaping those relations. Finlay was acutely aware of the ways meaning emerges from specific arrangements and contexts. His battery of relational mechanisms, at work in Little Sparta and in the publications of his Wild Hawthorn Press, includes juxtaposition, disjunction, hierarchy, quotation, historical reference, and formal resemblance, among others. Here, his term ‘documentation’ indicates a kind of hierarchy on one hand, as well as suggesting the objective or informational character of the thing named ‘documentation’, while ‘fragment’, a word and idea that is everywhere in Finlay’s work, suggests the existence of much larger whole beyond the space of Stathatos’s photograph, beyond the space of the card, beyond the space of the page.

In common usage, documentation precisely documents—serves something outside itself by preserving information about the other thing’s conditions of existence. The term carries meaning without referring to a particular form. A photograph, a film, a website, a typescript, a collection of all of the above and any number of other forms might be counted as documentation; what matters is its relationship to the thing documented. The “documentation” pictured in the photograph of the missing candlesticks—la liberte ou la mort 1798, “a study of the rhetoric of the Revolution by the French poet Roche”—defies the normal parameters of the term: it is apparently a ‘study’ of something other than the thing it is supposed to document. Furthermore, la liberte ou la mort 1798 seems to have had a completely independent, non-documentarian previous life as La liberti ou la mort, refléchissez et choisissez, 1798, a slim literary volume by Denis Roche, an established French poet, published by a commercial press in France in 1969.

What is Finlay trying to achieve by saying that poet Roche’s 1969 “study of the rhetoric of the Revolution” (very likely a collection of eighteenth-century French epigrams 27) is “documentation” of his own work dating to the early 1980s? First, he is creating a precise relation between two things that is not stated or inferable elsewhere. He calls on his

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Denis Roche, La Liberté ou la mort, réfléchissez et choisissez, 1789 (Paris: Tchou, 1969). A collection of French epigrams from the time of the Revolution, itself a kind of documentation. 191 pages, 10 x 18 cm, complete in itself.

At the time of submission, the writer is seeking evidence of the true content of the papers on the table between the wax drippings. A letter posted to the poet Roche is reproduced in the Illustrations.
audience's familiarity with the activity of documenting and the particular role of documentation in the circulation and preservation of artworks—in the context of the art collecting institution, documentation comprises descriptions of the material properties as well the origins and the life cycle of an artwork. But Roche's text almost certainly does not offer details about the material properties or provenance of Terror and Virtue (in fact, it is likely Roche's text predates the creation of the candlesticks by over ten years). The reader/viewer is invited to consider variations on the conventional relationship of documentation to documented. The term 'fragment' puts a point on the relationship: the documentation here is not an optional companion but rather a constituent part of Finlay's work. In order to understand the candlesticks, Finlay is saying, you have to read Roche's text. One artwork accounts for the other.

Embedded in the relation between the candlesticks and the documentation is another relation, to the historical fact of the French Revolution, represented by Roche's “study of the rhetoric of the Revolution” and the form and title of Finlay’s candlesticks. The reference is ‘embedded’ in one sense—it is ‘contained’ in both works—but external in another: it is a ubiquitous, explicit reference in Finlay’s body of work (see Chapter 9 of Stephen Scobie’s Earthquakes and Explorations for a fuller account of Finlay’s neoclassicism). Here, the nature of the relation of each work to the common historical referent is the key to the relation of documentation to documented. The reference embedded in the candlesticks takes the form of an iconic object (Corinthian column) paired with labels (Terror, Virtue), while Roche’s “study,” which has the appearance of a long-form text, offers a broader view of the historical context in which this iconography and these terms operated.

ab Following this logic, explaining the relation between the two parts is beside the point: read the text and you'll understand the candlesticks, Q.E.D.


ad What are the guillotine and column all about anyway? The image of the guillotine functioning as an explicit reference to the Revolution, and more specifically the Reign of Terror, for an audience even marginally familiar with modern European history. The column would operate in a larger semantic field, pointing to antiquity just as convincingly as Enlightenment France (the ideals of which the Reign of Terror was supposed to make real). However, the proximity of the guillotine to the column fixes the symbolic value of the latter to neoclassical and specifically revolutionary France (a demonstration of the operation of fixity, normally the province of text in relation to an image, performed by instead by another image).

As explained in notes z and aa, it remains to be seen whether Roche's "study of the rhetoric of the Revolution" corresponded more or less faithfully to Roche's published work La Liberté ou la mort, réfléchissez et choisissez, 1789, itself a collection of eighteenth-century epigrams. In any case, the discrepancy between the forms of the "study" on one hand (indicating...
documented resembles a phenomenon familiar to historians: citing a source in order to establish historical context.

Where exactly are the texts and images in this drawn-out example? We have inferred that Roche's study of rhetoric is a long-form text, the kind of text apprehended not in an instant but rather with studious attention over time—what we might reasonably call it a durational or "readerly" text (varying from Barthes's use of this term\(^\text{ae}\)). It is represented twice on the card, by a photographic image of a stack of papers bearing a legible title (an image of text) and by a brief textual description in the caption: two condensed interpretations of the thing itself. Continuing this way through all the parts listed at the outset results in a catalog of image-text relations. Both medal and candlesticks follow the formula of the emblem: symbolic representational forms with labels to make the symbolism explicit. Finlay's title and caption on the card, rendered in red ink that calls attention to the text's visual status, behave similarly to the documentation, offering a specific historical context for the photographic image. Together, the title and caption on the card take (literary) form as a short narrative. The even shorter 17-word caption from Abrioux's monograph behaves differently, offering a kind of 'minor contextualization'—a conventional art historical dataset separated by commas and carriage returns that, in its visual form, epitomizes the "unmarked," un-image-like text. And the paragraphs before you relate to another art historical convention, **ekphrasis**, and in many ways correspond formally to our expectations of a contemporary academic text: unremarkable serif typography on a paper size so standard in the non-metric world that it is known simply as "letter"; three pages of metatext at the outset declaring a relation of submission to an academic institution.\(^\text{af}\)

The general pattern is familiar to a twenty-first century reader: in one way or another, all these texts 'explain' pictures, a phenomenon epitomized by the caption-image form in today's newspapers and magazines (theorized by Roland Barthes as "anchorage")\(^\text{ag}\); see pages 9 and 10 for interpretation) and the collection of epigrams on the other is material for another essay. In short, Finlay's use of the term "study" in this context would be a demonstration of the principle that the act of **arranging** or **grouping** constitutes intellectual labor, i.e. tantamount to interpretation.

