

La letra como signo visual del arte: Análisis de sus funciones discursivas

The Letter as a Visual Sign of Art: Analysis of Its Discursive Functions

A letra como sinal visual da arte: análise de suas funções discursivas

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¿Qué hace que un mensaje verbal sea una obra de arte?

Roman Jakobson¹

Como la oratoria, la música, la danza, la caligrafía, como cualquier cosa que preste su gracia al lenguaje, la tipografía es un arte por el cual se pueden aclarar, honrar y compartir los significados de un texto o, por el contrario, disfrazarlos a sabiendas.

Robert Bringhurst²

¹ Jakobson inicia con esta pregunta la conferencia “Lingüística y Poética”, dictada en 1958 en el Congreso de Lingüística de la Universidad de Indiana, cuyo contenido recoge su libro *Ensayos de lingüística general*, obra clave para esta investigación

² Tomada del libro *Los elementos del estilo tipográfico* (Bringhurst, 2014, p. 27).

Resumen

Esta investigación ha tenido como propósito examinar la relación paralela entre la producción plástica del texto en la obra artística y algunos procesos interpretativos implicados en su abordaje semiótico, a fin de esclarecer el impacto y las funciones del discurso escrito en las artes visuales. Se ha planteado una investigación de carácter descriptivo y documental, cuyos instrumentos de indagación fueron: 1) la investigación de perspectivas teóricas en torno a la semiótica del texto y 2) una selección y clasificación de piezas artísticas en las que el texto opera, semióticamente, de forma significativa. Se llevó a cabo un análisis de las obras seleccionadas a partir de la teoría de las funciones del lenguaje, propuesta por Roman Jakobson. La investigación ha permitido cruces teóricos que validan el análisis *tipográfico* como alternativa de estudio formal de las manifestaciones del arte. Y a su vez ha contribuido a una tipificación que trasciende las categorías históricas o estéticas tradicionales y permite abordar nuevas formas de apreciación y significación del texto (sea escrito, grabado, pintado, dibujado, impreso o teclado) en relación con su materialidad y aporte expresivo al campo artístico.

Pese a la implicación directa entre arte y *tipografía*, los materiales teóricos que documentan esa relación son escasos. Este trabajo ha permitido visibilizar las posibilidades expresivas del texto a partir de la identificación de sus funciones en la obra. La extrapolación del modelo jakobsiano —que parte de la oralidad y el discurso escrito tradicional— hacia el lenguaje plástico ha favorecido la comprensión de la complejidad discursiva en los dos niveles de la representación del texto en el arte: 1) su dimensión lingüística y 2) su carácter gráfico-expresivo; lo que ha permitido constituir una propuesta teórica que puede contrastarse con la producción artística.

Palabras clave: funciones discursivas, grafía, letra, semiótica del arte.

Abstract

This research has had the purpose of examining the parallel relationship between the plastic production of the text in the artistic work and some interpretive processes involved in its semiotic approach, in order to clarify the impact and functions of written discourse in the visual arts. An investigation of a descriptive and documentary nature has been proposed, whose instruments of inquiry were: 1) the investigation of theoretical perspectives around the semiotics of the text, and 2) a selection and classification of artistic pieces in which the text operates, semiotically, significantly. An analysis of the selected works was carried out based on the theory of language functions proposed by Roman Jakobson. The research has allowed



theoretical crossings that validate the typographic analysis as an alternative of formal study of art manifestations, contributing to a typification that transcends the traditional historical or aesthetic categories and allows to approach new forms of appreciation and meaning of the text (whether written, recorded, painted, drawn, printed, typed) in relation to its materiality and expressive contribution to the artistic field.

Despite the direct involvement between art and typography, the theoretical materials that document this relationship are scarce. This work has made it possible to visualize the expressive possibilities of the text based on the identification of its functions in the art. The extrapolation of the Jakobson model —which starts from orality and traditional written discourse— towards the plastic language has favored the understanding of the discursive complexity in the two levels of the representation of the text in visual arts: 1) its linguistic dimension, and 2) its graphic-expressive nature; what has allowed to constitute a theoretical proposal that can be contrasted with the artistic production.

Keywords: discursive functions, graphism, letter, semiotics of art.

Resumo

Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo examinar a relação paralela entre a produção plástica do texto na obra artística e alguns processos interpretativos envolvidos em sua abordagem semiótica, a fim de esclarecer o impacto e as funções do discurso escrito nas artes visuais. Foi proposta uma investigação descritiva e documental, cujos instrumentos de investigação foram: 1) a investigação de perspectivas teóricas em torno da semiótica do texto e 2) uma seleção e classificação de peças artísticas nas quais o texto opera, semiótica, significativamente. Uma análise dos trabalhos selecionados foi realizada com base na teoria das funções da linguagem, proposta por Roman Jakobson. A pesquisa permitiu cruzamentos teóricos que validam a análise tipográfica como alternativa ao estudo formal de manifestações artísticas. E, por sua vez, contribuiu para uma tipificação que transcende as categorias históricas ou estéticas tradicionais e nos permite abordar novas formas de valorização e significado do texto (seja ele escrito, gravado, pintado, desenhado, impresso, impresso ou digitado) em relação à sua materialidade e contribuição expressiva Para o campo artístico.

