1. introduction
Design discourse has focused to date on theories of interpretation that explain how meaning is constructed in visual texts. The contribution of these theories to the field of visual communication has been invaluable. However, they do not account for a significant aspect of the communication process – how the designer affects the way the viewer engages with the designed outcome. Without understanding this process, designers’ ability to control viewer response is limited, and the intended viewer experience is compromised.

The aim of this research is to develop a model of the relationship between the designer and their visual outcome that will assist designers’ management of viewer experience.

An examination of literary theory and its extensive analysis of the creative process will inform my development of this model. Of particular benefit to my research is literary theory’s account of how writers work with their material in order to achieve specific reader experiences. By exploring the writer’s means of managing reader experience I develop a new understanding of the relationship between the designer and their visual outcome. With this understanding comes the potential for the designer to assume greater control of the intended viewer experience.

The research will provide a model of a theory for practice, as well as a new way to critique the designed outcome.

THE SIGNIFICANCE

This research enables a new way of talking and thinking about design, benefiting both the maker and viewer of visual outcomes. I will argue that my research is significant to designers (and design theorists and educators), contributing to their understanding of how visual outcomes function, making design practice more effective, diverse and sustainable.
MORE EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

It is important at the outset to highlight the potential for this research to make design practice more effective. Firstly, improving the designer's control over their visual outcome is paramount to more effective design practice. This improvement can be achieved with a more precise understanding of the ways in which their work impacts the viewer. Secondly, the research proposes a new way to discuss designed outcomes. In doing so it facilitates more effective practice by enabling designers to better articulate, to colleagues and clients alike, why a particular approach has been chosen. The current design lexicon tends towards description of visual marks or explanation of ‘what it means’. Designers are therefore potentially limited to those approaches that are clearly explained by the language of formalism and semiotics. Facing the struggle to have alternative concepts accepted, it is likely that the more literal, obvious or explicable solutions, those that can be adequately rationalised, will be preferred.

Finally, the research also aids more effective practice by addressing the need for design educators to have ways to teach what was formerly learnt in professional studio environments. Kress and van Leeuwen make the point that the institutionalisation of design education in universities, technical colleges and privately operated design schools calls for a “more analytical grasp of principles,” to replace what was traditionally learnt “on the job, by example and osmosis” (1996: 12). I do not propose that this research replaces all that can be learnt ‘on the job’ but it does analyse and explain aspects of the significant relationship arising in the design studio between the designer and their outcome.

MORE DIVERSE PRACTICE

This research also challenges design's obsession with ‘making meaning’, a consequence of the semiotic focus on signification that has left designers with narrowly defined methods for engaging the viewer. By focusing on the relationship between signs and their meanings visual codes have been developed, reducing design to
the process of creating visual translations of simplified linguistic concepts. For example, pictures of the earth signify 'global' and light bulbs signify 'good ideas'. And the single typefaces, Template Gothic and Old English, signifying the new or the old, respectively. “Signification”, writes Wozencroft, “has become a habit in design, it is an easy way of appearing to share a common language without avail to any meaning except its commercial familiarity.” (1988:9) This idea is taken further by Richard Buchanan, who states:

[When] a designer's conceptual placements become categories of thinking, the result can be mannered imitations of an earlier invention that are no longer relevant to the discovery of specific possibilities in a new situation. Ideas are then forced onto a situation rather than discovered in the particularities and novel possibilities of that situation. (1995a: 11)

‘Mannered imitations’ and the lack of the ‘discovery of specific possibilities in an new situation’ are the result of the limited line of interrogation offered to designers, by semiotics. It is therefore ironic that one of the objectives actively pursued by semiotics (Roland Barthes in particular), was to reveal the ‘naturalisation of culture’, “a system in which stereotypes are produced as fictive artifices but are then ‘consumed as innate meanings’.” (KLINKOWITZ, 1998: 48) The use of semiotics in design has had the converse effect. As a consequence of the process of ‘demythologisation’ design has created its own system of visual clichés that present themselves as ‘actual’ or natural rather than ‘imagined’ or created.

It seems that the semiotic approach encourages a sameness and the potential of expressionless expression. Through the development of this common approach to language, more diverse and rich methods of communication are ignored. Susan Sontag warns of the erosion of such richness in her aptly named book Against Interpretation. She writes, “to interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world - in order to set up a shadow world of meanings.” She goes on to say, “away with all duplicates of it, until we again experience more immediately what we have.” (1966: 7) Sontag's statements can readily be applied
to design. The quest for meaning has ‘impoverished’ the role of
design, denying it the possibility of delivering experiences that
cannot be articulated through any other media. Concentrating on the
designer’s role in creating a viewer experience provides an additional
approach to signification as a method of communication. A unique
position for design can be created, instead of settling for what
Barthes refers to as “a bourgeois economy of value which centralises
meaning as a commodity of exchange.” (KLINKOWITZ, 1988: 45)

MORE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE
Before moving on from the implications of a semiotic approach, I
will briefly discuss its role in negating or ‘flattening’ the individual
qualities of the designer, an effect that my research attempts to
resist. As a reaction to the authority bestowed on the designer
by previous Modernist design criticism, semiotics and other
cultural theories sought to highlight the influence of prevailing
social conditions on the production of design. And although this
is necessary, there has been a tendency to deny the diversity of
individual thought still evident within the framework of the dominant
ideologies. This research redresses the imbalance of influences in
the design process. It provides by a method for examining and
controlling individual differences. Furthermore, for acknowledging
their worth and making the role of a designer, as it is currently
conceived, more viable and therefore sustainable.

I will argue that my research is important to the design industry,
a greater understanding of the visual communication process
being required to secure its place in the future, as a workable and
necessary practice. While technological advances have meant that
some design skills are no longer exclusive, there is the added
concern that the services currently offered by design are no longer
meeting the needs of contemporary organisations. Organisations,
according to Tony Golsby-Smith, are in crisis and could learn much
from design as their purpose and identity faces increasing ambiguity.
Golsby-Smith proposes a solution that both re-invents design (before
it’s services become entirely redundant) and meets organisations’
changing needs through the employment of design, for its thinking style alone. He writes,

*The art of design offers rhythms of thought, patterning skills, understanding of the defining role of love, intention and value in human agency, and the responsiveness to place and market - all key disciplines that are needed to be exercised in far wider applications than they have been in the past.* (1996: 23)

Golsby-Smith envisages a time when “design will be desirable for its thinking style, alone, without any artefact in view.” (1996: 23) But it is difficult to imagine how the design community will contribute in this manner if it is unable to clearly define and understand its own ‘thinking style’. This research will elucidate aspects of design's ‘thinking style' that will be necessary in order for the practice of design to transcend its traditional boundaries.

**BENEFITS BEYOND DESIGN**

Finally, an understanding of visual communication in the terms I propose has an implication and significance beyond the betterment of the design industry. Even though I have suggested the potential of a more diverse viewer experience through a supplementary approach to the practice of ‘signification', it is the potential for viewers with increased acuity (and the importance of this ability), on which I would like to focus.

Literacy, the ability to read and write, is still regarded as a form of cultural citizenship in Western societies, a capacity that provides access to opportunity and power, which is often proportionate to mastery. With the increasing use of the visual to communicate significant information, it therefore stands to reason that ‘visual literacy' is a necessary competency of members of contemporary society. Kress and van Leeuwen support this claim stating:

*If schools are to equip students adequately for the new semiotic order, if they are not to produce people unable to use the ‘new writing’ actively and effectively, then the old*
boundaries between 'writing' on the one hand, traditionally the form of literacy without which people cannot adequately function as citizens, and, on the other hand, the 'visual arts', a marginal subject for the specially gifted, and 'technical drawing', a technical subject with limited and specialised application, should be redrawn. (1996: 33)

But with the growing levels of visual literacy needed to negotiate the existing world there comes an equally significant set of skills that need to be taught - critical analysis. Literacy and criticality are not exclusive tools, however the latter needs to be addressed specifically since it is the tool required for ascertaining the ideological positioning evident in most visuals, regardless of their ostensible impartiality. Again, Kress and van Leeuwen support this point, arguing for the visual to be a part of the expanding project of 'critical discourse analysis' which,

...Seeks to show how the apparently neutral purely informative discourses of newspaper reporting, government publications, social science reports, and so on, may in fact convey ideological attitudes just as much as discourses which more explicitly editorialise or propagandise, and how language is used to convey power and status in contemporary social interaction. (1996: 12-13)

This research is therefore significant in its aim to provide equally, a theorised model of practice, and a method of visual analysis, that enable viewers to engage more critically with visual communication.

THE TERMS

I have repeatedly used the terms 'design' and 'visual communication' as a way to locate my research area, however in reality, I have done little more than place my research on an orbital path. These terms are useful in universal contexts, 'design' differentiating itself from non-design, and 'visual communication' from the other design
subsets (such as, industrial, interior and fashion). Yet they are far broader than my research may seem to warrant. For one, the case studies chosen to validate my model are all examples of print media; there are no websites, interactives, animations, broadcast graphics, film titles, etc. The examples are produced in the late 1980s, through to the mid-1990s and are predominately (North) American and European.

Even though my frame of reference is in fact quite narrow I will continue to use these terms – ‘design’ and ‘visual communication’ - in conjunction with ‘print media’, because the issues addressed are familiar to this wider field, and furthermore, the structural nature of the research enables potential application beyond what is detailed in this thesis. The approach adopted is concerned with a model, as opposed to unique outcomes, making it relevant to other areas of visual communication and design in general.

THE RELATIONSHIPS

In the opening paragraph of this thesis I refer to the pivotal terms of this research: the designer, the designed outcome and the viewer. They are represented in a simple diagram used to define the aspect of the design process encompassed in this research. That is, the relationship between the designer and their outcome. (Figure 1) The value of this diagram is simply its illustration of my research area. The relationship depicted, or more specifically, how the designer manipulates their outcome to affect viewer experience, is the focus of this research.

Although I refer often to viewer experience, the experience is discussed in strict relation to the designer’s intention. It is not discussed from the viewer’s point of view, or rather, it is not understood here as an experience defined by their individual histories. I should also note that I am aware of the passivity of the term ‘viewer’ in comparison to the more active ‘reader’, yet I will remain with the former in order to clearly delineate the visual and literary boundaries. This is appropriate for a thesis addressing the
designer's role in the production of meaning and experience in visual communication.

THEORETICAL METHODOLOGIES

My interest lies with the abstract structures evident in communication strategies, rather than the interpretation of the individual works, hence my predominately structuralist approach. Going one step further, I locate this research within 'structuralist poetics', placing it closer to literature than linguistics. Its purpose, defined by the dominant figures, Barthes and Todorov, is:

...to develop a poetics which would stand to literature as linguistics stands to language and which therefore would not seek to explain what individual works mean but would attempt to make explicit the system of figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do. (Culler, 1980: 8)

Another aspect of the poetics project was the avoidance of evaluative judgments. These theorists were adamant that their intention was to discover the mechanisms of the literary system, not whether a text was 'good' or 'bad'. Similarly, this research aims to recover the structural workings of visual communication (that generate types of viewer experience), rather than to judge design outcomes.

My thesis acknowledges the significant role of the Structuralist poeticians in this research, however of equal significance is Wayne Booth and the field of 'rhetorical criticism'. 'Rhetorical criticism' is a term used to describe "the work of critics of the 1960s and 1970s who analysed literature in terms of the many authorial devices used by the narrator to develop a particular relationship with the reader" (Gray, 1992: 246), Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction (1961) is a determining text in this area.
The Rhetoric of Fiction is a definitive text for my research because of its critique of the author/text relationship. It reveals specific devices that affect reader experience. Booth notes that while “the author’s judgment is always present”, they can also seem to the reader to disappear. (1961: 20) He identified the varying levels of authorial presence as a major rhetorical device, affecting the reader’s relationship to the text.

The theoretical methodologies that frame my research are, therefore, best described as both structural and rhetorical: structural because it is concerned with the systems or techniques that enable the generation of particular viewer experiences; and rhetorical because it is concerned with the actual devices used by the designer to affect these viewer experience.

1. Bamard provides an account of the weaknesses (and strengths) of a structuralist approach for the visual. (2001: p159-165)

THE LIMITATIONS

Presenting these particular theoretical approaches helps to defines more clearly the scope of this research, however, it also indicates its limitations. One of the greatest criticisms of any structuralist account is that it denies the historical, political and social circumstance of the examined texts, its makers (author, designer) and the audience (reader, viewer).¹ This criticism could also be levelled at my research. As already mentioned, I do not examine, for example, the singular histories of the viewer and its impact on their experience; or address the effect of economic climates on the type of outcomes produced. The outcomes are not analysed in the context of their geographic locations or target audience, and although I claim to be examining the creative process, I do not address psychological aspects of the designer – their influences, motivations, needs and desires.

Rhetorical criticism is similarly accused, as its discussion of authorial devices and their impact on the relationship of between the reader and the text is understood without reference to environmental factors. Booth acknowledges this shortcoming, stating, “I am aware that in pursuing the author’s means of controlling his reader I have arbitrarily isolated technique from all of the social and psychological
forces that affect authors and readers." (Booth 1961: xii) Again, this limitation is reflected in my own research.

Yet the choice of a structuralist / rhetorical methodology is a calculated risk. I am aware of the problems associated with these approaches - in this instance, the isolation of the designer, the outcome, and the viewer from their individual contexts and histories. But it is the ability of a structuralist and rhetorical approach to reveal the aspects of the designer / outcome relationship that makes the application of these methodologies pertinent.

OVERVIEW

Chapter 2 explores the contribution of semiotics to design discourse and the limitations of this type of critique for visual communications. I then propose an alternative approach modelled on literary theory, hypothesising that via an examination of the author's management of the reader experience a model can be developed, that recognises how the designer affects viewer experience, and subsequently increase the control of their intentions.

I will also introduce design as a rhetorical activity, an understanding that is crucial to the development of my model. I discuss why rhetoric is important to design, how it has already been applied in the area, and finally, how it is used in my research. The identification of design as a rhetorical activity enables comparison with literary processes.