\(^{ae}\) Barthes uses "readerly" to describe a kind of fixed text that is passively received by the reader (versus a "writerly" text in which the reader actively participates in the text, i.e. becomes writer). Barthes, S/Z: An essay, 4-5.

\(^{af}\) It is of course slightly facetious to claim conventional status for a document about the conventional or unconventional status of documents, furthermore one that that endeavors to, following Jerome McGann, find "formal equivalence for its subject matter and still preserve its communicative function." McGann, Black Riders, 101. See Illustrations for the context of this quotation. For an elaboration of the term **paratext**, see Gérard Genette, Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

examples.) That each picture somehow incorporates words however suggests a different relation, one in which categories are less categorical. The card presents multiple departures from the conventional “anchorage” hierarchy: the red type, by virtue of its color, becomes part of the image field (becomes image-like), while the photograph is printed in black ink, the conventional color for typography (and thus becomes less image-like). The climax of this catalog of forms is the text pictured in the photograph and referenced in the caption, which, by virtue of being called documentation, seems more text-like—without even being visible—that any of the actual, apprehendable text printed on the card. The (literary) content of this apprehendable text should be taken into account as well. Finlay’s title and caption comprise righteous language pointing to the evidence of a crime, framing the photograph as a picture of a site of violence—though the particularities of that act of violence would likely seem cryptic and strangely academic to the uninitiated.

The guillotine at large
This essay so far has taken a microscopic view of Finlay’s work, focusing on the bottom half of a single page of Abrioux’s Visual Primer. But the principle that “everything is everything” serves us well here. Earlier I characterized Finlay’s body of work as adding up to an exhaustive set of terms and forms (“a veritable language”). What makes the set language-like is not only its exhaustiveness but also, more significantly, its manner of deployment by Finlay, who continuously re-uses and strings together terms and forms, adapting them to diverse media and contexts of reception.

We have seen how the twin emblem of Terror and Virtue recurs in a bronze medal (guaranteed a permanent residence in the collection of the British Museum; also available to an elite consumer audience at the time it was struck); a set of ceramic candlesticks (the guillotine is there absent, but then, so are the candlesticks); and a “published” card that deploys only the verbal half the emblem. But this is only a sampling. Finlay invokes Terror and Virtue, column and guillotine, in countless works between the 1980s and the end of his life in the early 2000s. To consider just the guillotine on its own, or least, in relation to a diverse range of commentaries and forms, is to enter another list: guillotine as “model of order”; guillotine as “n., the highest peak of The Mountain; and its deepest ravine”; vine-covered guillotine accompanied by a longer epigram (reproduced on the facing page);

ah Color as a signal of visuality is treated as a foregone conclusion here; for a more detailed discussion of color and visuality, see “A brief history of pop, v.”

Both the garden style called 'sentimental', and the French Revolution, grew from Rousseau. The garden, trellis, and the guillotine, are alike entwined with the hemicycle of the new 'sensibility'.

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guillotine as part of a visual rhyme with a waterfall ("Two Landscapes of the Sublime"); most ambitiously, four guillotines, all full-size, installed outdoors in a formal allée at the international art exhibition Documenta 8 in Kassel, Germany, titled "A View to the Temple."[i]

Many of these works are identified by Finlay as "emblems" and in some cases appears in emblem books—as in the case of naming a stack of papers documentation, appointing the various elements of his 'set' with genres or typological identifications is a way of making meaning. The double operation, in the case of Finlay's emblem-making, of making a historical reference with a reference to a genre (itself historical) is described by Stephen Bann in his introduction to Finlay's publication Heroic Emblems:

[Finlay] mobilizes the gap between the modern period and that of the Renaissance, just as the emblem-artists themselves identified the gap between their own period and the Graeco-Roman world through the choice of classical tags and quotations. He sets before us a cultural tissue in which these various levels—the Classical, the Renaissance and the Modern—are indissolubly linked.[k]

Arguably it is not just Classical, Renaissance, and Modern that are referenced in Finlay's work. But the idea of the "indissoluble link" is quite right. We have seen how the units of Finlay's symbolic kit: they move from one companion to another, get redrawn, scaled up or down, find their way into gardens and books and sometimes galleries. The dependency is not between this particular part and that particular part, but rather between the particular part and the knowledge of the whole, a whole that encompasses what appears to be an infinite chain of allusion.

[i] The "model of order" emblem was created in 1991 with Gary Hincks and published by Wild Hawthorn Press; the "highest peak" emblem was published in the booklet Jacobin Definitions created with Kathleen Lindsley (Wild Hawthorn Press, 1991); the vine-covered guillotine is a drawing by Gary Hincks printed as a lithographic and published by Wild Hawthorn Press in 1987; "Two Landscapes of the Sublime" is another lithograph with Gary Hincks published by Wild Hawthorn Press in 1989; Finlay's contribution to Documenta 8, "A View to the Temple," was realized in wood and bronze with Keith Brookwell and Nicholas Sloan in 1987.

In black and white without a filter, clouds on a bright day are indistinct and sky is washed out. Shadow detail also suffers.