Apesar do envolvimento direto entre arte e tipografia, os materiais teóricos que documentam essa relação são escassos. Este trabalho tornou visível as possibilidades expressivas do texto a partir da identificação de suas funções no trabalho. A extrapolação do modelo jakobsiano - que parte da oralidade e do discurso escrito tradicional - em direção à linguagem plástica favoreceu a compreensão da complexidade discursiva nos dois níveis de representação do

texto na arte: 1) sua dimensão lingüística e 2) seu caráter gráfico-expressivo; o que permitiu constituir uma proposta teórica que pode ser contrastada com a produção artística.

Palavras-chave: funções discursivas, ortografia, letra, semiótica da arte.

Fecha Recepción: Diciembre 2018

Fecha Aceptación: Noviembre 2019

Introduction

The irruption of the text as a visual art form has given rise to expressive and aesthetic possibilities that operate semiotically from the spelling and from the discursive mechanisms of the language, attending to the duality of the letter as a sign and as a cultural form. Therefore, the approaches to the visual recreations of the written text in the sphere of the artistic are pertinent, with a view to the recognition of their diverse roles. Typography in the visual arts makes language visible through the subtleties of its form, as Leonardo Da Vinci already stated in the currency of the portrait of Ginevra de 'Benci: Virtutem forma decorat (The form adorns virtue).

Background

- 1) The appearance of the text as an art form has a history as long as the writing itself. For Enric Satué (2007): "Typography is an art as old as modern and of course contemporary. A formally prodigious, diaphanous, subtle and detailed art "(p. 14).
- 2) Otl Aicher (2004) distinguishes the roles of typography as a means of communication and as an art resource:

The field of art is the aesthetic itself. The typography does not have a single level, but two: it must first be true; and then aesthetic. It needs a specific form of aesthetics, an aesthetic of use, to which art could never be subjected (p. 128).

- 3) From the earliest manifestations of graphics to current digital art, writing signs have been an essential component of artistic discourse.

The same signs of the Egyptian hieroglyphs decorated paintings on papyrus, bas-reliefs and burial chambers. The Roman lapidary letters adorned the friezes of the temples of the empire and until today they are recreated on the facades of the buildings that house the powers of the State in some large western cities. In the Middle Ages, Latin inscriptions accompanied the murals of many Romanesque hermitages despite being incomprehensible to the majority of the population, playing an essentially aesthetic role. Already in the Renaissance the letter was present as a semiotic resource in artists such as Mantegna, Holbein

and Dürer, who even drew a Roman alphabet with which he titled some of his engravings. On the other hand, the Descentcent art continued to feed significantly on typographical references, as he explains Satué (2007):

While in the classical periods of art the religious theme continued to dot the recurring themes with the words of rigor, —INRI for the crucifixions, Ave Maria for the announcements or Gloria in excelsis Deo for the ascensions and resurrections—, the courtly painting began to enter the name of the characters portrayed with slogans *ad hoc*. (p. 18)

In the baroque, Evert Collier filled his works with letters from the covers of books and newspapers that starred in his still lifes. Although towards the neoclassical and the romantic period, the letter as a sign of art played a marginal role as a silent and subtle complement to the scenes and the portrayed characters, this changed with the arrival of impressionism and the direct and transgressive look of the artists who they painted everything they saw, including the distinctive street signs in their outdoor compositions (au plein air). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the avant-garde resigned the discourse from the visuality of the written, which became a flag of movements such as futurism, dada, constructivism or neoplasticism, through aesthetic explorations but also deeply ideological and critical of society of the time.

4) Great icons of formal experimentation, especially in the twentieth century, used the text as an expressive element: Picasso, Klee, Juan Gris, Duchamp, Kandinsky, Warhol, among many others, expanded the semiotic scopes of art from the incorporation of linguistic graphics.³

5) Raquel Pelta (2012) he writes about the impact visual text has had on plastic since the dawn of the twentieth century:

Since Saussure made its linguistic theories known, the twentieth century has been characterized by an almost obsessive concern for language. If, in addition, we talk about design and typography, we could draw an arc that begins with the avant-garde and reaches post-structuralism, a current that starred in the 1980s and much of the 1990s (párr. 3).

6) In the context of the post-structuralist discourse, deconstruction - which Derrida addresses in *Gramatology* (2000) - exposed the almost tyrannical character of linguistics and the submission of the expressive potential of the sign as a visual and plastic entity. Post-structuralist theories posed possibilities of semiotic interpretation

³ Asociados al concepto *tipografismo* propuesto por Manuel Sesma (2014), quien lo utiliza para referirse al potencial expresivo provisto por la forma gráfica particular de la palabra escrita, y que define como “la semantografía de la letra, es decir, un campo en el que se puede analizar el significado de su función simbólica y de los indicios que distinguen unos tipografismos de otros” (p. 18).

that transcend and even challenge the traditional syntax of the text in order to resignify it, ideas that resumed artistic or poetic movements, such as concrete poetry, typography or calligrams in the literary field, and proposals for the Cranbrook Academy of Art and Fluxus - to mention two emblematic cases - in the field of plastic, visual arts and other alternative manifestations of art.