Chapter 3 charts the model's history and development. In this chapter, literary terms - fiction, author, narrator, distance, and point of view - are modified in order to be become effective components of my model for design. The process of invention is discussed as the point of similarity between design and fiction. I illustrate how the terms 'author' and 'narrator' can be understood in the context of visual communication, making it feasible to continue applying a literary theory framework to aspects of the design process. Also introduced is the visual narrator, the nature of whose involvement is
crucial to the creation of viewer experience. I analyse how the author manipulates the levels of narratorial involvement in written text in order to achieve particular reader responses.

Continuing to draw further analogies with literature, this chapter describes these varying levels of involvement as types of design distance. Literary theorists use the term ‘distance’ in reference to the involvement of author within the text. The chapter proposes that the notion of ‘distance’ can also be used to understand the relationship between a designer and their visual outcome: it can be understood as a rhetorical device, used by the designer in the management of viewer experience.

Finally, I introduce point of view, the last literary concept to underpin my model. While distance describes varying levels of involvement, point of view is understood as the principle means by which distance is created. The manipulation of point of view affects the type of distance evident in the material, in turn affecting the level of involvement of the viewer with the material. I show how the analysis of point of view in literature, by Structuralists Todorov, Genette and Uspensky is adapted for my model of the designer/outcome relationship.

Chapter 4 presents my model of design distance. I define the dimensions of the model and introduce the four modes of mediatory involvement, defined as IDIOSYNCRATIC, IMPLICIT, IMPERATIVE and ESOTERIC.

In Chapter 5 the respective modes of distance are applied to a selection of existing printed material. The visual descriptors of each mode are identified, and the theory tested via case studies. The strengths and weakness of each mode of distance are examined. And lastly, the model is evaluated in terms of its successes and limitations.
In concluding, this thesis is not an attempt to match seamlessly the processes of design and literature, rather it offers an alternative way of understanding and approaching visual communication.
2. background
When introducing this thesis I referred to the limitations of a semiotic critique of visual communications, suggesting that it provides an incomplete understanding of the practice of design, and by focusing on meaning, provokes a narrow conception of the communicative potential of visual outcomes. In order to overcome these limitations, I proposed an alternative approach that focuses on how the designer affects the viewer's experience of the designed outcome. Yet to explain how I arrived at this point it is necessary to account for the semiotic contribution to design discourse, in greater detail, which will reveal the gap that this research aims to fill.

Therefore, the intention of this chapter is to provide a background to my research, detailing not only the historical perspective of semiotics in the context of visual communication and, its current application, but also to introduce the discourses that have addressed more specifically the concerns of this thesis.

After describing how semiotics became valuable to design, I will discuss its fundamental weaknesses. I will then argue the potential for literary theory to redress this weakness as it has long been concerned with the relationship between the writer and their text, and specific to my research, the mechanisms employed by the author to affect reader's relationship with the text. I therefore introduce the hypothesis that a model can be developed to recognise how the designer affects their viewer experience via an examination of the author's management of the reader experience. And, although the application of this aspect of literary theory is new to visual communication, there are examples of how other, non-literary fields have used this knowledge to inform the creative processes. I will also briefly discuss this work.

2.1 SEMIOTICS AND DESIGN

Since the 1930s¹ there has been a growing body of knowledge on ways to analyse, interpret and understand the visual fuelled largely by the positioning of the visual as a language, which enabled it to be examined using methods similarly available to its linguistic
counter-parts, the written and spoken word. The application of these structuralist theories of linguistics to traditionally ignored modes of communication saw the founding of semiotics, a critical theory that remains a dominant aspect of design studies curriculum. The main concern of Semiotics, particularly the Paris school led by Roland Barthes, is the theory and analysis of ‘signs’ and their meanings, and to an extent, how the meanings are produced. Students of this approach to the visual are taught to decode imagery, separating out the hidden or associated, ‘connotative’ meanings from the ‘denotative’ meaning, thus exposing signs as social/cultural constructions whose significations or meanings are not naturally occurring.

Readings on semiotics emphasise the claim that a semiotician is interested in how signs achieve meaning rather than what signs mean, which has proven to be highly attractive to designers (or design educators), whose task is in the ‘how’ or encoding of communication. What something means or the interpretation or decoding of the visual became the domain of the viewer. But semiotics falls short of designer-ly expectations, because it does not focus on how a designer encodes images but how social, cultural, historical, and political conditions affect the encoding of images (which still impacts on the designer). That is, each location, object person, or abstract thing has associated meanings, well before the designer has placed them in a visual setting. This understanding is vital to a designer, who needs to be aware that the available visual language is already heavily coded. It is also ultimately useful to a designer because these encoded images become the building blocks needed to construct visual communication outcomes.

From the Paris school of semiotics designers are taught how to interpret the visual signs that constitute an image, and subsequently the ‘significance’ of these visual signs. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, designers have therefore being taught to focus on the ‘vocabulary’, the signs within the larger image structure. (1996: 1)

But an analysis of language usage reveals that vocabulary is only
one aspect of the linguistic statement, the other being grammar. It is on this premise that Kress and van Leeuwen develop a ‘grammar of visual design’, arguing that it is “equally vital in the production of meaning.” (1996:1) Referring to their theory of representation as ‘social semiotics’, thus differentiating their approach from the theory of semiotics most often applied to visuals, Kress and van Leeuwen analyse the ways in which images communicate meaning through the spatial organisation of formal elements. Again, this semiotic approach is valuable to designers, as it deals not only with terms familiar to designers — colour, perspective, framing and composition — but also explicitly with the designer’s domain, the configuration of visual elements. In fact, as I discuss toward the end of this section, aspects of Kress and van Leeuwen’s work address concerns that are similar to my own.

After citing considerable theoretical advances in the latter half of the twentieth century, there are still limitations with the ways in which to discuss visual communication. Even though semiotics has advanced awareness of how meaning is produced in the visual — its ‘grammar’ and ‘vocabulary’ — it has failed to provide a way to reveal how designers affect viewer experience. In their postscript, Kress and van Leeuwen hint at this shortcoming when stating, “In writing a book such as this, one sometimes feels that one is applying a cold, clinical approach to semiotic practices which are, in reality, strongly coloured by affective factors.” (1996: 265) They continue by mentioning their attempts to deal with these factors, but conclude, “that affect has perhaps been too thin a thread in the tapestry.” (1996: 265) It is these ‘affective factors’, or rather, an attempt to identify and analyse them that is the basis of my research. This thesis proposes that an understanding of these factors can provide a means to discuss visual communication that has not previously been available.

In order to locate a potential model that could illuminate these affective factors, and that could begin to elucidate responses towards the visual that are not accounted for through semiotic interpretation, I turned towards literary theory, as literary theorists have long been interested in aspects of form beyond how meaning
is produced. What is advantageous about this approach is the extent to which literary theory understands the author/text relationship. The parallel relationship in visual communication - designer/outcome - is far less understood. Of particular interest to this research has been the identification of the rhetorical devices used by the author to control the reader's relationship with the text. These rhetorical devices, I argue, are equivalent to what Kress and van Leeuwen refer to as ‘affective choices’, choices that control the feelings toward or affect the viewer's experience of the visual.

By drawing an analogy between the rhetorical devices that govern aspects of communication in literature and visual communication I propose the following hypothesis: a model can be developed to show how the designer affects their viewer experience based on the examination of the author's management of the reader experience.

While this hypothesis is unique to design, the desire to create a model that recognises how affective choices impact viewer experience is not. Following is an overview of the major, previous research into ‘affective factors’ in design.

PRECEDENTS: KRESS AND VAN LEEUWEN

In their book “Reading Images: The grammar of visual design”, (1996) Kress and van Leeuwen attempt to found a theoretical framework with which to analyse visual communication as a result of the inadequacies of the available approaches. It is therefore unsurprising that with such similar motivations that we should cross paths, Kress and van Leeuwen having already created a methodology, which reveals the affective factors within a visual outcome. Yet, as I have already stated, they themselves identify that ‘affect has been too thin a thread in the tapestry’, leaving ample opportunity for further research in this area.

In order to both acknowledge the contribution that Kress and van Leeuwen have made towards this type of understanding, and at the same time claim original contribution of my own research it is
REALIZATIONS

Demand  gare at the viewer
Offer    absence of gaze at the viewer
Intimate/personal close shot
Social   medium shot
Impersonal long shot
Involvement frontal angle
Detachment oblique angle
Viewer power high angle
Equality eye level angle
Represented participant power low angle
necessary to outline the similarities and differences between our work.

As its title suggests, ‘Representation and interaction: designing the position of the viewer,’ Chapter 4, of Kress and van Leeuwen’s book is the most relevant to my thesis. It is the section that deals most specifically with affective factors, although they are never explicitly labelled as such within the chapter, they instead refer to the ways in which the relation between the producer and the viewer are represented. Investigation of this relationship is the main similarity between our works. Both Kress and van Leeuwen’s research and my own, identifies a relationship between the designer and viewer that is represented within the work, not just as a consequence of it being produced and viewed. They argue that, “whether or not we identify with the way we are addressed, we do understand how we are addressed, because we do understand the way images represent social interactions and social relations.” (p.121) Kress and van Leeuwen then make those understandings overt by creating a typology of interactive meanings, which reveal the kinds of interactions that can be represented, or the range of structures used by the producer to place the viewer in a particular position. (Figure 2) The model I create reveals similar information: it identifies a device used by the designer to affect viewer experience.

In order to discuss why my model is similar, rather than the same, it is necessary to provide some examples of how Kress and van Leeuwen analyse the position of the viewer. For instance, they claim that, via the direct gaze of the represented participant the viewer’s attention may be demanded (Figure 3); or, by the framing an image with a ‘long-shot’ the viewer is placed at a more impersonal, objective distance (Figure 4), opposed to the close-up photos of the people with whom the viewer should identify. (Figure 5) They also reveal how the angle of the image, for example oblique (Figure 6) or eye level, places the viewer with detachment or equality, respectively.

As my thesis unfolds it becomes apparent that the terminology is identical in parts – ‘distance’ and ‘point of view’, being the
founding terms of my model, and ideas such as ‘detachment’ and ‘involvement’ being strongly represented. But it is the participants, to which these terms refer, that indicates one of the primary differences in our research. Kress and van Leeuwen are referring to the relationship between the participants in the outcome (whether they be human, objects or the environment) and the viewer, whereas I am referring to the relationship between the designer and the outcome. As indicated by Kress and van Leeuwen the close-up framing of images (eg figure 5) results in the viewer having an ‘intimate/personal’ relationship with the participants, and similarly, if the viewer is looking at an image which has been taken from an oblique angle (figure 6), they (or their placement) would be described as ‘detached’. Whereas, in my research ‘detachment’ will refer to the type of involvement the designer has with the material; the designer, not the viewer is described as ‘detached’.

Also, I describe the relationship that the designer has with the outcome, and then, the possible affect that has on the viewer. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, the ‘image-producer’ and hence the ‘viewer’ are in the same position and therefore have the same relationship with the image (in terms of angles in photography). (p.143) In my research, the viewer does not mimic the type of involvement the designer has with the material.

The second major difference is in regard to ‘whom’ the viewer forms a relationship. While Kress and van Leeuwen propose that the viewer forms a relationship with the ‘represented participant/s’, whether they are human, objects or environment, I will argue that the viewer forms a relationship with the visual narrator, who is present, but not represented as a physical entity – person, thing or place. This aspect leads to one of the greatest weaknesses of Kress and van Leeuwen’s work, and the reason why my model is necessary. All of the analytical tools used by Kress and van Leeuwen rely on images that are (mostly) naturalistic, and can therefore be explained via the codes of gaze, framing and perspective. But what if the visual outcome does not have a human figure staring out from the page, or an identifiable perspective, or an angle that reveals the viewers
orientation (apart from front on)? How are these examples (figures 7, 8, 9) understood using Kress and van Leeuwen’s methodology of interaction? when the ‘represented participants’ are indiscernible, or if discernable, unyielding in there revelations? Kress and van Leeuwen also admit that there is often no immediate motivation for the use of perspective and size of frame. (p.148) Much contemporary visual communication is subsequently un-readable according to the Kress and van Leeuwen’s presets, the analytical tools made available being limited to more traditional visual approaches.

It is worth reiterating the similarities and differences between our approaches, as they are vital in understanding my research territory. Firstly, the main similarity between our work, aside from common terminology, is the proposition that a relationship between the designer and the viewer is represented within the work, that this interaction is represented. A major difference is the way in which we describe the realisations of the represented interactions. For Kress and van Leeuwen interaction is realised through the visual devices of gaze, framing and perspective, of the represented participants. Whereas, in my research interaction is realised through numerous visual mannerisms, which suggest a visual narrator with differing levels of involvement – described in terms of ‘distance’. The other major difference is the aspect of the relationship being described. Kress and van Leeuwen’s approach primarily describes represented interaction via the viewer’s relationship to the outcome, whereas my model describes the designer’s relationship to their outcome.

Although, Kress and van Leeuwen’s research is valuable in its acknowledgement of a represented designer and viewer relationship, it has been invaluable by its ultimate revelation, of the need to understand further the affective factors inherent in visual communication. Their approach only partially locates and investigates these factors leaving room for my own model. But in order to discuss the development of my model, it is necessary to first, understand the role of ‘rhetoric’ in design.
2.2 DESIGN AS RHETORIC

In the previous sections I have used the term 'rhetoric' to describe both a form of criticism and a device. I have also claimed this term, along with 'structural', as a means to describe my research. Rhetoric, as a way to understand and explain the practice of design, has become increasingly popular, making available more opportunities to discover how a designer creates communicative outcomes, aspects of which are denied by semiotics. But its understandings, descriptions and applications within design discourse are diverse, which is why it is necessary to define more clearly what 'rhetoric' means in the context of visual communication, and more specifically my research.

Apart from solving terminology issues, the purpose of this section is to argue that design is a rhetorical activity. Without this understanding it would be difficult to apply the findings of literary theory, as its application is contingent on the fact that literature and design are both rhetorical practices.