When same scene is photographed with the addition of a red No. 25 filter, sky darkens, clouds pop out and contrast improves.
A short history of pop, v., with or without out

pop, v.1 5. intr. e. orig. U.S. To be or become vivid, or, visually arresting. Also with out.\(^\text{al}\)

Pop, v., n., adj., gets a lot of mileage in American English. It is a sound, a familial title, a type of beverage, a genre of art, a festive explosion. It is an abbreviation for popular and an acronym for an Internet protocol used to retrieve email. With prepositions attached, pop refers to other types of cultural productions: pop-up books and greeting cards and pop-up windows and menus on the computer screen.

Pop, v. enjoys a second life as a metaphor describing explosion-like phenomena. “Downtown is popping”; “she popped in to say hello”; “record sales popped off the charts.” Some pop metaphors are more concrete than others. In any case, the explosion-likeness is in the quality of movement, usually rapid, over a short or long distance between points or planes, or else in the quality of suddenness, unexpectedness. The popping downtown describes a lively urban space full of people moving, perhaps resembling popcorn kernels subjected to heat. The visitor who pops in makes a sudden, brief appearance before popping off. Record sales that pop off the charts move in the two-dimensional space of a chart representing sales over time—until the sales numbers outgrow the chart’s parameters and pop off.

The metaphor extends into our area of special interest, the picture plane. Here it takes on a life of its own. In the case of the picture that pops, the reference is not to an explosion or a sudden movement, but rather to a shift—a kind of expansion—from two to three dimensions. The picture that pops is one that aspires to three-dimensionality, illusionism (a condition encompassing three-dimensionality), and/or nearness to the viewer. A 1969 advertisement for a color TV set (see facing page) promises that the “colors will pop out with realism”; a photographer offers advice for how to make

"the subject really ‘pop’ off the background”; a graphic designer “adds a bevel and drop shadow” to a title on a book cover in order to “make it pop.”

In these examples, the *pop* occurs in the space of the screen, the photograph, or the graphic composition—spaces, like the space of a painting, designated for the representation of multiple planes on an approximately flat surface. An image that *pops* seems to exceed its surface and move forward, closer to the viewer. That such a condition is desirable is taken to be self-evident. “Colors that pop with realism” are a selling point for early color television sets: the phrase appears prominently in full page newspaper advertisements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Photography magazines for hobbyists routinely provide technical instructions on how to make colors or details *pop* within photographs. The title that *pops* from the book cover is both legible, and, according to the logic of the marketing department, more likely to turn a profit than the title that fails to *pop.*

The key operation here can be said to be convincing, an operation that relies on an audience (real or hypothetical) that shares common aesthetic standards for the treatment and placement of images. The color image that *pops out* of the TV set is convincing by way of seeming more realistic than other televisual images. The photograph that *pops off* the background is convincing because it demonstrates mastery of photographic or darkroom technique. The book title that *pops* is convincing because it seems professional; the book cover that *pops* is convincing because it stands out from the others—it is, theoretically at least, more desirable, more saleable, and more profitable.

Reading/seeing
What does *pop* in the picture plane tell about the image-ness and text-ness of texts and images? The *pop* metaphor under consideration is a decidedly visual phenomenon. Photographs *pop,* colors *pop,* figures *pop.* When headlines or book titles *pop,* the metaphor refers to a visual rather than a readerly encounter, as the example of the title on the book cover shows. The designer, by his own account, “adds” illusionistic visual effects—“a bevel...
Ted Williams Hunting Coat

Carefully tailored for lightweight comfort—$29

Hunting Cap .......... 2.59
Gloves ................. 2.79

Tie-On Shell ........... 2.49
Blank Quan Vinyl laminated in cotton. Wear over any outfit, machine washable.

Sears Insulated Innerwear Sporting Suits 977

Sears 4-Gun Racks of Solid Cherrywood

Portable Color TV

18-in. Diagonally Measured Picture
Regular $369.95 Now Only

$339

Sears Insulated Sahara Suits

Reg. $19.99 1**

Sears Reversible Trapper Suits

Reg. $19.99 **

Sears Plastic Trigger Locks

Reg. $19.99 **

Mallard, Pintail Decoys

Reg. 15.95 **

Sears Duck Call

Reg. $2.49 1**

Ted Williams Vinyl and Scope Case. Vinyk on back, leather on front. Extra plastic pockets.

Reg. 14.99

Ragweed Vinyl Gun Case. Fiberglass padded and cotton flannel lining, waterproof, . . .

Reg. 13.99

Sears 4-Gun Racks of Solid Cherrywood

Reg. $7.99 6**

and for all types of firearms. Finished in cherrywood. Comes with locking bar.

Cool Night Sleeping Bag

Reg. $26.95

Keeps you warm in freezing cold—summer to winter season. 2 top and 3 bottom layers. Full length side zipper, offset top layer. Zip close, machine washable.
and drop shadow—to make the title *pop*, that is, to make the title into a thing with depth that appears to stand slightly above the plane of the book cover. It follows that text that *pops* must be brief enough to be apprehended immediately in its entirety. In the previous essay I submitted a description of reading as, at its most readerly, a durational activity commanding the reader’s focused attention. Text that *pops* rejects this kind of sustained reading—its form and its imagined context (the bookstore, from the point of view of the people creating its cover) encourage instead a kind of reading that is more like seeing.

**Popular images**

Images that *pop* according to common twentieth and twenty-first century usage belong to a general category: by and large they are images designed to persuade or entertain. In the case of the Sears color television set and the Radiant “Hy-Flect” projection screen, the metaphorical *pop* is a function of the transmitting device—mass-produced consumer electronics in both cases—rather than an inherent characteristic of the transmitted images. In all cases, including photography and printed or onscreen graphics, the image or composition that *pops* achieves a culturally-agreed-upon aesthetic standard; it is professional, eye-catching, convincing. These examples belong to a category recognizable to any twenty-first century creature of media: so-called popular visual culture encompassing posters, postcards, billboards, book covers, product packages, magazines, desktop background images, etc. What makes these ‘popular’ images more likely to *pop* than images in an art museum or a technical manual? Or, to ask the question from the opposite direction, why does the *pop* metaphor seem to be reserved for popular imagery bound up in the marketplace?