7) Ellen Lupton and Abbott Miller, in their work *Visible theory* (2015), have exposed the need to renew and diversify the dominant approaches to the study of the plastic visuality of the text: "We need to question the practices with which the operation has been operated. written discourse, as well as the affiliations with which we have formed ourselves when we assume the formal patterns of tradition, modernity and contemporaneity" (p. 4). The authors raise the prejudices with which the study of the interpretation of the writing has been faced, and expose the need for criticism in the discursive analysis based on specificity, in order to avoid analytical naivety.

8) For Walter Ong (2016), the printed, and even merely written, already had a character of authority that indicated when something had a "state of consummation", which affected the literary, philosophical and scientific work. Following his idea, what is written also affects the state of the work of art, reinforcing (or weakening) its credibility and its discursive scope from the irruption of typography. Each text is a fragment that has a certain independence from the work itself - be it literary, scientific, philosophical or visual - despite belonging to it. In the René Magritte painting entitled *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (This is not a pipe), the text that serves as an inscription that names the work maintains a relationship but also a certain independence of the image, so it becomes made in an architect of meaning and meaning for the viewer.

9) For José Luis Martín Montesinos and Montse Mas Hurtuna (2009) typography can assume a form of visual metaphor in human communication, where not only the text is represented as text but as an image:

The written sign carries a huge emotional weight. Beyond mere linguistic functionality, it is part of our affective universe (...). The characters are presented in multiple aspects and in very different contexts, sometimes in frank struggle with color or movement, sometimes diversifying and metamorphosing with the image or projecting in three-dimensional space, sometimes ... it seems that the characters getting alive" (pp. 36 y 37).

10) Around the need for the duality of the written and the visual in art, Foucault (1968) states in *Words and things*:

No matter what is said, what has been seen never resides in what is said, and as good as one wishes to see, through images, metaphors, comparisons, what is being said, the place in which they shine is not the one that displays the view, but the one that defines the syntax sequences (p. 19)

Following this idea, Fernando Zamora Águila (2013) states that the written and the visual respond to two languages that are not reducible to each other, so that when translated between them they suffer some denaturation.

Particularly in the work of art, typography allows these languages to operate together, contributing their intrinsic qualities and building a hybrid language: typographic discourse.

Wouter Weijers explores in *The Triumph of Typography* (2015) how the artist has turned typography into a central resource of the work of art by transcending its merely descriptive character, especially since the art of rupture of the 20th century, and the way it has been capable of evoking all kinds of sensory meanings from his visual character, such as the giant onomatopoeia in the paintings of Roy Lichtenstein or the phonetic poem of Hugo Ball ("Karawane"), in which the shape of the letter is related to the sound that it is reproduced in parallel to its reading, raising possible relationships between the speeches emanating from the graphic representations of the writing when they are associated with other forms of perception.

11) Based on this background of the research, Roman Jakobson's approach on the need to distinguish the specificities of language in the field of significance is heightened in the following:

A variety of the semiotic system is constituted by the various substitutes for spoken language, among which is the writing that is a secondary and optional acquisition when compared to the speech of all men, although sometimes the graphic and phonic aspects of language are considered by scholars as equivalent "substances" (Jakobson y Devoto, 2009, p. 25).

Jakobson would take the idea of characterizing the particularities of sign systems to do the same with the functions of language, assuming the interpretative differences inherent in the different elements that make up a message, whether oral or written. The proposal of this work expands that possibility towards the plastic in the field of art.

Justification

In the absence of recurrence of the expressive and aesthetic potential of the text in formal studies of the iconography of art, the plasticity of the text is a tangible reality of the work. Therefore, it becomes imperative to resort to theoretical approaches that have already advanced in addressing the semiotic phenomena of culture and communication in order to take them to the field of artistic appreciation. The discourse analysis disrupts disciplines such as philosophy, semiotics and communication theory. Specifically, Jakobson's theory comes from linguistics, a discipline considered by various authors such as Piaget or Peirce as essential to understand the complexity of social phenomena associated with human communication in different orders. In this framework, language functions have been useful for analyzing messages from their linguistic nature to their visual implications.

Hypothesis

This work is oriented to the notion that a semiotic study of the text in the visual arts is possible from an interpretative category derived from the fusion of linguistic and iconographic dimensions, which gives rise to a third way: the plasticity of the message written. This compound language would operate as an autonomous typographic code, with its own characteristics and interpretative rules, whose decipherment can be based on the analysis of the theory of discursive functions.

Objectives

The research presented has focused essentially on the following:

- 1) Identify theoretical findings that allow the construction of approaches oriented to the specificity of the study of the letter as a plastic sign of art.
- 2) Organize and classify the breadth of the typographic phenomenon in the visual arts based on specific criteria.
- 3) Explore the relevance of Jakobson's discursive functions in order to replicate them in unique art scenarios as a semiotic interpretation tool.

Materials and Methods

The basics of the theoretical model used

Roman Jakobson's language functions were published for the first time in his essay "Linguistics and Poetics," and his model has been used for discourse analysis in recent decades because it incorporates elements of other theories: he introduced the element of *Einstellung* (the semiotic orientation) in order to differentiate the approaches of a message from the different forms and hierarchies of the language that operate in it.

The relevance of this theory in the present investigation lies in the possibility of categorizing the mechanisms of action of the typographical sign in the work-spectator relationship that triggers a repertoire of interpretative variants.