In order to achieve this understanding I will briefly discuss rhetoric's common usage, origins, shifts in definition, theoretical and practical applications, and, contemporary meaning. Following that, I will discuss how the current conception of rhetoric makes it both a viable and an invaluable resource for design. As my relating of rhetoric and design is not an isolated approach, I will reveal other attempts to use rhetoric as a method to describe design practice, and finally, situating my own research within this discourse, emphasises its commonalities and differences.

CLASSICAL RHETORIC

Rhetoric, in its simplest terms, is the 'art of persuasion'. A definition that has remained largely unchanged since its foundation in classical Antiquity, yet the stability of this term belies its contentious past. Although the definition of rhetoric has stayed the same, the ethicality of persuasion has been debated: Aristotle believed that persuasion was an inherent part of communication, and therefore
unavoidable, whereas Socrates believed it to be a distortion of the truth. These opposing sides represent the essence of a debate that has continued throughout history.

Central to any discussion of rhetoric is Aristotle, whose understanding of its workings and applications, laid the foundations for the discourse that is relevant to design, today. Fundamental to this discourse was his idea of rhetoric as a neutral form of communication, neutral in the sense that no discourse is absent of rhetorical devices, an argument that is significant to this thesis and will be discussed further in this chapter. Aristotle argued that rhetoric was intrinsic to communication, applicable in all situations, but it is specific in its type of appeal: an argument could be rational (logos), ethical (ethos) or emotional (pathos), each kind persuading an audience in a different way.

Aristotle recognised that all of the types of appeal were valuable rhetorical resources, an idea supported by Richard Buchanan, in “Declaration by Design: Rhetoric, Argument, and Demonstration in Design Practice,” (1989) who reveals how logos, ethos and pathos are all useful types of argument in industrial design. Disputing the preference for the emotional (pathos) argument, Aristotle claimed that not only did this preference narrow its possible implementation, but it also reinforced the notion of rhetoric as a means of deception. Aristotle likens “an audience determined simply by an emotional appeal to a warped carpenter’s measure: the ability to measure accurately had been destroyed in both and as a consequence neither functions as a reliable guide that can discriminate between true and false appearances.” (Kastely: 1997: 9) This ‘warping’ undermines his insistence that rhetoric is an equitable tool, denouncing unethical operators as the culprits of distortions, rather than rhetoric itself.

And lastly, Aristotle can be credited for the application of rhetoric to areas other than verbal communication, as prior to this it was seen solely as the ‘art of words.’ He regarded the practice of rhetoric as independent of the subject. It could be applied to any form of discourse, whether it was orating, writing, fiction or philosophy,
for its larger concern was its place in society as the purveyor of workable communication strategies, irrespective of the material content. It is this perception of rhetoric that enabled its application in areas such as the visual arts, music, and eventually, design.

THE 'NEW' RHETORIC

It is worth noting briefly how rhetoric fell from a respected form of argumentation, championed by Aristotle, to the current, general perception of it as a tool of deceit and vehicle for empty promises. From classical Antiquity to the medieval era, rhetoric was employed expressly by those in the fields of politics, law and the Church. It's orientation toward the vocational during this period ensured its status as a practical tool; the means were inseparable from the issues at hand and the people to whom they were directed. Yet this fusion was not enduring. The separation of "thinking wisely from speaking graciously," the 'content' from the 'technique,' was among other things, the result of a rise in rationalism and empiricism.

(EAGLETON: 1981: 104) This separation foresaw the decent of rhetoric into how it still commonly regarded: at one end 'ornamental' and at the other, more damningly, deceitful and pretentious.

Yet, even though the reputation of rhetoric still bears the scars of past denunciations - upheld by beliefs that first emerged in the quarrels between Aristotle and Socrates - the idea of rhetoric endures, and in some disciplines is making a re-emergence. And although it may not be recognised under one of its new names, 'stylistics', 'new stylistics', 'discourse analysis,' etc., it's motivations are the same: to understand and apply the methods of effective communication. Through a series of name changes (and some changes in its understanding) rhetoric has reinstated itself as a worthy contributor to the area of literary and cultural studies. And, as the idea of rhetoric has essentially remained the same, it would be fare to say that the changes of name have been part of a rhetorical strategy. Rhetoric has employed some of its teachings in an attempt to shrug off its past reputation: a case of 'rhetoric for rhetoric's sake.'


9. "Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory" by Peter Barry gives an overview of the changes in the section A brief historical account: from rhetoric to philology to linguistics, to stylistics, to new stylistics." (BARRY, 1995: 204-207)
This brings me to the new definition of rhetoric, or to be more precise, the definition of new rhetoric. Umberto Eco writes:

...almost all human reasoning about facts, decisions, opinions, beliefs, and values is no longer considered to be based on the authority of Absolute Reason but instead intertwined with emotional elements, historical evaluations, and pragmatic motivations. In this sense, the new rhetoric considers the persuasive discourse not as a subtle fraudulent procedure but a technique of ‘reasonable’ human interaction controlled by doubt and explicitly subject to many extra logical conditions. (1976: 277-278)

In essence ‘new rhetoric’ claims the ‘pragmatic motivations’ that are a part of all exchanges make persuasion inherent in the communicative act, regardless of content or context. But it is worth noting that the newness of ‘new rhetoric’ must surely be a chronological reference, as the idea of the impossibility of communication absent of rhetoric was one of Aristotle’s most significant contributions to the field.

**DESIGN AS RHETORIC**

Since recent theories of communication confess to rhetorical presence it is not surprising that the ‘new rhetoric’ has found a place in the discourse of design. In fact it has not so much ‘found a place’ as it has colonised an area to the extent that design is viewed not as a user of rhetorical devices, but rather as a rhetorical practice. This point can be explained by a largely reductive, but effective, set of formulations based on previous discussions. If we understand design as communication and communication as rhetoric, then the declaration of design as rhetoric - or as the visual equivalent at least - is the next logical step.

While the rather drastic economy of this equation could be viewed as an algebraic sleight of hand, the theme central to design and rhetoric is made apparent: communication. And although the centrality of communication to design is not a new concealment,
the understanding of it in terms of rhetoric rather than semiotics certainly is. Until recently communication was understood to be “the transfer of a state of mind from the speaker to the audience - a passing of information and emotion.” (Buchanan, 1989: 92) Rhetorical theories, however, are inclined to see communication as the process of inducing belief or identification in an audience through the invention of ethical, logical or emotional arguments. (1989: 92)

In retrospect is seems strange that the obvious synergy between rhetoric and design has been a Post Modern acknowledgment as surely the functionalist agenda of communication - its ‘pragmatic motivation’ - articulated by ‘new rhetoric,’ offers an uncanny parallel to the Modernist designer’s belief in function as the primary objective. It is in fact ironic that rhetoric became apparent during a period when the designer’s principle motivation is seen to be one of expression rather than utility. That said, rhetoric possibly emerged in design at a time when in was needed most. The identification of rhetorical strategies validates a way of working that was previously viewed as mere expression. Theories of rhetoric engender ‘expression’ with a much-needed functional intent that could not be measured by the Modernist rules.

Yet the use of rhetorical theory as an apologia for often self-referential work is a relatively minor contribution to design when compared to the fundamental revelation that no communication is objective. As I have mentioned this concept dates back to the classical Greeks, Aristotle in particular, making modernist communication theory’s belief in the pursuit of objectivity appear somewhat misguided. But it would be safe to assume that their belief was not founded on ignorance but rather idealism, the hope that communication could be rid of the personal and the subjective. It was not so much that communication was objective but that it could become more so. The ability of rhetorical theory to transcend the modernist limitations of objectivity has enabled design to recognise its cogent nature and to acknowledge that the design process is not free of ideological frameworks or historical contexts.
THEORY AND PRACTICE

One of the advantages of a rhetorical understanding of design is that it refers to the theory of effective communication, as well as the practice of it, unlike semiotics, which resides firmly in the theoretical realm. Through mutual language and procedures rhetoric promises to link the previously separate domains of design theory and practice. Terry Eagleton notes that not only were the services of rhetoricians traditionally required for practical applications, as it was impossible to “imagine that the business of politically effective discourse could be left to the vagaries of individual inspiration,” (1981: 102) but also, rhetoric “was the received form of critical analysis all the way from ancient society to the eighteenth century, [which] examined the way discourses are constructed in order to achieve certain effects.” (1983: 179) Yet the analysis of these texts was not simply an ‘academic’ exercise, unlike much post-modern critical theory (structuralism in particular), but instead part of the often vocational preparation that enabled effective communication. Eagleton expands upon this point:

*Rhetoric in its major phase was neither ‘humanism’,
concerned in some intuitive way with people’s experience
of language, nor a ‘formalism’, preoccupied simply
with analysing linguistic devices. It saw speaking and
writing not merely as textual objects, to be aesthetically
contemplated or endlessly deconstructed, but as forms of
activity inseparable from the wider social relations between
writers and readers, orators and audiences, and as largely
unintelligible outside the social purposes and conditions in
which they were embedded. (1983: 179)*

Although I will discuss in greater detail how rhetoric is theoretically and practically realised by design, it is the application of rhetorical criticism in my research that enables me to justifiably claim a ‘theorised model of practice’ as my intent.

HOW RHETORIC HAS BEEN USED IN DESIGN

Even though rhetoric influences all modes of design, as an art of persuasion it finds a logical home in visual communication which is more overtly about intellectual, logical, aesthetic, and emotional
inducement, than the other areas. (Swanson: 1997: 74) But in more recent years as the understanding of design as a communicative practice has expanded so to have the possible applications of rhetorical theory — particularly, as I have mentioned, in the area of industrial design by Richard Buchanan (1989). But before I examine the specifics it is important to note that rhetoric has had a wider influence on design discourse than is immediately recognisable. Any study that deals with the influence of designers and design on society and the shaping of designers and design by society, as well as with the designed outcome as a point of mediation between the designer and the viewer falls well within rhetoric's jurisdiction. (Buchanan, 1989: 93)

Following is a discussion that details the use of rhetoric as a way to negotiate visual communication by various theorists and practitioners. Starting with Gui Bonsiepe, then Robin Kinross, Roland Barthes, Hano Ehses, and Ann Tyler. Richard Buchanan's application of rhetoric is also discussed, although oriented towards industrial design, it details an approach that is relevant to my own research.

Visual communication's instinctive relationship with rhetoric was initially revealed through the field of advertising - advertising essentially being about inducement through persuasive arguments. This obvious coupling is given its first detailed examination by Gui Bonsiepe in the early 1960s at the Institute of Design (hochschule fur gestaltung), Ulm. Bonsiepe's article, "Visual-verbal rhetoric," (1965) was one of the first attempts to apply the terms of verbal rhetoric to visual outcomes, namely advertisements. (Although he also refers to corporate identity as being rhetorically directed in an effort to present the company's image.) And whilst this study was heavily influenced by semiotics it set the foundation for the development of a type of visual/verbal rhetoric that is understood today.

Although Bonsiepe refers only to advertisements in his discussion of rhetoric he does acknowledge that any act of designing engages in a rhetorical process. He writes:
Information without rhetoric is a pipe-dream which ends up in the break-down of communication and total silence. “Pure” Information exists for the designer only in and abstraction. As soon as he begins to give it concrete shape, to bring it within the range of experience, the process of rhetorical infiltration begins. (1965: 30)

And while this statement may lack ambiguity in regards to rhetoric’s intrinsic relationship to design, a few paragraphs later he contradicts himself by claiming that a train timetable, for example, is an example of information that is “innocent of all taint of rhetoric” (1965: 30) Even though this discrepancy remains unresolved by the author, it is dealt with nearly twenty years later by Robin Kinross in his article, “The Rhetoric of Neutrality.” (1989) This article is of greater relevance to my research as it not only reconfirms the point that no communication is free of rhetoric, but, as the title suggests, identifies an aesthetic that appears to be free of rhetoric. As a consequence of this position he rejects the distinction between design that informs and design that persuades, and reiterates that, “all communication is ideologically grounded, even if it is transmitted in forms that purport to be free of ideology.” (Margolin paraphrasing Kinross: 1989: 20)

It was also around the time of Bonsiepe’s article that Roland Barthes wrote “The Rhetoric of the Image,” (1977) which also applies a theory of rhetoric to advertisements, on this occasion for pasta, pasta sauces, etc. But unlike Bonsiepe, who uses rhetorical figures such as analogy, metaphor, synecdoche, metonym and exaggeration to better understand the construction of visual communication, Barthes use of the term was not grammatically prescriptive. He developed a more general position and viewed rhetoric as the ‘set of connotators’ that deliver the symbolic messages opposed to the literal, denoted messages. And while he turns to semiotics to ‘decode’ the advertisement, he acknowledges the rhetorical process in the production of these meanings. According to Bonsiepe the combination of rhetoric and semiotics is a unique requirement of modern communication because in antiquity the combination of
words and images was unrealisable and therefore inconsequential to classical rhetoric.

Similarly, Hanno Ehses uses both rhetoric and semiotics to develop an understanding of the creative process in his article, "Representing Macbeth: A Case Study in Visual Rhetoric." (1984) In his introductory paragraph he suggests that semiotics can be used to explain the principles that reside in the structure of signs and how they are used within messages, whereas rhetoric offers a way of constructing such messages. Ehses is adamant about the necessary integration of both theories if an awareness of the creative process is to evolve - an awareness that he believes will enable the graphic designer greater control over their visual outcomes, ultimately making them more effective communicators.

Ehses, like Bonsiepe, offers a grammatical model through which to view classical rhetorical figures. Grammatical, because the figures are viewed as principles of construction - words and images are joined to form sentences whose final outline is one of a rhetorical figure: figures of contrast (antithesis, irony); figures of resemblance (metaphor, personification); figures of contiguity (metonymy, synecdoche, periphrasis, puns); or figures of gradation (amplification, hyperbole).11 This article argues that each design scenario although requiring a unique response can be answered via common strategies (i.e. rhetorical figures). But it should also be pointed out that Ehses is careful to guard against the assumption that such an approach will result in the mechanisation of the creative process.