*Pop* referring to the visual experience of attention-getting dates back to at least the 1940s. The Oxford English Dictionary’s entry for for “*pop*” (definition 5e) cites a line from an 1946 American newspaper article: “In a burst of dye freedom, cotton’s colors pop out in Chinese red and blue, chartreuse, coffee cream ... .” The Radiant “Hy-Flect” projector screen advertisement reproduced on the facing page appeared in *Popular Science* in the same year (“Project your motion pictures and slides on a screen which makes them fairly ‘POP OUT’ into the room”). It is no coincidence that 1946, the year following the close of the Second World War, marked the beginning of a period of significant expansion of the U.S. consumer marketplace as wartime bans on consumer goods production were lifted and wartime technologies and manufacturing and distribution systems were re-purposed for the consumer market.

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*op* *Popular Science* 149 no. 4 (Oct. 1946): 247.

*oq* See Joel Davidson, “Building for War: Preparing for Peace: World War II and the
of military research, such as nylon, synthetic rubber and new types of plastic, were introduced into consumer goods manufacturing. The development of television, already underway before the war, gained speed when military engineers and technicians applied their specialized knowledge of electronic communication systems to commercial technology designed for "home entertainment."

As communication technology expanded, so did marketing and advertising. The increasing volume of "brand name" consumer products in the U.S. in the late 1940s went hand in hand with the resurgence of the professional advertising and marketing industries—industries that were already well-established by the end of the nineteenth century but had been in decline since the 1929 stock market collapse. As in the decades following the close of the Second World War, the advertising industry benefitted particularly from rapid technological advancement in photographic reproduction processes. Color printing, expensive and inefficient at the beginning of the century, became exponentially faster and cheaper when photo offset printing became standard procedure for printing houses; color photographic images became standard fare in magazine and even newspaper ads.

Color television and color cinema was mainstream by the late 1960s. Advertisements celebrating the illusionistic experience of color cinema and color television were themselves rendered in illusionistic color (see page 38).

Make it pop
Color is a major agent in the pop metaphor, as we have seen. Hobbyist photography magazines and manuals dating to 1960s frequently include technical instructions for making photographs pop by means of manipulating color, either by framing the photograph with an eye to the color palette, or by using color filters on the camera or enlarger lens. Graphic designers manipulating illustration, type, stroke, shape and texture in addition to photography use bright colors or color inversion to make an

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The term "brand" to identify a particular company name appearing on a product dates to the nineteenth century; the more elaborate concept of the "brand image" became current in the late 1950s and early 1960s. See Adam Arvidson, Brands: Meaning and Culture in Media Culture (London: Routledge, 2006): 54.

element of a composition pop. Color is an obvious ally to the pop metaphor because it is especially suited for naturalistic renderings and “eye-catching” graphics. Furthermore, for advertisers in the second half of the twentieth century, color seemed to promise direct access to the consumer’s capacity for emotional attachment. Starting in the 1910s and continuing throughout the twentieth century, research on the efficacy of advertisements indicated that memory retention and emotional attachment were the key factors in the effort to increase sales. A 1964 on the effect of advertisements printed in color in newspapers found stated in its findings that “color increases status” of the product or company advertised, and that “color makes the merchandise and ad more interesting and attractive.” Make it pop is a metaphor for the work of the designer who produced such advertisements.

As an advertising mandate, make it pop works on various scales. Pop occurs within the space of a graphic composition—a magazine ad, a book cover, a billboard—a space it all the while endeavors to transcend—as well as in larger spatial contexts—the shop window, the “retail environment.” In a series of email exchanges discussing how pop is used in the graphic design profession, designers trained in print design described pop as operation of “creating visual interest,” and “introducing hierarchy and stress to one or other other piece of text,” “making a particular element (the title, the author's name, etc) more prominent, more eye-catching, more lifted off from the background.” The pop effectively generates a foregrounded subject, a thing in front of everything else. What are some of the graphic techniques? Using red, increasing type size, “knocking out” type (rendering text in white on a dark background), and adding a spot color or varnish over a single element of the composition—a technique whereby one element of the composition exists “parallel to and above” a “banal 4 color” surface.

The techniques were understood by the designers to have a kind of distance-shortening effect—physical and metaphorical: the design that pops is “attention-grabbing,” it “creates an impression very quickly” and “it comes and goes before you had a proper chance to think.” You in this case is the hypothetical passing consumer who, multiplied, constitutes the


aw Brendan Dalton (graphic designer, America Online), in discussion with the author, March–April 2013; Mark Melnick (freelance graphic designer, Mark Melnick Design), in discussion with the author, March–April 2013. See partial transcripts of these conversations in the Illustrations.

ax Brendan Dalton in discussion with the author.
commercial graphic designer's audience.

Graphic design is difficult field in which to locate images and texts precisely. Graphic more often refers to a treatment, one that brings texts and images together, than it is a particular thing. When the noun is used, it hovers between image and text, leaning one way or another depending on context. A graphic, n., is text-like in that it is not photographic (if a photograph can be taken as the gold standard for image-ness); in technical computer drafting terms, a graphic is more likely a vector than a bitmap, i.e. comprised of continuous lines and shapes rather than unseeably small points of color. In this way it is like typography—it is indeed a way to describe typography, and a way to describe a composition (such as a page) that incorporates particularly self-conscious typography. Furthermore, particular graphics often communicate specific meanings; like words, they denote. Logotypes state a brand or company name (and if successful, project its 'image'), wayfinding signs offer directions, charts indicate weather conditions or profit margins.