The functions are not exclusive to each other and each one is associated with the predominance of one of the components of the semiotic process, which leads to a useful interpretation to distinguish the impact of the message. "Diversity is not in the monopoly of one of these various functions, but in a different hierarchical order" (Jakobson, 1984, p. 353).

The correlation of the discursive functions with the six factors present in the communicative process is shown in table 1.

Tabla 1. Funciones de Jakobson

Función	Figura en que recae el énfasis del mensaje
Función emotiva	El emisor
Función conativa	El destinatario
Función fática	El canal
Función referencial	El contexto
Función metalingüística	El código
Función poética	El mensaje

Las funciones muestran a la derecha su operador semiótico principal.

Fuente: Elaboración propia con base en Jakobson (1984)

In the Jakobsian model, the function is determined by the element on which the interpretative emphasis that derives in the final message lies.

The selection of materials for analysis

The second methodological process developed corresponded to the selection of artistic works that allow the contrast and application of the discursive functions. For this task some general criteria have been established:

- 1) Select images that come from various artistic disciplines: painting, sculpture, architecture, installation; as well as from different periods and stylistic movements, in order to identify the validity of Jakobson's functions in the range of visual manifestations of art.
- 2) Select works in which the text, as a visual resource, plays a significant role as a semiotic motive.

The work of contrast

The research results have resulted in the analysis of the works selected from the discursive functions. For this purpose, the selection of three images has been arranged for analysis by each category or function (18 images in total), so that the operation of each of them can be appreciated in different cases. Each function proposed by Jakobson has been briefly explained from references or paraphrases of the author's definition (placed in italics). Then, ways of identification and application of the function referred to in the artistic field are proposed. Finally, a brief description of the adequacy of the specific function of the text in the work is made.

Results and Discussion

The presentation of results and discussion has been presented in an integrated way based on the method already described for the analysis. The description of each image is preceded by the definition of the function itself, necessary to contrast with it; definition that has been taken from the original work of Jakobson (1984), so it will not be cited repeatedly in each case.

Referential function

To be operational, the message requires a context to refer to (a reference). But even if there is an ordering towards the referent or context, the so-called referential function is the guiding thread of several messages that will have to be taken into account as complementary elements from the other functions of the language.

In art the referential function could be approached from different approaches: from the work itself as a message framed in a specific and specific context to the referentiality implied in the authorship.

The text is an essential reference of art that induces the meaning that the viewer attributes to the work from the link form-content of the letter with a specific context.

Parts analyzed from the referential function

Figura 1. Libros "Lengiz"



Fuente: Aleksandr Rodchenko (1924)

In Rodchenko's work the text is, of course, a reference of interpretation of the work. Being written in Cyrillic (alphabet used in Eastern European countries), it does not provide specific information to viewers who use other alphabets; However, it is the iconic work of Russian constructivism and one of the most important of the avant-gardes of the first quarter of the twentieth century. In this case, linguistic understanding does not seem a requirement for the appreciation of the work, at least speculatively. The main text that Lilya Brik seems to shout - the muse of constructivism - is the phrase "Books of all branches of knowledge." The blank legend that is repeated on the left edges is "Lengiz", an acronym for Leningrad State Printing, for whom Rodchenko made the image. It was really a piece of propaganda that, however, has since been considered an emblematic work of avant-garde constructivist art, whose linear, geometric and industrial aesthetic in a direct and flat predominantly red color comes its referential character. Without knowing what the text says, it immediately refers to the context in which it was created.

Figura 2. *Paisaje con carteles*



Fuente: Pablo Picasso (1912)

In *Landscape with posters*, Picasso portrays an urban environment from which three familiar typographic images emerge with Parisian concepts and brands from that era. On the left, KUB refers to the name of a brand of consomme cubes and the 10 cents it cost, although Satué (2007) refers that it may also be an allusion to the term kubismus that the German historian Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler gave cubism in that language. The other letters presented are Leon, a brand of hats, and PERNOD, the brand of a famous French liquor. Although the texts appear in the table in the foreground, they could be considered, more than the central concept, the reference of the site portrayed by Picasso, which is not described in the title. From identifying the brands and their origin, it is possible to understand the atmosphere of the painting.

Figura 3. *U.S.A. Surpasses All the Genocide Records*



Fuente: George Maciunas (1966)

The *U.S.A. Surpasses All the Genocide Records*, by George Maciunas, founder of Fluxus, uses the referential function of the text to implicitly refer to the colors and graphics of the United States flag, which gives the work a double sense of appreciation, antagonistic and ironic: on the one hand, as a heraldic image of American nationalism and on the other hand, from the text, as a direct denunciation of the artist about the genocidal role of the country. The color and morphology of the lines of the text metaphorize the greatest American graphic symbol, using it for parody.

Emotional function

The emotional or "expressive" function, focused on the sender, aspires to a direct expression of its attitude towards the message, asserting its prominence as its source.

In the field of the arts, the emotional function is the one that manifests most openly, since the concept of authorship necessarily implies the voice, the seal, the charisma of the artist, which is impregnated in the particularity of the message. Despite the importance of the author in the work, there are and have always been anonymous manifestations of art.