If it has not already become clear it is probably useful to note that the distance between Bonsiepe's and Ehses' propositions are largely chronological and procedural, but certainly not conceptual. Both use semiotic and rhetorical theory, both acknowledge that all communication is rhetorically infiltrated (ignoring Bonsiepe's, [no longer] waverin conviction – see footnote 10), and both refer to the potential 'empowerment' of the graphic designer who is made aware of such an approach. As I have suggested the only major difference, beside the twenty odd years between publication dates, is the point

11. Although there are hundreds of rhetorical figures, these are the ones listed by Ehses (p.190), who chose them for his Macbeth case study as they provided the most "obvious potential for visual duplication"
of application of rhetoric to the design process. Although Bonsiepe acknowledges the potential of rhetoric to help designers better understand and improve what they are doing he does not show how this might happen - the theory never precedes or becomes a conscious part of the practice. He applies the rhetorical figures to the advertisements, post production, whereas Ehes asks students to design a poster using a rhetorical figure that visually compares to its verbal counterpart. Rhetoric in this instance becomes a method of provocation, a conceptual tool, generating ideas that may not have otherwise been reached.

And although the previous designers, Bonsiepe and Ehes, have argued a strong case for the use of rhetoric in design theory and practice, they have conceived of it in a narrow way, and as a result limited its application to visual communication, advertising in particular. But Kinross foresees further problems resulting from this prohibitive approach carved out by the use of rhetorical figures. He sees the debasement of classical verbal rhetoric as indicative of the need for caution, but warns more specifically of its potential to create "a new academicism and formalism, in which guidelines grow into a restrictive network of fences." (1986: 198)

As if to heed this warning other design theorists have engaged with rhetoric from other, less binding, perspectives. In Ann C. Tyler’s essay, “Shaping Belief: The Role of Audience in Visual Communication,” (1992) rhetoric becomes a way to understand the relationship of the audience to the communication process. The aim of visual communication, she claims, is to persuade an audience to take on a belief, a belief that will either induce the audience to take action, educate the audience, or create an experience for the audience. Previously an audience has been viewed in diverse ways: as spectators, viewing the outcome as a formal aesthetic expression; as passive readers, who interpret the visual statement, but do not generate meaning; or as active readers, a position credited to semiotics, which acknowledges multiple interpretations. But it is the ‘audience as participant’ that Tyler develops more thoroughly to explain the relationship between the process of communication
and the audience. With rhetorical theory as the foundation she suggests that visual communications' intent is persuasion through the development of argument: a tactic different to forming visual statements inside grammatical structures, or delivering messages through encoded visuals, approaches exhibited by Ehses and Barthes, respectively. (Tyler: 21-22)

To conclude her paper Tyler proposes further areas of inquiry, a subtle acknowledgment of not only the limitations of her own research, but of all investigation that avoids engaging with the ethical and moral responsibilities of designers and the audiences. Whether we replace the semiotic art of interpretation with the rhetorical art of persuasion is of little consequence when addressing these questions offered by Tyler: "What are the designer's responsibilities in referencing beliefs? And as an active participant in shaping belief, does the audience have a responsibility within the communication process?" (p.29)

And even though Tyler's approach transcends the boundaries of advertising, rhetoric still remains the exclusive tool of graphic design. This parochial attitude is cleverly dismantled by Richard Buchanan who proposes a 'rhetoric of things', with specific attention given to the products of industrial design, opposed to the more conventional 'rhetoric of words.' In his article "Declaration by Design: Rhetoric, Argument, and Demonstration in Design Practice," (1989) he proclaims that the made object becomes a persuasive argument that is activated when an object is considered for use or actually used. An 'argument' for Buchanan is the connecting device between the designer, their subject matter (for Buchanan the subject of design communication is 'the idea of practical life'), and the audience. (1989: 95) By using classic rhetorical terms he divides the design argument into three areas: technological reasoning (logos), character (ethos), and emotion (pathos) - adding that this division is not exclusive, each object bearing some trace of the three components. It is the knowing or unknowing manipulation of these components by designers that enables them to realise persuasion.
HOW I USE RHETORIC

So where do I fit in? Like Kinross I query the distinction between design that persuades and design that informs; like Tyler I prefer a methodology that favours persuasion instead of interpretation; like Ehses I see the necessity of a theory that can provoke practice; and, like Buchanan I believe in a ‘rhetoric of things’. My understanding of design is undoubtedly rhetorical. But where my approach differs is in its origin and its scope. The point of departure for rhetorical investigation for Buchanan and Kinross are the designed objects or outcomes, for Tyler it is the communication process and an audience. And although Ehses’ approach is ‘geographically’ the closest - levelled at the creative process of graphic design - there is a difference in the identification of rhetorical presence. On one hand he acknowledges the presence of rhetoric in all communicative acts, but on the other, only identifies the rhetorical figures of, for example, contrast or contiguity or resemblance or gradation. Even if all visual outcomes could be paralleled to a verbal rhetorical figure, an extensive knowledge of the hundreds of variations would be required, and how useful would this process really be? Ehses makes no reference to non-figurative rhetorical analysis.

My particular approach to rhetoric has in fact been informed more by the work of literary theorist, Wayne Booth, than any designer or design theorist. Booth’s seminal text, “The Rhetoric of Fiction” (1961), develops a less traditional conception of rhetoric, contrary to the usual (prescriptive) figures of speech, or the unfavourable side of persuasion. He sets out to describe the techniques of fiction, which he views as “the rhetorical devices available to the writer….. as he tries consciously or unconsciously to impose his fictional world upon the reader.” (1961: xii) These devices I should add are of kind not avoidable. Booth acknowledges the fallacy of artist purity and it turn derides the value placed on the mimetic. But he does not evaluate particular rhetorical methods, he only exposes them for what they are - devices used by the author to achieve certain effects. There are no examples of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ rhetoric, only examples of how they have been used to develop the narrative and a relationship with the reader.
My interest is not so much in the pervasiveness of rhetoric, but the illusionary scale of its presence. My interest lies in the manipulation of rhetoric and the subsequent levels that appear between the poles of 'intentionality' and 'neutrality.' It is for my purposes more technique than technical, and evident through types of distance rather than types of figures. But finally it is an understanding of design as a rhetorical practice that will potentially reveal the workings of the elusive creative process. To understand how rhetoric is used is to begin to understand how designers affect viewer experience.

CONCLUSION

By tracing rhetoric from its classical origins to its present form I have revealed both the feasibility and constructiveness of applying it within a visual communication context. But apart from revealing the significance and previous successes of understanding design as a rhetorical activity, I have also exposed the limitations of its application. Therefore, the implication of these findings for my own research is that although a rhetorical approach is a legitimate strategy for revealing aspects of the creative design process, it is one that has been narrowly conceived and applied to visual communication. These finding have also implied that an alternative approach, offered by a literary model, may provide insight into the rhetorical devices used by the designer to affect viewer experience.
3. development of the model
3.1 DESIGN AS FICTION

"Design no less than literature can be a form of fiction...Design rhetoric exaggerates reality and speaks of things that are often more imaginary than actual." (Paul Elliman cited in Poynor, 1997a: 31)

As I have suggested Booth's, 'The Rhetoric of Fiction', is useful in its potential to reveal not only literary, but design creative processes, specifically in regard to the control of viewer experience. But in order to effectively draw an analogy between the two fields of design and literature it is necessary to articulate their points of relation. From this point I will use the term 'fiction' rather than literature, as what is important is the notion of a created environment not literary merit.

The aim of this section is to argue that designers, like writers engage in similar methodologies - of primary significance to my research is their shared use of processes of invention. Not only does the establishment of this foundational premise release design from its scientific restraints, enabling understandings of design that have previously being denied, but also it sets the stage for further literary analogies within this research.

Firstly, I will define fiction, and my use of the term. Secondly, the commonalities between design and fiction will be briefly argued, with the process of invention being the key concern. And, apart from the value of identifying this common process and the subsequent role of rhetorical devices, I will discuss the idea of 'appropriateness', another insight into design offered through the comparison to fiction.

WHAT IS FICTION?

The relationship between design and fiction cannot be understood without a brief explanation of how 'fiction' is used generally and how it is used for the purpose of this argument. As a derivation of the Latin term fingo, to form or fashion it can either refer to the product of imagination (the novel), or the process of imagining. In its Postmodern incarnation it can be referred to as "all mental activity", 48
because “we can only make sense of things by imposing fictions (shapes or interpretations) on them.” (Fowler: 1997: 95) This use of the term ‘fiction’ - the idea that everything is fictional - is both problematic and essentially unproductive. If everything is a ‘fictional’, then the idea of ‘non-fictional’, is automatically invalid, and a way of knowing is lost.

It is for these reasons that I use the term in a narrower sense, to describe that which has been invented - fashioned or formed. The fictional process yields representations, or rhetorical compositions, of ideas rather than realities. As Todorov points out “there is not, first of all, a certain reality, and afterward, its representation by the text.” (1981: 27) It is this idea of fiction, as not so much being a reconstruction of reality, but as the product of a series of rhetorical devices, employed for certain effects, that makes it a useful analogy to design. Acknowledgment of a process of invention demystifies the Romantic notion of creativity, as separate from technique, and begins to enable a dialogue, largely ignored by design discourse, around a ‘process of design’.

While I have succinctly labelled fiction it is worth noting that, like rhetoric, its definition (and reputation) wavers throughout history. Plato sees fiction as lies, but as “the child of lying, not the father of lies”, as it is pretending without intent to deceive (Martin: 1986: 186). Whereas, Gustave Flaubert sees it as truth, believing ultimately, that fiction turns into fact. He writes, in a letter to Louise Colet, in 1853:

_The day before yesterday, in the woods of Touques, in a charming spot beside a spring, I found old cigar butts and_ _scrapes of pate. People had been picnicking. I described such a scene in Novembre, eleven years ago; it was entirely imagined, and the other day it came true. Everything one invents is true, you may be sure. Poetry is precise as geometry. Induction is as accurate as deduction; and besides, after reaching a certain point one no longer makes any mistake about the things of the soul. My poor Bovary, without a doubt, is suffering and weeping at this very_
These opposing positions reveal that the idea or definition of fiction is slippery, or more specifically, historically situated, reflecting a current intellectual position rather than any inherent ideas about ‘lies’ or ‘truths’. For the sake of my argument, it is inconsequential, as to whether fiction is or isn’t real, or revelatory at any level. Its worth is located in the process it reveals.

DESIGN AND FICTION

Many would argue that the pairing of design and fiction ignores designs primary function, which is utilitarian, relegating it to the role of cultural annotation. But it is not design and fictions primary function, which motivates this parallel, but rather how they are created, by the processes of invention.

But before I discuss this aspect, if we were to widen our definition of function to include not only what an artefact does in the world, but also what it says about the world, the parallel between design and fiction becomes more apparent. For both design and fiction function as cultural signifiers. They function as sites for the exploration and construction of a society of individuals, and of the relations between them. Telling us who we were, or are, or would like to be, defining the world in which we live, and in which we wish to live. They are engaged in “the creation and organisation of signs not simply in order to produce meaning but in order to produce a world charged with meaning” (Culler, 1975: 189) Although this is obviously more apparent in relation to fiction, which can seem to be an explicit account of human behaviours and desires, the products of design can also be understood in a similar way. Buchanan (paraphrasing Forty) writes that while “design is the preparation of instructions for the production of manufactured goods”, these instructions inevitably include “expressions of ideas or myths about the world in which we live.” (1995: 49)
PROCESS OF INVENTION

However it is not for this reason alone that I find value in the pairing of design and fiction, as there are numerous 'texts', from shoes, to cars, to films, to furniture, which offer similar reflections on who we are and how we would like to live. The strength of the proposition that 'design is like fiction' can be located in the process of invention as it is articulated and understood by literary theory. I would argue that by the process of invention, designers and writers construct artificial environments to deliver experiences, messages, moods and ideas. And it is this idea of invention that acknowledges the weakness of a scientific framework as a method of inquiry, and links design more closely with literature.

Richard Buchanan also supports this separation of design from a science methodology, in his article, "Rhetoric, Humanism, and Design" (1995), by arguing the role of invention in design. For Buchanan, the fundamental difference between science and design is their approach to subject matter. He sees the subject matter of science as determinate, and therefore acquired through the process of discovery. And that “discovery implies that there is something constantly available, waiting passively to be uncovered, and that the discovery will yield only one result, which may be confirmed by other experimental techniques for questioning nature.” The subject matter of design, on the other hand is indeterminate, “open to alternative resolutions even with the same methodology.” (p.24) created rather than given through the processes of invention. Gunnar Swanson makes a similar claim, describing design as 'synthetic', stating, “design does not have a subject matter of its own - it exists in practice only in relation to the requirements of given projects,” and inadvertently echoes Buchanan's sentiment about the process of design not being one of discovery, by writing “the path of progress for the field is not defined by the next great unsolved design problem.” (1997: 69)

Therefore, it is fiction and design's sharing of indeterminate subject matter, and the subsequent employment of a process of invention over discovery that links these two fields. And, as the process of
invention is extensively examined by literary theory the potential to
discover insights into this aspect of the design process is great.

'APPROPRIATENESS'
Apart from sharing the process of invention, and roles as cultural
signifiers, design and fiction also share 'appropriateness' as an
evaluative measure. The very contingent nature of design, the many
possibilities and resolutions it offers for any one given situation
often makes the discussion of its 'correctness' difficult. The question
asked of design is never "What should it be?" but rather, "What
could it be?" And then, further, "What else could it be?" This is why
design, unlike science, will only ever be able to offer a solution,
rather than the solution. It was in fact the previous framing of design
as a science that gave rise to the problematic idea of 'good' or
'bad' design, which still persists in design criticism. By removing it
from this methodology and pairing design with fiction, there comes
an acknowledgment of many ways to tell a story. And it is for this
reason that the choices made by designers and writers can only ever
be judged by degrees of 'appropriateness'.

As a consequence of the absence of a definitive outcome existing
independently of the process - an outcome waiting to be discovered
- there is no singular external point to measure progress against.
This lack of an external guide shifts the gaze firstly, inward towards
their own construction, asking 'how true to is it to itself', not 'how
true it is' (as this would suggest a singular truth). It is for this reason
that design and fiction share the measure of 'appropriateness', set
not against the real world but an invented world. But, it is important
to note that this 'invented world' is ultimately tested, or set against
our conception of the actual world. The 'real' starts out as the
framework or model, but ultimately becomes the site.