But for all its text-likeness, the capacity for graphics to pop is emphatically visual. I have already proposed that ‘reading’ a graphic that incorporates text is more like seeing—these are not readerly texts. Its perceived immediacy and emotional impact—the metaphorical grabbing of attention—are the special operations of images. “It comes and goes before you had a proper chance to think,” wrote one graphic designer. Thinking, like reading, is a durational activity, and one that carries a suggestion of critical engagement. Seeing, then, is more like feeling: more immediate, less determined, more likely to persuade.
The desktop is one of many metaphors at work in the realm of personal computing. Computer users open and close windows, plug devices into ports, zip and unzip folders, and cut and paste data or save it to clipboard. The desktop, a kind of parent metaphor that accounts for much of the language used to talk about everyday computing, relates the computer's graphical user interface with the physical surface of a desk. In practice, the metaphor extends beyond the top of the desk to the entire space of an office or study—the computer desktop is home to furniture and accessories such as a clock, a calculator, and a trash receptacle as well as familiar items such as documents and folders. An optical phenomenon, the desktop is an image created by light projected through semi-liquid crystal diodes sandwiched behind the electrode-laden glass surface of a modern computer screen.

This essay is concerned with the spatial rules and the visual experience of the metaphorical desktop. As an illusionistic space populated by an ever-changing set of smaller visual units, the computer desktop has precedents in the history of picture-making, especially European painting before linear perspective became the preferred mode of representative picture-making.

The visual experience of the desktop is determined by the graphical user interface, a development of the early 1980s coincident with the expansion of the retail market for personal computers, maps computer functions to a world of images. The vast majority of these representative images are icons—small, representative, conventionalized images often

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ay The particular optical mechanics of computer displays have changed over time; at the time of the invention of the GUI the standard display used cathode ray tubes; electron beams project through the tubes and illuminate the phosphor-coated screen in order to create an image.

taking the shape of a sheet of office paper, ranging in size from about 16 to 256 pixels wide, depending on user display settings, and always accompanied by a textual label. According to common usage, icons live “on” the desktop—like its counterpart in the physical space of an office, the computer desktop is a surface onto which items can be put down, spread out, piled up or put away. Unlike many desk surfaces, a computer desktop often looks more like a picture than a surface. The desktop background, also known as desktop “wallpaper” (here we leave behind the metaphor of the desk in favor of something more vertical), is perhaps the most characteristic, and certainly the most visible, element of the desktop.

The terms “background” and “wallpaper” are telling in that they evoke an image of an expansive, continuous surface—borderlessness—as well as suggesting passive presence. A desktop image fills the entire space of the screen except for a narrow strip along one edge devoted to a menu bar or taskbar, which, thanks to shadow and reflection effects, usually has the appearance of sitting on top of the desktop background. The desktop image is, in effect, behind everything—behind application windows, behind status bars, behind widgets, behind notifications, behind menus, behind icons.

The previous essay addressed ‘behind’ and ‘in front of’ in the context of persuasive advertising images. This essay considers background and foreground in relation to utility and decoration in the desktop environment and looks for correspondences between types of images and texts and users’ expectations of active engagement or passive reception. As a picture-making activity, the ‘production’ of the desktop shares concerns and techniques with European picture-making between the sixth and fourteenth centuries A.D., the period in which symbolic pictures were the standard units of pictures and space was a flexible, adaptable element.

The first premise of this essay is that the major ‘grounds’ of the desktop, foreground and background, correspond to different modes of experience for the user: active use in the foreground, passive reception of the background. This model follows the earliest meanings of foreground and background in seventeenth century western theater and painting, in which the “chief objects of contemplation” occupy the foreground, and background refers to the surface or ground behind them. In the most historically general definition, the background, in theater as in illusionistic painting, is the element of the composition most distant from the

ba  On a 1280×1024 screen, a single 48×48 pixel icon occupies less than 0.2% of the desktop.

viewer—physically distant in the case of theater, distant-seeming in the case of painting. Historically specific accounts of the theatrical and the painterly background show how preferences for particular background treatments crossed back and forth between theater and painting through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Illusionism by way of linear perspective was the standard mode of visual representation by the sixteenth century. The new way of making pictures made paintings like the one the next page seem hopelessly old-fashioned. The crowd of characters (standard symbolic units) floating in front of an abstracted architectural space would have been at odds with the new fashion for measurable space.

In the space of the computer desktop, the foreground is a space of interaction. In the space closest to the surface, computer users navigate through selectable, and in some cases editable, text and images. Desktop icons, together with items on the menu bar, work both as a wayfinding system and as points of access to data and computer functions. These images and texts have precise meanings: selecting an icon or a menu item triggers a specific function, such as launching an application or opening a file.

The desktop icon is a close relative of the semiotic icon defined by Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce offered a three part semiotic system encompassing symbol, icon, and index. For Peirce, an icon was an exact representation; computer desktop icons follow the logic of Peirce's symbol instead: a conventionalized or abstracted representation. A desktop icon representing a file folder looks recognizably like a file folder in a vertical filing cabinet; a desktop icon representing a calculator utility looks like an office calculator; an icon representing the desktop looks like a generic desktop (a particularly tidy one with a default background image—see example on page 45). Desktop icons for text documents invariably take the form of sheets of paper complete with symbolic gray marks arrayed in horizontal lines to remind us of writing or printing. Desktop icons representing image files are most often pictures of images, with the appearance of the picture-of-an-image differing slightly between file formats.

Desktop icons resemble art historical icons, as well; For example, computer icons often appear together with texts—a word, short phrase, or other arrangement of letters, numerals, and punctuation—that function as descriptive labels, appearing in a uniform system font below, above, or next to the icon. In the case of user-generated folders and files, this descriptive text provides specific information about the item represented beyond what


is conveyed by the image. In the case of a rich text file, for example, the icon representing the file indicates, to an initiated user, the data type (text), the file type (rich text) and, in some cases, the software with which it was created. Data types (image, text, spreadsheet) frequently correspond to conventional image types—icons for rich text files, for example, have many of the same visual features of icons for other text-based file types such as Microsoft Word documents or Notepad files.