Pieces analyzed from the emotional function

Figura 4. Columna de Trajano

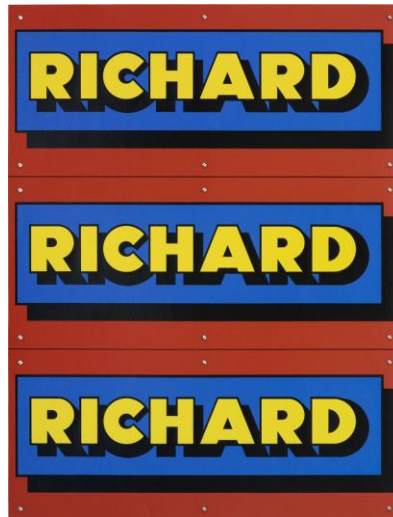


Fuente: Monumento construido Roma (113 d. C.)

Trajan's column is a monument built in Rome at the beginning of the second century of our era as a commemoration of the Roman victory against the Dacians. It is one of the most famous samples of its architectural splendor and the typographic component is present in the lapidary inscriptions of its pedestal. These fulfill an emotional function because they are used as a visual symbol of the expression of Roman pride and the arrogant personality of Trajan, which corresponds to the megalomania associated with the imperial figure, which can be seen in the inscription in chapter letters, whose translation says:

The Senate and the Roman people, Emperor César Nerva Trajano Augusto Germánico Dácico, son of the divine Nerva, maximum pontiff, tribune for the seventeenth time, emperor for the sixth time, consul for the sixth time, father of the country, to show the height they reached the mount and the place now destroyed for works like this.

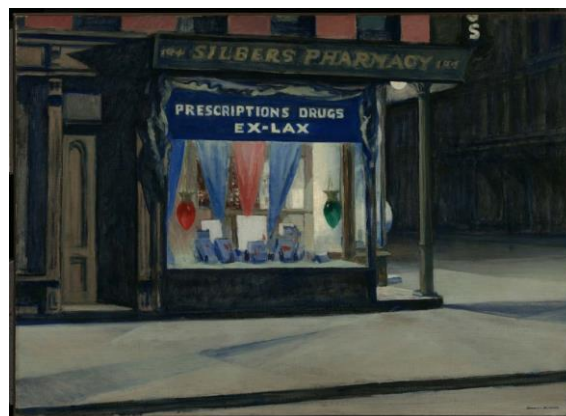
Figura 5. *Sign*



Fuente: Richard Hamilton (1975)

The triple exposure of the author's first name in this screenprint of the iconic British pop artist is a clear example of the way in which the emotional function is expressed as a linguistic and visual message. What seems like a cynical prominence on the part of the author when he puts himself at the center of the work, corresponds rather to a parody of himself, also parodically associated with the French brand of anise Ricard. The artist generates these posters of himself, in addition to bottles and accessories with “his brand”, assuming himself as the English version of the famous French Ricard, with all the stylistic and conceptual implications derived from pop art. The idea is to trivialize the status quo and elitist postures of art and everyday objects, and do so by its own name.

Figura 6. *Drugstore*



Fuente: Edward Hopper (1927)

Edward Hopper is one of the most famous American artists due to his nostalgic stage paintings and the American lifestyle of the first half of the 20th century. The emotional function of the text in Hopper's works is that it becomes a symbolic element of his style, since

the pictorial and well-drawn texts he draws in the canopies of the local suburban solitaires he portrays become the subtle seal of his work. In *Drugstore*, the text describing the merchandise of the premises was changed twice by the author, first at the suggestion of his gallery owner, when replacing the second x with a c in *Ex Lax*, considering the allusion to a laxative not very delicate, although Hopper He restored the x when the work was bought by a collector.

Conative function

Oriented towards the receiver, the conative function operates from the premise of vocational or imperative messages. This function gives a certain "authority" to the issuer, which is valid through speech.

The conative function in the arts can manifest itself in two fundamental ways: those that actively involve the viewer by reacting, and even participating in the work, or trying to influence him from imperative, interrogative or direct confrontational speeches.

Pieces analyzed from the conative function

Figura 7. *Your body is a battleground*



Fuente: Barbara Kruger (1989)

In *Your body is a battleground*, the artist and activist Barbara Kruger uses her characteristic pictorial style of bold letters, combined with a red and white palette and a black and white photograph to express a direct message that encloses an imperative and energetic character. The work is related to ideas for reproductive freedom and against gender violence that characterize the artist's discourse, framed in feminist ideas of the late 80s, which considered the body as a means of cultural and social vindication. Although all of Kruger's work shows this overwhelming and inquisitive character, this particular piece seems to be a

call to action and, at the same time, an ideological position that gains visibility through art, for which it uses direct texts and images and blunt