In fiction, this idea of appropriateness as a relative term is evidenced
by John Gardner's statement of the importance that

...every character is sufficiently vivid and interesting for his
function; every scene is just long enough, just rich enough;
every metaphor polished; no symbol stands out crudely
from its matrix of events, yet no resonance goes completely
unheard, too shyly muffled by the literal. (1991: 77)

The use of the words ‘sufficiently’ and ‘just long/rich enough’ imply a
level of relativity that is indicative of the notion of appropriateness
rather than absoluteness. And the fulfilment of these requirements
necessitates the functioning of a ‘character,’ an invention.

The designer George Nelson also uses the idea of appropriateness as
a factor in design, stating, “the design process is integrated in the
principle of appropriateness” (BUCHANAN, 1995: 53). Nelson writes,

Going through the entire design process, which includes
the important collaborations all the way down the line,
with materials people, engineers, technicians in specialised
areas, and marketing people, the steady movement is in
the direction of a solution that is ultimately seen, not as
beautiful, but as appropriate…Everything in organic nature
functions in relation to survival needs; we find these
things beautiful, because as creatures of nature we are
programmed to respond to evidence of appropriateness
as an expression of beauty. For mathematicians, and for
scientists generally, words like ‘elegant,’ ‘appropriate,’ and
‘beautiful’ are synonymous. (CITED BY BUCHANAN, 1995: 54)

The importance of the concept of appropriateness to my research
will be revealed later, as the success of each rhetorical position
(type of ‘distance’) within the model I have constructed is described
in terms of appropriateness rather than the absolutes of ‘right’ or
‘wrong’.

CONCLUSION
By proposing that designers and writers are both engaged in the
construction of fictional environments I have argued not only the
shared process of invention but also an alternative to the scientific
framework as a method of inquiry for design. It is the latter which

53
has the broadest implications for my research as it reveals a way to understand the creative design process that has been ignored by design discourse, yet extensively examined by literary theory. The analysis of the processes of invention used in literature, particularly the rhetorical devices used by the author in an attempt to control aspects of the reader's response, provides insight into the rhetorical devices used by the designer to affect viewer experience.

3.2 AUTHORSHIP

In my introduction I claimed that an understanding of the authors relationship with their text - specifically their attempts to control reader experience - would provide insight to the under-examined relationship between the designer and their outcome. And in the previous section I referred to the author (or writer) as the designer's literary equivalent, sharing similar processes yet different products. For these reasons it is necessary to look more closely at the idea of authorship in the context of visual communication.

Design and authorship is in fact, not a new coupling. The labelling of a 'designer as author' has gained momentum in the past decade, with graphic authorship being claimed by practitioner and theorist alike. But this labelling has predominantly been nothing more than an ambit claim of ownership, a struggle for acknowledgment by the designer, with little consideration of the complexity of the term 'author' and its historical shifts. One of the aims of this section is to discuss the usage of this term, which will subsequently reveal design discourse's superficial understanding of the term. But more importantly it will reveal a missed opportunity for design to examine the longstanding dichotomy between 'creativity' and 'technique', which is explored by authorial criticism. It is for this reason that an exploration of 'designer as author' has currency.

This section will be divided into two parts: 'authorial criticism' and 'designer as author'. In the former section I will trace the shift in the meaning of the term 'author', and how its current use within literary
criticism is significant to design. In the second part I will discuss how the notion of 'designer as author' has been understood in design, its limitations, and an alternative use for this idea.

3.2.1 AUTHORIAL CRITICISM

In its most orthodox form an author is "a person who writes any kind of literary or non-literary work." (Gray, 1992: 37) But the author is also a mechanism by which we order, classify, value and understand a text, making their relationship to the text culturally determined rather than natural. The author is as much a product of the work as the work is a product of the author. The consequence of this cultural determination is a term whose finer points are historically dependent. From the Romantic, to the post-Romantic, to the neo-Rhetorical period the notion of authorship has shifted.

ROMANTICS

To be called an author in the Romantic period (1780-1850) was to be bestowed with old-fashioned ideas of originality, authenticity, and possibly 'genius'. The Romantics saw a necessity to demarcate the imagination and the imitative, creativity and technique, (Williamson, 1989: 3) and in doing so fabricated the 'creative genius', an individual whose talent is inspirational, indescribable, and untraceable. This mythical character is enduring, and can be located in areas of contemporary criticism such as literature, music, fine art, film and more pertinently, in design.

In design, this split between creativity and technique, is echoed through a continuously divisible hierarchies: from creative directors, to art directors, to graphic designers, to 'Mac operators', to production assistants, and so on, with each stage surrendering more creative control and replacing rhetorical technique with the technical.

POST ROMANTICS

While the Romantics championed uniqueness and maintained a belief in the unmitigated independence of an author's work a counter-view was developing. There was a disavowal of the Romantic
opposition between creativity and technique resulting in the author slipping from the privileged position at the origin of texts, and as the originator of intent. This view was solidified in an essay written by American critics Wimsatt and Beardsley called “The Intentional Fallacy” (1954). As its title suggests, they denounce any analysis of a text that takes into account authorial intention, believing that the text itself contains all the material required to understand the work.

This is a key concept of New Criticism, a dominant critical movement of the 1930s and 1940s. But this movement’s conviction in the ability of a text to surrender all meaning is dubious as it ignores the historical and social contexts of language, as well as the fact that meaning cannot be so easily separated from intention. This movement gave way to structuralism and eventually, post-structuralism, which further supported the futility of authorial intent as a means of criticism, evidenced most famously by Barthes’ 1968 essay “Death of the Author” (1977). It is at this point that we see not only a preference for textual investigation but also the emergence of the importance of the reader. Whereas Structuralists described the ‘structure’, the post-Structuralists focused on the potential plurality of meaning contrived by the reader, giving rise to the expression, ‘the birth of the reader.’

In response to Barthes’ announcement of the author’s death, Foucault writes, in 1969 an essay, which also dismisses the author as an origin of the text titled “What is an Author?” (1979) But this differs from the established Structuralist approach, as Foucault does not focus on the text, claiming that this method merely transfers origination from a hypothetical subject to a “transcendental anonymity.” (Cited in Williamson, 1989: 33) He instead sees the author as a function of discourse, determined by cultural conditions, and applied as both a practical and theoretical device.

This Post Structuralist perspective is fuelled by developments in areas such as Marxism, Feminism and Psychoanalysis. These movements share a belief that the intentions of a text are already shaped by language itself, “that language cannot be considered a
transparent medium which expresses some prelinguistic experience.”
(Williamson, 1989: 26) The author's role as an originator is eroded even further.

**NEO RHETORICAL**

In his book, “Authorship and criticism” (1989), Dugald Williamson refers to the next stage in authorial criticism as Neo Rhetorical. This method differs from the Post Romantic hypothesis “because it emphasises the productive role of compositional techniques, their relation to cultural practices and their role in forming subjects' psychological and intellectual capacities.” (Williamson, 1989: 30)

Authors are viewed as skilled practitioners in the art of assembly, and techniques of representation are not seen purely as translators of pre-existing meanings nor are meanings independently embedded in language, but rather integral in the generation of meaning.

**THE SHIFT**

This overview of authorial criticism is by no means definitive, but it does mark an interesting shift in the notion of authorship; it removes the production of texts from the realm of 'authorial expression' and reconsidered it as 'rhetorical composition.' In doing so it highlights how the generation of meaning has been historically contested by the changing relationship between notions of 'creativity' and 'technique'. A rhetorical perspective does not set these terms in opposition, but instead sees them as indistinguishable. It is at this point that the study of authorship is valuable to design as it provides a model with which to address the processes of invention, as an understanding of techniques reveals aspects of the elusive creative process. And it also the point where the label of 'designer as author' seems most viable as the authorial banner becomes one of orchestration rather than origination. Writers and designers alike are seemingly just 'authors of technique'.

But does this use of this term have any other contributions to design discourse, or will it further promote the idea of the creative genius? Regardless of literary theory's recent attempt to decentralise the
generation of meaning away from the author, an understanding of
the work is still sought in those who create it. As Barthes writes,

...criticism still consists for the most part in saying that
Baudelaire's work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van
Gogh's his madness, Tchaikovsky’s his vice. The explanation
of a work is always sought in the man or woman who
produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the
more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice
of a single person, the author ‘confiding’ in us. (BARTHES,
1977b: 143)

In design discourse there has been little to suggest that the use
of the term ‘author’ does anything more than perpetuate the
romantic conception of the creative genius. Closer examination
of the proposition of ‘designer as author’ yields problems, and
more specifically leaves some of designs more pertinent questions
unanswered.

3.2.2 DESIGNER AS AUTHOR

So why does design claim the role of authorship when cultural
criticism is abandoning the idea? And even if design were unaware
of the intrinsic difficulties of the title ‘author’, why would a discipline
whose very existence is dependant1 look towards a model whose
orthodox image is reliant on the notion of independence?

As I have mentioned before there is little evidence to suggest that
the answers to these questions are any more profound than for
reasons of self-aggrandisement. Or to be less cynical, it may be that
by virtue of the authorial banner designers believe that a greater
degree of creative control will be bestowed upon them. A situation
of privilege preceding power. In any case authorship is a seductive
title that implies a level of omnipotence. An omnipotence that
Adrian Forty sees as “the myth of creative autonomy” that “releases
designers from the uncomfortable prospect that they might be no
more than actors in the theatre of history.” (1992: 242)

1. Conventional design practice being dependant on clients.
But regardless of these explanations, or further justifications, the fact that cannot be ignored is that authorship will continue to be a contentious term because of the paradox that exists in all cultural production. Forty explains this paradox by stating that "on the one hand, design is determined by ideas and material conditions over which designers have no control, yet, on the other hand, designs are the result of designers exercising their creative autonomy and originality." (1992: 242)

A few pages on Forty further highlights the problems associated with ‘creative autonomy and originality’ by using the example of the Lucky Strike cigarette packet, redesigned in 1940 by Raymond Loewy. He writes:

> While one cannot deny that skill and creativity went into the design, it seems hard to believe that only Loewy could have come up with the idea of a white cigarette packet, and once we admit the possibility that other designers could have achieved similar results, the case for attributing the design's success entirely to Loewy's personal creativity falls away. If there were others who could have produced it, some of the reasons for the design's success must have lain elsewhere than in the individuality of the designer. (1992: 244)

The formal decisions a designer makes are superficially easier to identify than that of a writer: we more readily understand the construction of a page than we do the construction of the paragraph that lies upon it. But this is by virtue of experience rather than the task being less complicated. Not only will a glance at a piece of design reveal it’s formal characteristics more quickly than a piece of text, but the opportunity for such revelation is made more available in a culture increasingly dominated by the visual. A consequence of this predominance is the claim that we are a highly ‘visually literate’ society, but I would like to argue that vision affords sight not literacy; being able to see is not the same as being able to read. So, rightly and wrongly, the resulting “I can do that” school of criticism
(membered by designers and public alike), makes a designer's audition for the role of creative individual seem even more remote. But regardless of the innumerable problems of authorship the title remains a favoured description.

MICHAEL ROCK'S 'DESIGNER AS AUTHOR'

A discussion of design and authorship would be incomplete without the inclusion of Michael Rock's canonical article, "The Designer as Author" (1996). I will use this article, one of the most comprehensive studies of the topic, as a starting point for the debate of graphic authorship, examine his key ideas, and show where our thoughts converge and ultimately why I take another direction and propose the "designer as narrator".

Rock introduces the idea of authorship in design and outlines the difficulties associated with the term, both its use in authorial criticism and more specifically in design. He develops a convincing argument that suggests designers have been unwittingly employing a "modified graphic auteur theory" (1996: 49) for some time. The idea of an auteur was developed by French film critics in the 1950s, and usually attributed to a director whose work transcended typical film making, but most importantly exhibited a distinctive, creative vision, a signature style. English and Americans critics developed this idea into what is now referred to as 'auteur theory," which expresses the Romantic sentiment of authorship, transforming film-makers into 'artists'.

2. See American critic Andrew Sarris's "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962" (1971)

An analogy can be drawn between designers and directors, Rock points out, as both work collaboratively directing various projects with varying degrees of creative control, the overall signification being a result of the initial content and its visual execution. He also sees design's adoption of the authorial banner to be for reasons similar to that of film's development of auteur theory, which was intended to elevate "what was considered low entertainment to the plateau of fine art." (1996: 48) The establishment of an author has developed into a necessary component in constituting work as high
In accordance with the criteria, Rock reveals the following designers to be “probably” worthy of auteur status: Fabien Baron, Tibor Kalman, David Carson, Neville Brody, Edward Fella, Anthon Beeke, Pierre Bernard, Gert Dumbar, Tadanori Yokoo, Vaughan Oliver, Rick Valicenti, April Greiman, Jan van Toorn, Wolfgang Weingart, (and many others). It is the combination of ‘technical proficiency’ and ‘a signature style’ that singles these designers out from many others. But at this point he asks, “if we add the requirement of interior meaning, how does the list fare?” (1996: 48) The field is instantly reduced. Designers such as Bernard and Van Toorn pass muster, because of their ‘political affiliations’, whereas Carson and Baron are ousted as ‘stylists’, albeit ‘great’ ones. Brody and Valicenti also make the grade through an attempt to imbue their work with ‘inner meaning.’ While I agree with Rock’s categorisations so far, many wouldn’t. Herein lies the dilemma of auteur theory. How do you discern what exactly inner meaning is? Is it qualitative? Is a certain amount required before auteur status is reached? This enigmatic attribute, referred to by Rock as the “I can’t say what it is but I know it when I see it” aspect of auteur theory makes its problematic and has resulted in its lack of popularity among film theorists. (1996: 49)

Rock likewise abandons auteur theory, and instead proposes sites where ‘graphic authorship’ may already exist. And although the inclusionary nature of this taxonomy - activists sit along side children's book illustrators - may disturb purists, it is indicative of both the fact that we are yet unsure of who exactly qualifies as a designer. It is no wonder that the title of ‘graphic authorship’ is so elusive. This reads as much as an exercise in emphasising the diversity of designers’ roles as it does an exploration of potential authorship. He includes the following:

- artist books, by Diter Rot, Tom Phillips, Warren Lehrer, Tom Ockerse, Johanna Drucker;
- activist work, by Gran Fury, Bureau, Women’s Action Coalition, General Idea, ACT-UP, Class Action and the Guerrilla Girls;
writers and publishers of material about design, such as Josef Muller-Brockmann, Rudy VanderLans, Paul Rand, Erik Spiekermann, William Morris, Neville Brody, Robin Kinross, Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller; and,

author/illustrators, such as Sue Coe, Art Spiegelman, Charles Burns, Ben Katchor, David McCaulley, Chris van Allesberg, Edward Gorey and Maurice Sendak.