Label text uniquely identifies a file or folder—indeed, it is the unique name of the file or folder for both the computer and the computer user. There may be ten text files on a user’s desktop, and five them may be rich text files, but only one of them can be named thesis.rtf, because the operating system won’t permit a second thesis.rtf to be created in the same place as the first.

In the case of icons representing utilities and software applications, the relationship between image and text is less hierarchical because both image and text are unique. The Macintosh, Windows and Linux calculator utilities, for example, are represented by a picture of a calculator as well as the label, “Calculator,” that appears nowhere else on the system as an application name. The same is true for the familiar trash receptacle, a holding tank for data that has been deleted by the user but not yet erased from the computer’s physical memory. The Macintosh “trash bin,” the Windows “recycling bin”, and the Linux “trash” (visible only if turned on) each appear together with a picture of a modest waste container—filled with crumpled paper when it contains files; otherwise, empty. Here the name serves as a 1:1 translation or verification of the image content. We recognize the waste container, although we may have chosen the term “wastebasket,” or, “rubbish bin” to describe it in words. Inversely, we recognize the labels “trash bin” and “recycling bin,” although we may have produced or picked out an illustration different from the one supplied by the operating system.

The same is true for icons representing proprietary software applications, which carry the special burden of uniqueness levied by marketing departments and, accordingly, often incorporate copyrighted logos. For instance, the Skype logo, an uppercase white S inside a blue cloud, doubles as a desktop icon, as does the Mozilla Firefox logo, a red fox wrapped around a blue globe. Icons for Adobe Creative Suite 5 programs—shallow, three-dimensional rectangles viewed in perspective and rendered in different colors for each application—incorporate acronyms referring to the name of the program (InDesign, Photoshop, [Adobe] Illustrator) within the image. Text icons for proprietary file types sometimes incorporate text into images as well, for example, the icon for files in Adobe’s Portable Document Format incorporates its three-letter file extensions into the icon’s image content. The file extension thus shows up twice for many users—once as part of the icon image, rendered in color in a specially-chosen font—and
then again at the end of the label text, in a default system font rendered according to global user settings.

While considering the formal qualities of desktop icons, it is important to note that a desktop icon almost never appears in isolation. The complex system of functions available on personal computers are represented by multiple types of icons, as well as other images and texts that appear on the desktop. The importance of precisely mapping these words and images to their function is all the more important in this context of abundance—in fact, it is one of the main concerns of professional user interface designers.

The background image that appears behind icons and other desktop items is implicated in user interface design only insofar as its appearance affects the legibility of items in the foreground. The background image is dynamic in the sense that it controlled by the user, who can select a background image from any of the image files on the computer, including default background image files packaged with the operating system, and control its position (centered, stretched or tiled) by way of a control panel or system preferences panel accessible through the main menu for the operating system. But while the desktop background image can be selected and even created by the user, it is not itself a point of interaction. Like a stage set or the background of a narrative painting such as we see on page +, the desktop background image provides a setting for an array of foreground elements. Unlike on a stage or in a painting, the desktop background image is not bound to foreground elements by expectations of narrative or aesthetic continuity. In the course of normal computer use, windows are opened, closed and layered on top of each other, and desktop icons are moved around and deleted and new ones appear. Desktop background images remain the same, be unaffected by the changes in the foreground, while foreground elements move relatively independently of the static background. [Because the desktop is a programmed space—a framework built by a programmer to accommodate diverse uses and what’s over time—it can never have the quality that a painting has where intersections and incorporations happen between background and foreground.] [But that is not say there is no meaning there or especially in the interplay and there is definitely potential]

Like an office or desk, personal computers are associated with an individual by way of ownership or use, and decisions about the configuration and appearance of the display space of the computer reflect the values of the owner or user—especially those decisions understood to be more aesthetic than utilitarian. Advertisements for downloadable desktop be Well, not always the same because the user can change it but relative to the foreground changes the background change is like geologic time+
background images bill their products as “vivid”, “fresh”, “high-quality”, “stunning” and “crystal clear”. The desktop is a working space as well as a space for display of taste: like a picture hanging on the wall in a home or office—and now we leave the metaphor of the desktop-as-painting in order to return to the metaphor of desktop-as-room, in which paintings may be hung—the desktop background image reflects the taste of the person who chose it, or, to follow Bourdieu, the cultural conditions that determined that person’s taste. Galleries of downloadable background images claim to offer beauty, inspiration and escape: an image downloaded from the National Geographic “wallpapers” gallery provides “a unique view of the world for your desktop”; desktop background images created by graphic designers are billed by Smashing Magazine as “a source of inspiration.” A background image of friends or family is much like a photo on a desk, a souvenir that conveys the importance of the persons pictured to anyone who sees it. Desktop background images also often take the appearance of abstract shapes and patterns, or a field of solid color—an image without representational content, no more or less than a background.

How do the characteristics of desktop background images and icon images relate to their reception and use? The background/foreground relationship plays a role. Returning to an earlier description, the desktop image functions as a continuous background surface, and icon images as discrete foreground elements; users familiar with western traditions of theater and picture-making identify the background as a static space and the foreground as a space of action. Icons, by virtue of their position closest to the user, are recognizable as dynamic, story-telling elements—with the user in control of their movements. Position, specifically, relative proximity to an audience or user, signals importance, and in the context of interactivity, selectability.

Implicit in the background-foreground hierarchy is also a hierarchy of size. The desktop image is necessarily larger in physical size, measured in pixel dimensions, than an icon, sometimes by thousands of times. According to the conventions of other picture-making traditions, especially photography, a larger field allows for finer detail and more colors and tones and often connotes artistic production, such as in the case of photographic prints. [the art historical hierarchy of history paintings as the best and biggest, genre paintings as the worst and smallest] Desktop background images advertised as “high quality”, “beautiful” or “stunning” and characterized by saturated colors and sharp detail take part in this kind of primarily aesthetic identification.