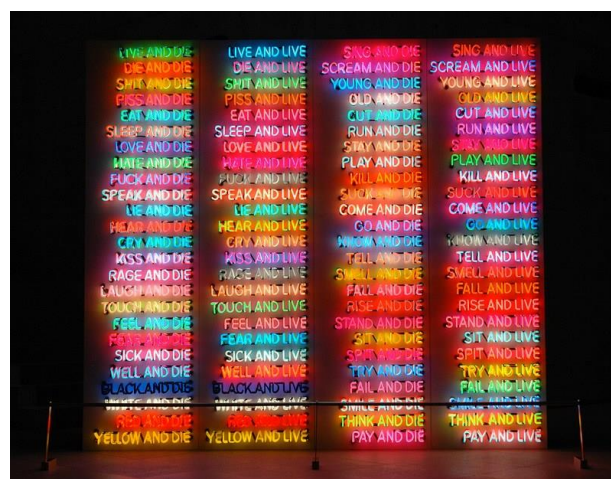
Figura 8. *Follow your dreams: Cancelled*



Fuente: Banksy (2011)

Banksy has become a cult figure in the artistic scene of the 21st century. The secrecy, anonymity and open questioning of the system are expressed through its refined and direct style, where typography normally occupies an essential role. In *Follow your dreams: Canceled*, which appeared on the streets of Boston, the author uses the text as a crude and ironic reminder of the impossibility of following dreams in a capitalist society, represented by the middle-class worker of the time of the great Depression. Here you can see a double imperative, first in the optimistic invitation of the character to the spectator, which is immediately canceled by the harsh, bureaucratic and forceful reality of the system, which imposes itself on every possibility of freedom and sleep.

Figura 9. *One hundred live and die*



Fuente: Bruce Nauman (1984)

Bruce Nauman uses, like few artists, typography as a formal and discursive essence of his artistic proposal. In *One hundred live and die*, Nauman uses a hundred sentences that address actions related to the deepest human feelings and motivations, through neon lights that turn on and off in a coordinated way through a complex algorithm. Nauman's work is a subtle mixture between the poetics of the text and the ordinary, almost vulgar appearance of the neon; although its essence is the reflexive character but no less imperative of its slogans: *Live and live, Play and live, Go and die, Think and die, Live and die ...*

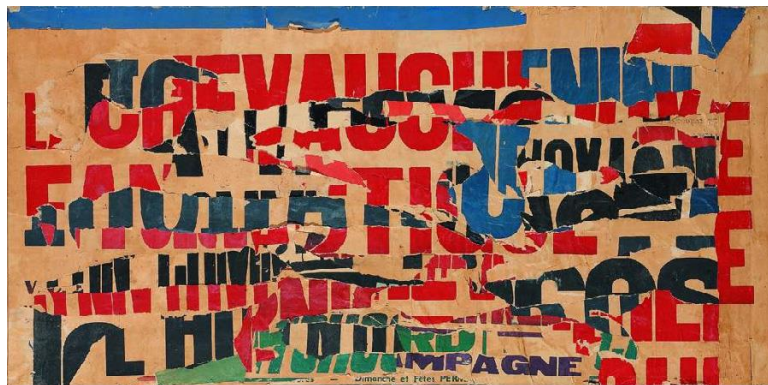
Phasic function

"There are messages whose primary function is to establish, prolong or interrupt the communication to check if the channel works" (Jakobson, 1984, p. 356). The phasic function fulfills the task of keeping the channel open and active contact between sender and receiver of the message.

This function in art could be characterized from the intention of the artist or the work in maintaining a prolonged or lasting bond with the viewer beyond the message itself, with the idea of attracting their attention and keeping it in expectation.

Pieces analyzed from the phasic function

Figura 10. *We waste time*

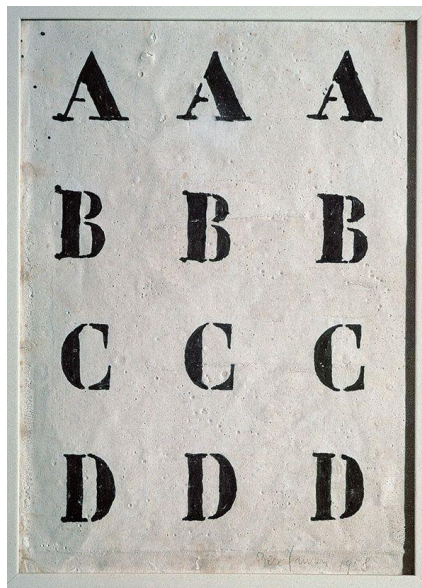


Fuente: Jacques Villeglé (s. f.)

Jacques Villeglé expresses through his collages composed of typographic posters a critique of the dark side of civilization using a medium that, in his own words, "really reflects society". The speech function of language can be seen in his piece *We waste time*, which is actually part of the series with the same name. The torn typography of street posters does not really express concrete or decipherable messages, but is aimed at attracting the viewer's attention with an enigmatic and violent composition, in order to convey the chaos in which

contemporary society is immersed and familiarize spectator with the letters of the mass media.