Bruce Mau’s *S.M.I.L.E.* and Irma Boom’s work for a Dutch corporation, are also included, as are April Greiman, Allen Hori and Tom Bonauro for their work that uses “the medium of professional graphic design to create self-referential statements and compositions.” (1996: 52)

But although Brody has designed magazines, Spiekermann, visual identities, Greiman her fair share of brochures, and Hori, no doubt a letterhead or two, none of this work has lead to their standing as ‘graphic authors’. So where does this leave the ‘average’ graphic designer, whose existence as such, is dependent on this type of work? Surely no closer to sharing the authorial title. And whilst I agree with Rock’s inclusions, I wonder whether such a lengthy debate of authorship is justifiable for a few worthy players?

For a model so flawed the persistence of this idea is curious. We have seen its failings through authorial criticism and its limitations in design discourse. Even if we view the use of the term ‘author’ in the latter as metaphorical an essential problem still remains: an authorship model focuses attention on ‘who’ created it rather than ‘how’ it was created, a point also acknowledged by Rock in his final sentence, “the primary concern of both the viewer and the critic is not who made it, but rather what it does and how it does it.” (1996: 53)

CONCLUSION

Were it not for the difference in my application of the term ‘author’ the implications of these findings could seem problematic, as my own model also necessitates the construction of the ‘designer as author’. Yet, my use of the term is informed by the neo-rhetorical perspective, which as discussed, sees authorial processes of
invention as ‘techniques of representation’. The significance of this approach is that it draws attention to ‘how’ rather than ‘who’ in the creative process. Therefore, the value of claiming authorship, in my research, is not for reasons of ownership, authority or acknowledgement, but rather, because of the extent to which an understanding of the author's techniques (or rhetorical devices) has been developed by literary theory. By making the analogy of designers to authors, I can apply these understandings to the field of visual communication. The author's value will be revealed as contingent of their relationship to the narrator, having little significance to my research as an author alone.

3.3 THE VISUAL NARRATOR

Authorial criticism revealed an inadequacy in helping to understand ‘how’ it is that designer’s design or how messages are communicated. I have proposed that it does nothing more than supply an illusionary point of origin, a ‘who’, for the semioticians ‘what.’ Yet if we examine the author in relation to the narrator, I will argue that a useful analogy for design can be developed, as it is within the author/narrator paradigm that the rhetorical devices used to create the stories and reader experiences can be located; and, an understanding of these devices offers a way to investigate how the designer controls the viewer experience.

The idea of a visual narrator is one of the most crucial aspects of my research. My research describes the visual narrator as the significant factor used by the designer in the manipulation of ‘distance’. And, as ‘distance’ is the type of rhetorical device I chosen to explore in relation to viewer experience, it is necessary to understand what a visual narrator is, and how they come to create varying levels of ‘distance’. But to arrive at this point, literary theories own exploration of the narrator - the different types and their impact on the reader/text relationship – needs to be discussed, as again, literary theory provides the foundation to my own ‘visual narrator’.
Therefore the aim of this section is to firstly argue the possibility of a visual narrator, and secondly reveal how a narrator, whether visual or literary, appears to be involved to varying degrees in the narrative, and that these varying degrees have a significant impact of the reader/viewers relationship to the text.

To argue for a visual narrator I must first of all argue that visual communication can be described in the terms of narrative. This is where I will start. I will then briefly discuss the author/narrator paradigm and define my use of the term ‘narrator’. Lastly, I will introduce the types of narrators, as understood by key narratologists, and more importantly, the degrees of involvement of these narrators within the text.

DESIGN AND NARRATIVE

In the simplest terms a narrative is a story, and while we usually equate a story with a novel, this manifestation is relatively contemporary. Telling stories has a long history oral history, as do non-linguistic forms, such as dance, painting, and more recently film. It is therefore apparent that a narrative is a structure that can be transposed upon various mediums. But can it be transposed on design? And if so what are the advantages of the transposition?

While not all designed outcomes have a first page, they usually have a beginning. They may not have an obvious plot, but there is often a sequence. And while there may be no relationships between characters, there are relationships between elements. Relationships dictated by visual hierarchies, elaborated through words and images, explained with lines; relationships activated by the viewer, that inevitably come to an end.

It is the development of these formal and cognitive associations, of order and succession, which makes the structure of a designed outcome comparable to that of a narrative. As a narrative is not “the flux of raw experiences,” but rather a story in which “a selection of incidents is made so as to suggest some relationship between
them." (Gray, 189) Yet it is the analysis of the structural components that form the story, not the content of a story that is of value to design.

**NARRATIVE THEREFORE NARRATOR**

If we are to believe that a narrative, of sorts, is being communicated through designed outcomes, I will argue, from a rationalist position, for the automatic existence of a narrator, or more specifically, a ‘visual narrator’. One significant aspect of the visual narrator is that like its literary counterpart, it is not the same as the designer or author. This distinction is crucial. Even though the attempt to identify a mediating presence in literature has proven to be a contentious (and formidable) pursuit - the question ‘who is speaking?’ having been addressed by many of the key literary theorists of the last century, notably Wayne Booth (1961), Scholes and Kellogg (1966), Roland Barthes (1977), Seymour Chatman (1978), Gerard Genette (1980), Susan Snider Langer (1981), Tzvetan Todorov (1981), and F. K. Stanzel (1984) - one basic principle has prevailed: the author and the narrator are not to be understood as a singular entity. Barthes writes in support, “The (material) author of a narrative is in no way to be mistaken for the narrator of that narrative...who speaks (in the narrative) is not the one who writes (in life)” (1977a: 111-112).

To make this common misinterpretation is to dismiss two crucial relationships in narrative art: the relationship between the narrator and the author, and the narrator and the reader. The relationship between the author and the narrator is symbiotic: the author relies on the narrator for (communication), and the narrator on the author for existence. The narrator is also the point of connection between the reader and the text. The reader's response to a text and understanding of a text, are entirely dependent upon the discovery and awareness of a mediating presence. By conflating these terms, the narrator is lost, resulting in the author losing their most powerful rhetorical device, and the reader losing access to the fictive world. Apart from these losses, the ways of knowing about literature would be greatly diminished, as would the new way of knowing about
visual communication proposed by this research, as it is predicated on the existence of a visual narrator.

While the concept visual authorship has been embraced by design discourse the notion of a visual narrator seems to have been all but ignored. In her article, “It’s a Nice World After All: The Vision of ‘Difference’ in Colors” (1996), Ann Tyler comes the closest to acknowledging the existence of a visual narrator. She writes:

\[
\text{it is important to recognise that designers/editors are not the same as} \quad \text{authorial voice created...The creation of an authorial voice, consciously or unconsciously, in part allows designers or writers to develop arguments that reflect views other that their own; whether or not they are those of a client or the subject represented. (p.61)}
\]

Although not referring explicitly to a visual narrator, Tyler does make the important point that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the designer or editor, separating out ‘who speaks’ from ‘who writes’. She also acknowledges that ‘the creation of an authorial voice’ enables the development of arguments, which suggests that Tyler perceives this voice as a rhetorical device. But even though she discusses how the arguments are developed verbally and visually, Tyler resists the term ‘visual narrator’, instead preferring to remain with the literary weighted, ‘authorial voice’.

But, why my insistence of a ‘visual narrator’ considering the controversy surrounding its literary cousin? Because, aside from its difficulties, the choice of narrator is regarded as one of the single most important technical decisions to be made when creating fiction. As Percy Lubbock states, “the whole intricate question of method, in the craft of fiction’, is governed by ‘the relation in which the narrator stands to the story”. (cited in Booth, 1996: 117) And where this narrator stands has a significant impact of the reader’s relationship with the text, as Rimmon-Kenan attests, “the narrative level to which the narrator belongs, the extent of his participation in the story, the degree of perceptibility of his role, and finally his reliability are crucial in the reader’s understanding of and attitude to the story”.
Likewise, I will argue that the choice of visual narrator will significantly impact the viewer experience of the designed outcome.

**NARRATOR AS MEDIATORY PRESENCE**

In the context of this research I see a visual narrator as a 'mediatory presence', the point of mediation between the designer/author and the viewer. The equation of narrator and mediator is not new. Stanzel (1984) refers to mediacy as the "generic characteristic of narration" (p.4), and claims that, "the rendering of mediacy, is perhaps the most important starting point for the shaping of the subject matter by an author of a narrative work," (p.6) the rendering of mediacy being the choice and development of a narratorial position.

I have momentarily replaced the term 'visual narrator' with 'mediatory presence' to emphasise that my use of the term is metaphoric. I understand and use the term to indicate a "perceiving consciousness," (LANSER, 1981: 52) not necessarily a person, and certainly not the author. The term visual narrator is therefore an "anthropomorphism." (BRANIGAN, 1984: 40)

The reason for this tactic is two-fold. Firstly, as I have mentioned, it is difficult enough, at times, to ascertain 'who is speaking' in a literary work, even when these texts present potential candidates (characters, etc.), or an effaced narrator, made existent by unclaimed words on a page, therefore the difficulties of finding a person in design outcomes is even greater, as my proposal of a design narrative does not involve characterisation in the literary sense. Also the relationship between the written word and speaking is more evident – the readers 'speaking' the words to themselves as they read, whereas a viewer does not translate the visual text into a spoken dialogue, making the sense of a narrating voice less apparent. Secondly, and more significantly, the theoretical value of locating the narrator is in the recognition of it as an authorial device, not a person. Because in the author/narrator paradigm, the narrator symbolises the rhetorical dimension of literature: how the narrative is presented to reader. It is for these reasons that I perceive the
visual narrator to be like the literary narrator, “not a person or state of mind, but a linguistic and logical relationship posed by the text as a condition of its intelligibility...a way of measuring the presentation and perception of objects.” (BRANIGAN, 1984: 3)

**TYPES OF NARRATORS**

One of the reasons ‘who is speaking’ is so difficult to establish is because of the numerous ways in which mediacy is rendered. From the various types of narrators, to their various ‘levels of presence’, an exhaustive range of options are available to the writer. For the purposes of my argument I shall briefly list the varying ‘types’ but in much greater detail discuss their features, namely, their ‘degrees of perceptibility’. (KIMMON-KENAN: 1983) Classification of types at this point will help to outline the dimensions of narratorial choice, and in turn emphasise the deficiency of the traditional categories, which divide all texts into two or three groups (first person, third person, and omniscient). But ultimately it is the discussion of the degrees of mediacy that is important for my research, as the degrees of mediacy are indicative of the type of visual narrator employed.

Wayne Booth lists, “at the risk of pedantry,” (1966: 120) ten categories of narration. These categories are by no means autarchic: most narrators would have characteristics of several, never fitting exclusively into one. The choice of the novelist only ever being of “degree, not kind.” (1961: 165) They are as follows:

1. **First or Third Person Narrators**
2. **Dramatised and Undramatised Narrators**
   a. The implied author (the author's second self)
   b. Undramatised
   c. Dramatised
3. **Observer and Narrator-Agents**
4. **Scene and Summary Narrator**
5. **Silent or Commentating Narrator**
6. **Self-conscious Narrator**
7. **Variations of Distance**
8. **Reliable or Unreliable Narrators (isolated or supported)**
9. **Privileged or Limited Narrator**
10. **Inside or Outside View**
In the final pages of this chapter Booth warns that the writer's choice of narrator solves only one part of the problem. The narrative may be in first person, but what kind of narrator are they? How reliable are they? When should they offer opinions or remain silent? How much of them is revealed? Booth responds that, "these questions can be answered only by reference to the potentialities and necessities of particular works, not by reference to fiction in general, or the novel, or rules about point of view." (p. 165) For that reason, narrative type cannot be uniformly applied, as narrative choice becomes dependent on particular situations and the desired effects. Success must therefore be measured by the veracity of reader experience in relation to the author's intent.

**LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT**

Whether the referent is 'degrees of mediacy' (Stanzel), 'degrees of perceptibility' (Rimmon-Kenan), 'degrees of audibility' (Chatman), or 'levels of presence' their basic function is the same: to allude to the variable awareness of a narrator's involvement by the reader in any given text. While it may be clearly apparent who the narrator is in some cases, in others, the narrator is barely discernible. It is this aspect, the narrator's variable levels of involvement, that is more significant than the type of narrator to my research, and, to many literary theorists. As Chatman writes, "it is less important to categorise types of narrators than to identify the features that mark their degrees of audibility" adding further, "a quantitative effect applies: the more identifying features, the stronger our sense of a narrator's presence." (1978: 196)

For example, throughout Salinger's "Catcher in the Rye," the reader is aware of the narrator, a character named Holden. Holden begins the book by stating,

> If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were
occupied and all before they had me, and all that David
Copperfield kind of crap, but I don’t feel like going into it.

(1951: 5)

It ends in a similarly overt way, Holden says, “That’s all I’m going to
tell about.” (p.253) There is never any doubt as to ‘who is speaking’,
a stark contrast to the effaced narrator, favoured by writers such
as James Joyce, Henry James, and Gustave Flaubert. Flaubert writes,
“that the author should be in his work like God in the universe:
everywhere present but nowhere apparent.” (CITED IN SCHÖLES AND
KELLOGG: 268) Although Flaubert refers here to the author and not the
narrator, we can assume that by lessening of the readers awareness
of mediacy presence, the presence of the author is also subdued.