Icons, conversely, are decidedly “low quality” images. Low-resolution as a rule, icon images rarely occupy more than 100 x 100 pixels of display space. They appear not as objects of beauty or originality, but rather as part of a shared symbolic language providing access to basic
utilitarian functions—opening and closing files, folders and applications. The smallness and crudeness of icon images in comparison to the desktop image signal its communicative role just as the largeness and sharpness of the desktop image signal its decorative role. But perhaps the more

Communicative and decorative roles correspond to modes of reception and use. A decorative image image may be perceived passively—experienced—and in most cases is intended to provide pleasure. A communicative image is read—scanned for meaning—and commands careful attention if it is previously unknown. A communicative image thus works much like written language. And, in fact, the presence of text provides an important clue to the communicative properties of icon images. The label that appears together with an icon image gives explicit information about the function of the icon—and signals to the user that an icon has an explicit function. That this label has a conventional appearance reinforces its communicative role, and distances it from a decorative role. In the context of the desktop, text rendered in unique styles and colors carry the scent of the marketing department (as in the case of Adobe Creative Suite products), or serve to convey an individual user’s taste (in the case of desktop background images of, for example, a poem or quotations). Conversely, text rendered in a system font in a standard position appears to serve the system as tools—means to simply-stated ends. Text and icon signal utility, communicability. A “vivid” image of an exotic locale, a family picture, a sport team’s logo, or a pattern of interlocking shapes signify taste and function as décor, ornamentation.

This dichotomy points to a hierarchical relationship between text and image. The more image-like an image is, the more it seems to belong in the background, to be perceived in passing, at a distance. The more purely textual a text is, the more it seems to belong in the foreground, where it can be closely read. Can text, and the text-like icon image, be seen as more ‘useful’ than the desktop background? This question can be brought into wider fields of art and literature, especially literature that is self-consciously visual and visual art that is self-consciously textual. How do we decide where reading begins and gazing ends, and vice versa?
Other means of communication puts together subjects and ideas from different areas of my experience. The thinking behind arranging these essays one-after-another in this institutionally-inflected document was to take a broad view of the mechanics of visual expression and to speculate why a particular mode of expression 'belongs' to a particular context (why pop belongs to advertising, for example; why icons belong to desktops and semiotics). The set of essays is also meant to offer an array of models, and, more to the point, a way of collecting models: open-handedly. The other in “other means of communication” means “other than what you already knew or expected.” It is not the monolithic Other of Edward Said, but rather an other that suggests multiplicity and openness to alternative ways and means. The communication of the title is a way to level the typological field—put art and books and advertisements and desktop icons together in the same room—and a way to focus attention on their capacity for conveying messages.

Art is the default position of this document written by an art student in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an art degree. From this vantage point, desktop backgrounds and television advertisements are other means. The art that does show up here—medieval paintings, emblems, bronze medals—is by no means epitomizing of this particular art-making context (MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology in 2013). These too are other means. The structure of the document is open-ended; it is a set of independent parts connected by shared terms and modes of analysis and other sorts of visual productions could live here equally comfortably. Subjecting such a menagerie of subjects to analysis is in part an art student’s practical research on making. As a gesture (i.e., from the point of view of the table of contents), it is also a declaration of equivalency across a divided field: meaning and beauty and dullness and hypocrisy exist here as well as there (in Chapter 3 as well as Chapter 1, etc.). As a “readerly” text, that is to say, buried in its pages, it is an effort to describe specific conditions of production and reception in relation to particular forms: accounting for difference as well as as correspondence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Functions expressing little relation to the text</th>
<th>B Functions expressing close relation to the text</th>
<th>C Functions that go beyond the relation to the text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1 Decorate</strong></td>
<td><strong>B1 Reiterate</strong></td>
<td><strong>C1 Interpret</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1.1 Change pace</td>
<td>B1.1 Concretize</td>
<td>C1.1 Emphasize</td>
</tr>
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<td>A1.2 Match style</td>
<td>B1.1 Sample</td>
<td>C1.2 Document</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A2 Elicit emotion</strong></td>
<td>B1.1.1 Author/Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>A2.1 Alienate</td>
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</tr>
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<td>A2.2 Express poetically</td>
<td>B1.3 Common referent</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A3 Control</strong></td>
<td>B1.4 Describe</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>B2 Organize</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2.1 Isolate</td>
<td><strong>B3 Relate</strong></td>
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<td>B4.1 Concentrate</td>
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<td>B5.2 Complement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B5 Explain</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. Taxonomy of functions of images to the text

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Figure 1. Taxonomy of word-and-image relations.
THE GUILLOTINE represents (of course) Terror, the classical columns (a visual ‘rhyme’ borrowed from Puvis) not only Terror’s reverse - here obverse - Jacobin Virtue, but the true Revolutionary mode.

"In the system of the French Revolution, what is immoral is politically unsound, what corrupts counter-revolutionary." ROBESPIERRE

"There are besides, two little columnes or pillastres of this Throne; love appears on the right hand, and fear of Thy justice is to be seen on the left." HENRY HAWKINS

"A republican government has virtue as its principle, or else terror. What do they want who want neither virtue nor terror?" SAINT-JUST

"Terror is the piety of the Revolution." IAN HAMILTON FINLAY

BIBL.: Saint-Just, Selected Writings; Hawkins, The Devout Hart; Wattemaker, Paris de Chavannes; Vuille, Liberty Or Death 1789; Kunggold, Robespierre

Ian Hamilton Finlay: Terror/Virtue, bronze, 52.5 mm.
Cher M Roche,

J'écris d'une position au bureau, près d'une copie du livre Ian Hamilton Finlay: Un apprèt visuel, par Yves Abrioux, ouvert à la page 30, qui présente une image d'une carte qui porte une photographie (par John Stathatos) d'une galerie (le temple) possédé par Finlay (le poète écossais), dans lequel peut être vu un travail par vous: la liberté ou la mort 1789. Une reproduction de la page est ci-joint. Dans le sous-titre attaché à la photographie, Finlay décrit le travail comme une « étude de la rhétorique de la Révolution par Roche, le poète français ». Il a l'air d'une pile de papiers.