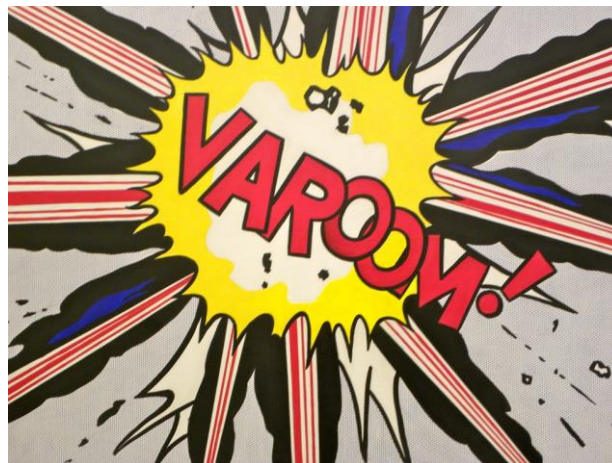
Figura 11. *Alphabet*



Fuente: Piero Manzoni (1958)

Piero Manzoni, famous for his work *Merda d'artista*, uses in his typographical paintings the resource of the phthalic function. Through his lithographs of alphabets he establishes a contact with the viewer that seems to focus on the aesthetic aspect of the stencil letters. There is no specific linguistic message. What Manzoni proposes is to use the formal peculiarities of the individual typographic character and accentuate it through repetition and high contrast to link with the viewer, in order to keep their attention on the work.

Figura 12. *Varoom!*



Fuente: Roy Lichtenstein (1963)

In the *Varoom!* Painting, Roy Lichtenstein uses his peculiar and unmistakable comic style in a large-format work that accentuates the impact of the image. The onomatopoeia is

one of the main resources of the visual and typographic language that use the phthalic function, because the viewer focuses his attention on a visual element that completely monopolizes it and that, in fact, is the only one that carries an identifiable meaning to from the text. However, this meaning is still subject to great interpretative ambiguity, as the explosion in the core of the image expands to the edges of the picture without there being total clarity of what is happening, maintaining the viewer's attention and expectation and forcing it to speculate.

Metalinguistic function

“When the recipient and / or recipient want to verify that they use the same code, the discourse focuses on the code” (Jakobson, 1984, p. 357). Then a metalinguistic function comes into play, because language is used to describe itself.

This function in art can be appreciated when the message of the work expresses direct references to the code used for its creation, such as when a painter portrays someone painting a painting or, in the case of the text in the work, it describes or refers to the same typeface or language. Another possible variant is when an author refers to himself through a self-reference in the text he has written.

Pieces analyzed from the metalinguistic function

Figura 13. *Der Genius mit dem Alphabet (El genio con el alfabeto)*



Fuente: Hans Sebald Beham (1542)

In the miniature engraving of 7.7 cm x 4.5 cm by the German artist Hans Sebald Beham, the metalinguistic function of language is evidently manifested. The engraving uses the typographic code in fine Roman Renaissance letters perfectly drawn in the band that holds the genius. It seems that the artist's intention is to highlight the greatness of the alphabet as a

Figura 15. *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold*



Fuente: Charles Demuth (1928)

The painting *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold*, one of the most emblematic works of modern American art, is a tribute of the painter Charles Demuth to the poem "The Great Number", by the poet William Carlos Williams, friend of the painter:

Between the rain and the lights I saw the number 5 gold
in a red fire engine
move tense alien to the ringing of the bell
the howl of the siren and the din of the wheels.

The metalinguistic function is manifested from the fact that, in the nucleus of the painting, the number five is represented in repetitions of different size and tone, focusing the reading on the figure, on the number as a plastic sign, stripped of the connotations of its origin and essentially as an aesthetic game of numerical language, which as a visual code can be considered an extension of language. What reinforces this metalinguistic and metasymbolic role of the five, associated with this work, is that later artists honored Demuth's work by creating series based on the number five as a central element (see figure 16).

Figura 16. Obras de Robert Indiana, quien realizó una serie completa basada en la obra *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold* de Charles Demuth, que pueden considerarse metarrepresentaciones de la obra original



Fuente: Robert Indiana (s. f.)

Poetic function

"The orientation towards the message as such (Einstellung), the message by the message is the poetic function" (Jakobson, 1984, p. 358). This function is usually fundamental in every speech and can use other secondary functions in the constitution of the message.

The poetic function in the arts is determined by the characteristics of the work, both stylistic and thematic, which are aimed at a particular semiotic intention.

In the field of typography, the poetic function is manifested from the meanings derived from the direct interpretation of the text and its plastic characteristics, disregarding or minimizing other references.

Pieces analyzed from the poetic function

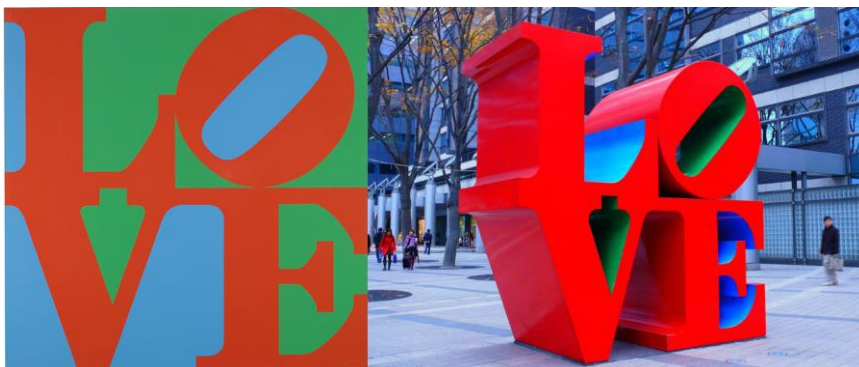
Figura 17. *Artists who make “pieces”*



Fuente: Ed Ruscha (1876)

Ed Ruscha uses direct and pure text as the basis of the message of his paintings. In *Artists who make “pieces”* and other paintings of the same series, Ruscha uses a simple and frontal visual language based on a sans serif typeface without ornaments and without any other distracting element in the image, in order to focus the interpretation of the viewer on the specific content of the text. The curator Cornelia Butler establishes that this work by Ruscha is a sample of the position of distancing of the artist with the established movements and the attempts to categorize his work, through an absolutely ironic phrase that is accentuated with the intercommuting of pieces (pieces) , which aims to question the language and categorizations of art. The poetic function of language manifests itself in the absolute orientation of meaning from the specific forms of the text and the literalness of the words used in the image, without contextual or other interference.