These two narratorial positions, at one end a highly developed
character and at the other a barely audible presence, represent
the extremes of mediacy. This distinction has become commonly
accepted in literary circles and the foundation of many formalists’
frameworks. In Booth’s classification alone there are many pairs that
present either ends of the narrative scale: ‘first or third person’,
‘dramatised and undramatised’, ‘narrator-agents and observers,’
‘summary and scene,’ ‘commentating and silent.’ Although these
binary oppositions can by no means be directly equated with an
overt or a covert narrator, the former (of each pair) is a rhetorical
strategy that is more likely to result in greater narratorial presence.
And conversely, the latter is more likely to result in lesser narratorial
presence.

Norman Friedman (1967) has also used this distinction to create
a typology of narrative situations that is entirely dependent upon
‘degrees of mediacy.’ Echoing Booth’s fifth category (‘scene and
summary’), he introduces the terms ‘showing and telling,’ from which
he develops an eight-part scale that progressively shifts the level
of narration from ‘Editorial Omniscience’ (telling) to ‘The Camera’
(showing) where there is no explicit narrator. (1967: 119-131) And
finally, there is Stanzel who supplanted his initial pairs, ‘reportorial
narration’ and ‘scenic presentation’, (1984: 46-47) with three
constitutive elements of the narrative situation: mode, person, and perspective. But he still maintains a commitment to the binaries. For Stanzel there are now two extreme narrative possibilities within each category, each opposition denoting difference in mediacy.

CONCLUSION

While this is by no means a comprehensive account of the types of narrators available or all the levels of narratorial involvement accounted for by narratologists, this brief summary does provide the two basic principles necessary to understand my model and its foundational elements. But before these two principles are discussed, it is important to reiterate that my argument relies on the acceptance of a narrator, in this case a visual narrator, in the presence of all visual communication. Yet, this visual narrator is not necessarily the same type in each instance, which leads me to the first principle. Similar to these literary theorists, I propose multiple types of narrators (although only four in contrast to Booth’s ten), in my model. The second principle of my model is that mediatory involvement is a variable condition, that some rendering of mediacy is more overt than others.

Agreeing with Chatman’s claim that the ‘degrees of audibility’ are more important than ‘types of narrators’, I conflate ‘type of narrator’ and ‘level of involvement’ (or degree of audibility). By this I mean that my types of visual narrators are defined solely by their levels of involvement: there are not four different types of visual narrators, and the potential within these types to have varying levels of narratorial involvement, instead, the four types equate with the four levels of involvement.

I have revealed that the narrator is a significant authorial device, and that there are different types of narrators, which seem to be involved on varying levels. I have also suggested that this is significant because designers also employ visual narrators – different types with varying levels of involvement. But what I have not discussed is how the choice of visual narrator, and their mediatory involvement
is a rhetorical decision. They are created in order to effect the
delivery and content of the information, which subsequently affects
the viewer experience. It is the rhetorical dimension of the visual
narrator, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.4 DISTANCE

"Every discourse bears traces of the personal and individual act
of its production; but such traces can be more or less intense."
(Trudorow, 1981: 25)

In the previous section I argued for an explicit relationship between
design and narration, and introduced the concept of the visual
narrator and their varying levels of mediatory presence. The extent
to which this literary equivalent has been debated suggests that
the levels of narratorial involvement, between the poles of explicit
mediatory presence and effacement, are more than mere 'stylistic
variants.' (Stanzel: 56) It is literary theory's examination of the effects
of varying levels of mediacy, and the subsequent impact of this
understanding on visual communication, which is the focus of this
next section.

One of the most important effects of variation in levels of mediatory
involvement, as discussed by literary theory, is the effect it has
on the kind of involvement the reader has with the material. This
varying 'involvement' of the reader is discussed through the term
'distance' - the more or less distanced the reader is from the work,
the more or less involved they are presumed to be. But it is the
author's management of the narrator's involvement - the 'distance'
of the narrator from the material or how present the reader perceives
them to be - which ultimately effects the reader's involvement, that
is of most interest to design. This, I will argue, is because inherent
in all design are varying degrees of 'distance' that can also be
manipulated to create particular communicative effects.

Therefore, the aim of this section is to introduce distance as a
rhetorical device that is manipulated by the author through the use of different types of narrators (these narrators being defined by their differing levels of mediatory involvement). The consequence of an understanding of how authors use distance is the provision of a valuable model by which to better understand how designer's affect viewer experience, that will in turn give designers greater control over the creative process.

In order to do this I will first introduce the concept of distance as a term that relates to all representational arts, not just literature. I will then narrow the type of distance that I am most interested in, which is the type referred to by my model as the distance between the visual narrator and the designed outcome. The designer through the choice of visual narrator manipulates this distance. This distance will then be discussed not only in relation to literature, but also in relation to other non-literary works; a discussion, which sets distance up as a powerful device that transcends literary boundaries, making it applicable to visual communication. Finally, I will introduce my model: the fours types of visual narrators and the degrees and kind of distance they produce.

**WHAT IS ‘DISTANCE’?**

In its broadest sense ‘distance’ is intrinsic to all representational arts, because for representational arts to exist they must display a degree of distance from the ‘reality’ which they represent. Distance is the only way we know them to be the representation, and not the reality. As Susan Sontag writes, “art is nothing more or less than various modes of stylised, dehumanised representation.” (1966: 30) But once more, it is the discussion of distance within the context of literature that I find the most useful. Again, this concept is similar to detachment, but detachment in this context refers to being emotionally removed from, or unaffected by, the material. As I have stated the term distance, in literature, is usually used to describe the relationship between the reader and the material, referring specifically to the degree and type of identification of the reader with the material. Within this relationship there is considered to be
'AUTHOR'  OUTCOME  VIEWER

distance produced  distance experienced

figure 10
a 'correct' level of distance felt by the reader so that they can retain criticality toward the material. Martin Gray writes,

> It is almost a premise of critical procedure that a reader should not be too involved with a work of literature: it should exercise the range of his or her sympathies, but in order to appreciate it properly he or she needs to be detached, at a distance from it, and 'disinterested'... if a reader identifies too strongly with a work of art, whether for sentimental, personal or political reasons, it is felt this will distort a proper judgment of it. (1992: 92)

But there is another type of distance associated with the representational arts, whether it be literature, painting, sculpture, film, etc. that is of greater interest to my research. That is, the type of distance produced by the designer, not the distance experienced the reader. (figure 10) Even though I have separated the two types of distance, they are intrinsically linked: the type of distance produced by the 'authors' affecting the viewer's experience of the work. And it is because of its impact on the viewer's experience that the type of distance produced by the 'author' is understood to be a rhetorical device, and therefore, the focus of my model.

'AESTHETIC DISTANCE' IN LITERATURE

In the field of literature the type of distance produced by the author, is referred to as 'aesthetic distance.' As a concept, 'aesthetic distance' refers to the fact that, "some writers are apparently more involved with their material than others", and that "these different levels of involvement create different pleasures for the reader." (Gray: 92) To illustrate this point Gray writes that George Eliot has been criticised for being too close to the characters in The Mill on the Floss (1860), since it was based on autobiographical experience. Whereas, she does appear to stand 'further away' from her characters in Middlemarch (1872), "as if she had made clearer and more complete moral judgements about their behaviour."

(p.92) This latter idea suggests that greater clarity is associated
with greater detachment from the content, providing the reader with a less biased or less personal account of the story. But as an author ultimately controls narratives, this concept of detachment (or engagement) is an artificial construct, a rhetorical device used to manage the readers perception, and experience of the work.

Even though a writer can be involved with the text on a variety of levels - politically, emotionally, culturally etc., - the type of involvement is covered by the term ‘aesthetic distance’ as it refers to the perceived level of mediatory involvement, of any type. And, although aesthetic distance is a narrative device, it should not be understood as a tool that serves only the author’s story telling purpose, as its role can transcend the delivery of a compelling tale, instead creating an opportunity to reinforce ideologies. As Gray states,

For writers of certain political persuasion the notion of aesthetic detachment may seem a false view of the correct relation between writer, material and reader... A Marxist critic might perceive aesthetic distance as merely another aspect of the ideology by which the bourgeoisie subtly reinforces its political and cultural control, a kind of willed neutrality in dealing with texts, which ignores their origins and purposes in society. (p.92-93)

Gray’s pronouncement of a ‘willed neutrality’, again suggests that the neutrality is created for rhetorical purposes, that it is an aesthetic device. And this device is a consequence of narratorial choice: the rhetorical neutrality being a product of less mediatory involvement (or more detachment). It is for this reason that the choice of narrator is the key determinant of aesthetic distance. And, finally, as I have stated the aesthetic distance produced by the narrator ultimately affects the reader’s involvement with (or distance from) the text. To reiterate, Mitchell Leaks writes, “the distance or variations in distance established between the reader and the story will, for the most part be determined by the narrator’s choice and manipulation of his modes of presentation.” (1996: 164)
When discussing this readers relationship to the text I suggested that there was the belief in a 'correct level of distance', that the reader's response should fall somewhere between 'sentimental' and 'disinterested', for example. There have also been attempts to formulate the notion of the ideal distance to be produced by the author. In his article, ""Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle" (1912), Edward Bullough stated that if within the work there was neither 'over-distancing,' nor, 'under-distancing' a desirable 'psychic distance' could be achieved. "In the case of under-distancing...the work is 'crudely naturalistic,' 'harrowing,' 'repulsive in its realism," whereas, "an excess of distance produces the impression of improbability, artificiality, emptiness or absurdity." (1977: 325)

But ideal distance is again a relative concept, dependent upon the type of effect desired by the author, as not all work requires a similar type of involvement. There is not one type of correct distance, but rather a distance that is appropriate to the specific text, applied in an attempt to hold the reader at the desired distance. Whereas some work requires an emotional commitment or feelings of empathy from the reader, other work may require a less fervent, more restrained response that requires the engagement of the reader's social opinion. As Booth notes "distance is never an end in itself; distance along one axis is sought for the sake of increasing the reader's involvement on some other axis." (1961: 123) The work of German playwright, Bertolt Brecht (1896 - 1956), is an excellent example this kind of strategy. Synonymous with Brechtian theatre is the 'alienation effect', an intentional method which sought to 'alienate' the audience from the central character/s. This was achieved by making it undesirable, or near impossible for the audience to identify with a traditional 'hero'. But this deliberate increase of distance was employed to increase the audience's criticality, so that the audience more wholly engage their social judgement. Although this technique is associated with Brecht, the concept of 'detachment' as a necessary requirement with which to best view the world can be traced back to Descartes and the Age of Enlightenment, which celebrated science, rationality and objectivity. And this suspicion of the emotional, and
the subsequent effacing of feelings as a requirement rational thought still holds firm in much of the Western world.

Like many literary terms ‘aesthetic distance’ is a contentious issue, and best understood on a case-by-case level. In the case of George Eliot, details of her personal life are perhaps needed to understand the extent of her closeness to some characters, and likewise relative terms such as ‘moral judgements’ and their ‘completeness’ cannot easily be assessed in order to discern how detached or involved the author is from their work. For this reasons, and the fact that I am interested in how an author creates distance, I will narrow down the possible determinants of ‘aesthetic distance’ to the singular factor of mediatory involvement. This distance is of course metaphorical, measuring the ‘distance’ between the narrator/visual narrator and their material, a distance which is of course manipulated by the author. And in doing so, I arrive at the following formulations: the more overt the narrator (or mediatory presence) the greater the aesthetic distance, and similarly the more covert the narrator the lesser the aesthetic distance.

Using this formula, I would have to claim that Salinger employs much aesthetic distance, as his narrator Holden is an overt mediatory presence. Holden’s involvement in the story and the story itself are inseparable: each action, each comment, each observation, being from his perspective. The reader is at all times aware that this narrative is heavily mediated, which is why I would argue that there is much aesthetic distance.

But even though this is a rather extreme example, not all narratorial intervention is as explicit, as the creation or destruction of the illusion of reality can take on many forms. For example, the reordering of the temporal sequence through the use ‘flashbacks’ immediately suggests an ability to reconfigure ‘real time’. A subtler, but equally relevant example of authorial intervention is a highly detailed description - beyond the capacity of an average reader - of a landscape or an event. These are just two of the numerous ways in which mediation can be occur, but it is ultimately the perceptiveness
of the individual reader that affects the overall detection of level of authorial intervention.

'AESTHETIC DISTANCE' IN NON-LITERARY WORK

Yet it is not just literature that exhibits variations in aesthetic distance, as within all representational arts, the producer of the work uses this rhetorical device in order to achieve certain effects. Even though not all representational arts use the term 'aesthetic distance,' the concept can be used in a wider context as it refers to issues of the awareness of the maker/mediator, which is discussed in many areas of representation. Following is a brief discussion on how aesthetic distance is located and described in non-literary works.

The appreciation of an artwork bears close relation to issues of 'aesthetic distance'. In his book, "Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts," Kendall Walton views a work of art as provoking a process of make-believe with "the picture as a prop in a visual game." (1990: 301) As a consequence of this reading, he perceives the appreciation of such work to be dependent upon the immersion of the viewer into the fictional world - an immersion that can be readily measured as a kind of distance. But it is his discussion of the active discouragement (or encouragement) of participation with the fictional world that alludes specifically to notions of aesthetic distance. He notes that appreciation at times necessitates being 'caught up in the story,' but he is careful to point out that this is not always the case. In fact, there are instances when the opposite is required, which results in the creation of representations that attempt to "hinder even the imaging of what is fictional." (1990: 274) These conflicting types of appreciation (he makes the important point that "appreciation without participation is appreciation" (1990: 274)) require different strategies by the creator of the work. And these strategies can be realised by the implementation of differing aesthetic distances that will either emphasise or diminish the artificiality of the work.

One of the more obvious ways in which the illusion of reality is
destroyed, or the ‘aesthetic distance’ increased, is by focusing on the ‘physical properties’ of a work. Walton cites patches of unmarked canvas or Van Gogh’s “conspicuous brush strokes” (1990: 277) in Starry Night as examples of this approach. The focus towards the work's physicality, to an awareness of how it is created shifts the viewers attention away from the work’s role as ‘a prop in a game of make-believe’, interrupting the illusion of its autonomy. And, on the contrary, when ‘realism’ is the desired outcome the physical properties of the medium are manipulated to be as transparent or subtle as possible. Frank Stella, as quoted by Walton, remarks that in sixteenth-century Italy “projective reality was the goal of painting and.... the job of the artist was to effect successful self-effacement, both of its personality and his craft.” (1990: 280) This idea of ‘self-effacement’, refers specifically to one of the key factors of aesthetic distance: the manipulation of the perceived absence (as in this instance) or presence of authorial involvement.