Je suis une étudiante entrain d'écrire sur cette image et j'aimerais beaucoup savoir le contenu des papiers dans la photographie. Ma meilleure supposition est qu'ils représentent une version de votre travail publié, La liberté ou la mort, réfléchissez et choisissez, 1798. Toutefois, La liberté ou la mort, réfléchissez et choisissez, 1798 est dans un livre avec une épine, et les papiers dans la photographie ont l'air d'être détachés, non relié (?). J'écris pour demander si vous avez n'importe quelle connaissance de cette photographie, ou d'usage de Finlay de votre travail. Si vous pourriez fournir n'importe quelles informations de ceci « l'étude de la rhétorique de la Révolution par Roche, le poète français », je me considérerai profondément redevable.

Vous pouvez me joindre à

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USA

ou

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Mes salutations sincères,
That may be. My problem is not with Howe's work but with yours. No one builds a coherent argument by throwing together such opposite and discordant materials.

True, no one does. But then not every part of an argument—even a scholarly argument—is or ought to be coherent and expository. The question is whether critical writing can find formal equivalences for its subject matter and still preserve its communicative function. Poetry is a discourse committed to the display and exploitation of contradiction. Criticism, by contrast, is an informational discourse. How do we keep criticism from murdering its subject with its pretensions to truth?

Do you think it helps to bewilder the language, to confuse your reader?

Do you think that "bewildering language" and "confusing the reader" are equivalents? When that equation is made, we have abandoned all possibility of poetry.

Perhaps, but not of criticism.

Perhaps, but in that case you seem to leave us with only a certain kind of criticism: one committed to a particular idea and point of view. There are other forms—as with this dispute of ours, there is also criticism as textus interruptus.

Which creates its own kinds of problem. So go on with what you were saying. We can talk about critical method later. Now I want to hear more about Howe’s poetry.

Well, as I was suggesting, an elementary move toward the peculiar freedom of her texts is to reimagine the physical field of the printed work. In the first (Montemora) edition of the poem, the reader is subtly moved toward that reimagination by the absence of numbers on the pages. Their removal inhibits the serial inertia of the codex format, slowing down the process of reading slightly, urging that we stay for a while with each individual page. The general structure of the poem does not obliterate seriality altogether, but locates it as a form of order within a more encompassing form. The poem is divided into three large sections, and section 2 is serially arranged as seventeen units. But this section is framed by opening and closing sections that are entirely unnumbered. In those sections, the absence
I think it is worth noting that a -POP- is something startling, attention-grabbing, usually by virtue of the fact that it creates an impression very quickly. It comes and goes before you've had a proper chance to think. It is yelled in order to be distinguished from the white noise of ordinary reality.

I have overheard designers discuss colors or treatments that pop (a fluorescent spot color in a 5-color print job, a slick varnish over key typography or imagery), meaning that these things exist parallel to (and above, more or less literally) the more banal 4-color process printing or the undifferentiated masses of single-surface matte or even glossy paper. Pop could also refer to the visual effect of compositional techniques like the use of white space to create visual interest, or the use of alternating typographic grey values (achieved through font weight, letter spacing, leading, etc.) to introduce hierarchy and stress to one or the other piece of text.

But the request for something to “pop” is probably most closely associated with a client who wants a design to communicate in a very particular (usually instantaneous) way, but does not know how or why. It is shorthand for something with fuzzy borders, a concept which is easy to outline but difficult to articulate in detail. It is a result of the gut reaction a viewer feels when she first gazes upon something like a book cover, poster or web page. Did it grab me? Did it pop?

That is all I can muster for now. I do think that “The Pop” in design is interesting, because it must define itself in relief, whether against the boundaries of its own composition, or the general field of other graphic communications.

Best,
BD
Regarding "pop" ... I can never shake the connection I make to the fact that everyone in my family calls "soda" "pop", and so it will always mean "fizzy" (and so "effervescent", "bubbly", "sweet", "commercial", etc), even in a design context. "Buoyant" also immediately comes to mind ... My primary definition is essentially a product of regionalism.

Of course, there's also "Pop art", but Pop art has always had a huge helping of deadpan that is completely absent from the meaning of pop in a design context ... No marketing / sales director is looking for more irony coming out of the cover design department.

The main meanings in a design context are more about having a particular element (the title, the author's name, etc) more prominent, more eye-catching, more lifted off from the background.

For example, I've attached two versions of the Social Network poster. I'll give you one guess which version came first, and which version came second, after the designer was told to "make it pop".

It's an interesting example because, in the final version (right, fyi), the title of the movie is actually LESS prominent, but the tag line ("You don't get . . .") is fantastic, and they clearly wanted to emphasize that. Funnily enough, I understand that the designer (Neil Kellerhouse) actually came up with the tag line, so clearly he would want that to "pop".

There's no consensus on what colors pop best, but red is the classic choice, as you can see in this selection of Evan Gaffney covers:

But anything can pop, so long as it's been properly differentiated from every other element, such as Ken Auletta's name on this cover by Chris Brand and Ben Wiseman:

At this point, I think I'm descending into blather, so let me know if any of this is a help (at the very least I hope I made your deadline) . . .

Happy to comment further on the pop issue if needed ... As a final word on the subject, here's a painting by former Guided by Voices songsmith, Tobin Sprout:

All best!

-M

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