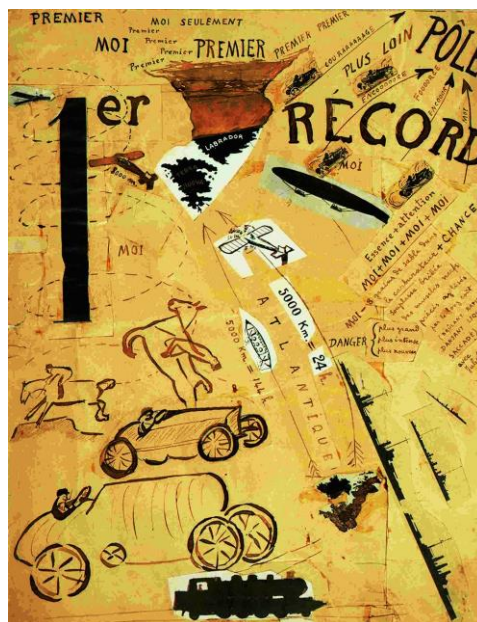
Figura 18. *Love*



Fuente: Robert Indiana (1967)

Robert Indiana is one of the artists who has worked most on typography, whether from texts or numbers in his works - as previously mentioned in relation to his series on number five and the work of Charles Demuth. The same artist would declare in Art Now magazine in 1969: "Love sculpture is the culmination of ten years of work based on the original premise that the word is an appropriate and usable element of art." Love is undoubtedly one of the most representative works of Indiana, an image (in paintings and sculptures) in high contrast and flat colors of solid red drawn characters that make up the word love. This work has gone from being an icon of American pop art to becoming a symbol of many American cities, where reproductions of the work have been placed from the three-dimensional representation of the great red letters through monumental sculptures. But the iconic character of the work does not threaten its interpretative clarity, the essence of those four red letters that are considered as a sign of fraternity. It is, in this direct character of its meaning, that the poetic function of the image lies.

Figura 19. *Le parole in libertà (Palabras en libertad)*



Fuente: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (s. f.)

In the manifesto *Distruzione della sintassi. Immaginazione senza fili. Parole in libertà* (Destruction of the syntax. Wireless Imagination. Words in freedom) of 1913, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti states that the printed word would be a revolutionary tool.

Marinetti and the futurists struggled to dismantle the syntax of the text, for a free and violent experimentation that would end the barriers between words and images, that would give rise to a free language that would destroy the "bonds" to which it had been subjected: grammar, lexicality or the production of meaning. In *Words in freedom*, Marinetti expresses,

through her chaotic typographical configuration, her devotion to the machine, technology and war, from her radical postures and the breaking of any code for reading and writing the text. The poetic function of Jakobson is associated with the works of Marinetti precisely because it allows to emphasize the significance from the very configuration of the message, from unique explorations and a direct communication of the little or nothing conventional forms, which transmit confusion, chaos and the author's feeling of rebellion. The interpretation of the futuristic work can be given from and only from the atypical and free visual configuration of the message, which corresponds to the aggressive and challenging content of the slogans represented.

Conclusions

Once, according to the methodology described, both the exposure of the characteristics of each of Jakobson's functions and its contrast with the selected works have been able to establish some conclusions that allow evaluating the relevance and usefulness of the proposed model:

First, it is essential to recognize that theoretical systematization in the study of the work of art brings the researcher's task closer to a more punctual assessment of his semiotic exploration pathways. It is very important to undertake this task for specific purposes and from consistent methods and models that have been subjected to language analysis from its various manifestations. That is the main contribution of the Roman Jakobson model, since it allows the distinction and organization of all the factors or elements of the communicative process, which are transpolated to the visual message of the text in the arts.

The main finding that the study throws is that practically any artistic manifestation, belonging to any historical moment or previous category of classification, is likely to be analyzed through the method of language functions, since in all of them the same elements can be identified that are constant in a visual discourse, and you can also find a prevalence of any of them as a decisive element of the message.

On the other hand, the shortage of existing instruments for the task of typing the text as an expressive resource of art allows the exploration presented here to open the discussion around that topic, regardless of what could be considered just a first approach capable of weighing the complexity of the phenomenon, which leaves open the opportunity of other subsequent explorations and with scopes potentially complementary to those of this work, in order to contribute to the consolidation of a theoretical apparatus that can be strengthened. Finally, the expectation of the present work is that the typology derived from the method used allows sufficient clarity to continue being used in semiotic analyzes of a similar nature and

that can be linked to other investigations of the same order to enrich the theoretical resources of the researcher in the field of art , semiotics and typography.

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