But to avoid aesthetic distance being interpreted at best, as a tool that maintains or destroys illusions, and at worst a series of stylistic variants, it is necessary to briefly examine the purpose of such approaches, as it is important to remember that ‘distance is not an end in itself.’ To keep within the context of the visual arts, and to borrow yet another of Walton’s examples, Picasso’s Bull’s Head, is an excellent example of how aesthetic distance is used to achieve irony. This sculpture, constructed from bicycles parts - the bicycle seat as the head and the handlebars as the horns - relies entirely on the ability of the viewer to simultaneously read both ‘bull’ and ‘bicycle parts’ to understand the work. As to see it singularly, as one or the other, is to misread the work. The bicycle parts, “distracting the viewer from their representational function and probably interrupting the participatory experience of fictionally looking at a bull,” (1990: 276) serve as ‘props in the game of make-believe’ and more importantly are identified as such. An awareness of their original function as bicycle parts is essential if the work is to be experienced as it was intended. Therefore the use of aesthetic distance in this instance does not so much extend or reinforce the meaning, but rather, it creates the possibility of meaning.
It is this manipulation of aesthetic distance to achieve communication intentions that is of concern to this research, as I have argued that designers can also be perceived to be more or less involved with their material, and as a consequence, have a valuable means of control over how their visual outcomes might be read.

**MY MODEL OF ‘DISTANCE’**

As I have stated, in literature the term aesthetic distance is used to describe the fact that ‘some writers are apparently more involved with their material than others’, apparently straightforward until realising that ‘involvement’ can refer to areas beyond the rendering of mediacy. But as I am concerned with the authorial attempts to control the viewer through rhetorical techniques, mediacy – or mediatory involvement – is the focus of this research. Distance, therefore becomes the term used to describe the relationship between the visual narrator and the material, which is manipulated by the designer to affect viewer experience.

According to my model, there are in fact two types of distance that a designer is in control of when they create an outcome: the *degree of distance* and the *kind of distance*. The *degree of distance* is created by the presence or absence of the visual narrator, whereas the *kind of distance*, (which is less easily identifiable) refers to qualitative, more than quantitative aspects of mediation. Like the degree of distance, the kind of distance also refers to perceived level of involvement of the author/narrator, but refers instead to whether the involvement is ‘detached’ or ‘engaged’, rather than ‘absent’ or ‘present’. And although there is a logical relationship between ‘detachment’ and ‘absence,’ and ‘engagement’ and ‘presence’, my research maintains that there is not always an equivalency. As I will discuss in greater detail, to be present you do not have to be engaged, and similarly, to be absent you are not necessarily detached. The awareness that there are kinds, and not just degrees of distance, creates a more accurate and less generalised model of distance, and deals more sufficiently with the anomalies that surface
Figure 11
with any attempt of categorisation.

Therefore, it is these factors I will argue that the designer manipulates to achieve varying levels of distance in their work, of which there are four main types. (Figure 11) And, to illustrate this argument I will analyse existing work and classify it to depict the various positions.

CONCLUSION

I have ascertained that the designer has under their control the type of distance that they produce in their outcomes, and that this distance is a result of a choice of visual narrator who is somewhere between highly involved and barely detectable. Distance, therefore, describes the varying levels of involvement. But how is distance created? I have implied that the involvement of the visual narrator creates distance, but they in fact only become the point from which to ‘measure’ distance. The creation of distance is therefore linked to the creation of the visual narrator. And in order to create the visual narrator the major issue the designer considers is not ‘who are they?’ but instead, ‘where do they stand in relation to the information they are delivering?’ Are they, for example, highly engaged and present, or is the visual narrator barely detectable and detached? It is these factors that create the visual narrator, which in turn creates the variations of involvement described by the term distance. Therefore the next question to address is how the designer positions the visual narrator in order to produce differences in degrees and kinds of distance, which will provide a greater understanding of the axes of my model. Again, I will examine the positioning of the narrator by the author to inform my approach to the designed outcome.
3.5 POINT OF VIEW

"Point of view provides a modus operandi for distinguishing the possible degrees of authorial extinction in the narrative art."

(FRIEDMAN, 1967: 111-112)

In the previous section I argued that distance is a term used to describe the relationship between the visual narrator and the material. But description alone offers only a way of discussing the consequence of the relationship rather than the creation of the relationship: the effect but not the cause. In order to understand the cause of distance the relationship between the visual narrator and the outcome must be examined, which involves the introduction of the concept of 'point of view'. "When attention shifts to the relationship of telling and told," Branigan writes, "then point of view becomes a central issue." (1984: 176)

'Point of view' is a structural device that is manifest in various forms of arts, but is most commonly recognised in the field of literature as a narrative technique that regulates the information delivered to the reader via the narrator. But more significantly, point of view is the textual element that has the greatest impact on the creation of distance, which is why it is so crucial to my model, providing the foundations of the axes degree and kind of distances. Therefore the aim of this section is to introduce point of view and the accompanying issues surrounding the term in a manner that is relevant to design. This section will show how the literary device of point of view can be translated into a design context, and distinguish with greater clarity the difference between degrees and kinds of distance.

To begin I will briefly introduce point of view as a device that can be found in all representational arts, with a specific focus on film, as this field provides an understanding of point of view that is particularly relevant to design. In greater detail I will examine point of view in the context of literature; its definition, history of use and
major theoretical models - structuralism in particular. A structuralist account of point of view is vital to my research as this approach provides the foundational ideas to the degree and kind of distance. By looking specifically at the work of Structuralist literary theorists Tzvetan Todorov, Gerard Genette and Boris Uspensky I will show how I have arrived at these axes.

'POINT OF VIEW' AND REPRESENTATIONAL ARTS

Although the use of point of view as a structural device in literature is widely acknowledged, its use in other representational arts is much less understood. And in order for point of view to be used as a tool for analysis and a tool for creating designed outcomes it is necessary to address how this device is used in non-literary representational arts. According to Boris Uspensky, "the problem of point of view is directly related to those forms of art which by definition have two planes, a plane of expression and a plane of content (the representation and that which is represented)." (1973: 2) And, at the risk of over-complicating already complex territory, this split has been interpreted by literary theory as the distinction between 'story' and 'discourse'; the 'story,' an unvarying sequence of events (the plane of content), and the 'discourse,' the presentation of these events (the plane of expression). This understanding of point of view therefore suggests that it is an issue that pertains to design (the term's 'expression' and 'content' already being firmly part of the design lexicon), as well as film and painting.

An understanding of this distinction, between the plane of content and the plane of expression, is crucial to the analysis of point of view. In fact, point of view is dependent upon it, because without the split there would be no 'point of view'. Jonathan Culler explains, "For the study of point of view to make sense, there must be various contrasting ways of viewing and telling a given story, and this makes 'story' an invariant core, a constant against which the variables of narrative presentation can be measured." (1981: 170) Point of view can therefore be understood as a 'variable of narrative presentation', a technique available to the writer to produce various effects or,
as is the focus of this thesis, varying distances. And an analysis of ‘point of view’ in designed outcomes therefore becomes a study of the representational techniques used by designers to deliver particular audience experiences, or rather, it becomes a method in which to analyse how messages are encoded.

Even though this use of point of view has been over looked by design there are other non-literary fields that have used this theoretical framework as a means better understand the rhetorical aspects of message production. In the introduction to “A Poetics of Composition: the structure of the artistic text and typology of a compositional form” (1973), which is predominantly concerned with literature, Uspensky cites painting and film (among others) as forms of art which employ point of view as a structural device. For instance, he claims that the terms ‘perspective’ in painting and other visual arts, and ‘montage’ in film, are concerned specifically with the aspect of point of view. (1973: 3)

‘POINT OF VIEW’ AND FILM

Film-makers and theorists alike have long recognised the value of ascribing the study of point of view to the creation and analysis of the visual storytelling medium. In fact, the intention of Edward Branigan’s book, “Point of View in Cinema: A theory of narration and subjectivity in classical film,” (1984) is very similar to the intentions of my own research. In his book Branigan develops a model of representation that reveals the structure of filmic forms and their meanings, using the classical terms: origin, vision, time, frame, object, and mind. This model of representation becomes a method by which to understand ‘how films tell stories,’ it becomes a part of the development of a ‘structural poetics of film.’ The relationship to my own research becomes clear, as my model is also an attempt to understand ‘how design outcomes communicate,’ and it also plays a part in the development of a ‘structural poetics of design’.

The parallel made between the use of point of view in film and literature is logical, even obvious - film being seen (albeit
simplistically) as a visual translation of a linguistic text. The angle of the camera in film can easily be equated with an ‘angle of telling’ in narrative fiction - the point of view shot, the close-up, the long shot, the birds-eye view are all, by their very nature, perspectival. But the relationship to design is not as straightforward - the spatial and optical determinants do not translate as smoothly to the visual devices used by designers, and nor is the concept of design as a storytelling medium as readily accepted. So it becomes important at this stage to highlight the exact position at which I see the concept of point of view being the same for both film and design. The filmic understanding, I should add, is not so different from the literary understanding but is sufficiently removed from the literary legacy which affords the term greater autonomy, and in turn makes it more readily translatable to non-linguistic forms.

It is Branigan's description of points of view in film as “epistemological boundaries inscribed within the text” that is the most sympathetic to the needs of my model. This definition sees point of view not just as a narrative technique but as a way of regulating information, controlling the viewer’s access to meaning. Branigan expands upon this idea in the following extract:

*Given narration is a systematic restriction of meaning - the 'object' which appears within a level always depends upon the conditions of the seeing of that object, namely upon an origin, vision, time, frame, and mind. A level is a limitation on the very existence of meaning. Thus point of view as a system of the text functions to control (expand, restrict, change) the viewer's access, not to a real object (through a camera), nor to psychological states and attitudes, but to signification. (1984: 178)*

So, if we are therefore to understand points of view generally as the ‘epistemological boundaries’ of constructed environments, (whether these environs be created linguistically, or spatially and optically, or designed) rather than the more specific (and literary) perspective established by an author, it becomes possible to that point of view.
can be applied to designed outcomes, and how its role as the regulator of information effects the creation of distance.

"POINT OF VIEW" AND RADIO ADVERTISING

The preceding paragraphs describe the employment of point of view as an analytical resource to understand better 'how films tell stories.' But this is only one aspect or the first stage of its use, as the theoretical framework of point of view can be used not only as a tool for analysis, but also as a means to directly improve message production. For example, in the article "Who talks in advertising? Literary theory and narrative 'point of view,'" (1991) Stern proposes that the application of point of view theory could increase the effectiveness of communication strategies by enabling advertisers to choose the most appropriate 'who' to deliver messages. She makes the complaint, similar to my own about design, that little has been done to understand the structural determinants of the message (how), and sees narrative theory as a means to address this problem because of its "focus on issues of the form of presentation that are not dealt with in communication theory." (1991: 10) Subsequently, she sets up a three-part system that classifies the use of 'point of view' in advertising: first-person, third-person, and dramatic character. In relation to advertising examples, she then proceeds to discuss the formal and functional properties of each point of view, in order to set up a ‘classification scheme’ that, “helps clarify the nature of the differences among the types and the effects associated with each one, and can thus help advertising creatives...make a more informed choice of the type of presentation best suited to the message." (p.11) Similar to my research, Stern has identified that an understanding of ‘point of view’ enables message creation to become more effective.

"POINT OF VIEW" AND LITERATURE

The area of point of view has caused endless debate among theorists who have difficulty in pinning down one of literary theory's slipperiest terms. And only recently have I learnt to understand it not so much as a set term but as an idea with coordinates but no clear boundaries, and to understand it in particular locations by
abandoning the struggle to conceive of it as a recognisable, durable form. I will begin to retrace the steps that I have made to formulate my model, define the term point of view, discuss its ambiguities and give an historical account of the theories of point of view that is accurate namely in its detailing of my task as a researcher of design, not a literary theorist.

An attempt to contain this unwieldy notion has resulted in a slew of contradictory and overlapping opinions which result in ambiguous terminology. One reason for the conflicting notions, according to Lanser, is that “unlike such textual elements as character, plot, or imagery, point of view is essentially a relationship rather than a concrete entity.” (p.13) And nor is it a permanent relationship formed by two stationary components, which further complicates the notion.

But the difficulty that surrounds the term ‘point of view’ starts well before literary theorists begin to contort it. The ambiguity can be attributed to the fact that it has a definition outside the scope of literature that is different, yet reminiscent of its literary relation. Point of view, (as defined by the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1993)) can be defined as both:

1. a particular way of considering a matter, and;
2. the position from which a thing is viewed or regarded

The former, and perhaps more commonly used term refers to an ‘attitude’, it is a seemingly more personally motivated, evaluative and therefore subjective term. Whereas the latter refers to ‘an angle of vision’, which suggests an exteriority to the subject, and therefore a possible objectivity. (Lanser: 16-17) It is this second definition that is the basis for literary theory’s understanding of point of view: the ‘angle of vision’ becomes the angle from which a work is narrated. ‘Point of view’, the position from which the story is told, thus becomes a ‘narrative technique.’

As Lanser comments, the ambiguity of this term is widely understood, but there is reluctance by literary theory to replace the phrase with seemingly more technical terms such as: ‘angle of
vision', 'focalisation' (or 'focus of narration'), 'narrative technique', 'narrative situation' and 'narrative transmission'. (1981: 17) But the perseverance of the term 'point of view' is telling in its suggestion of the impossibility of separating 'ideology' and 'technique.' Lanser believes the term endures because its ambiguity allows scholars to acknowledge that "one's attitude has everything to do with where one stands" without them having to "integrate questions of value with the analysis of form," (1981: 17-18) an often ignored area.

So when 'point of view' is discussed as a literary device it refers to where the narrator stands in relation to the story and consequently, how they engage their audience. Scholes and Kellog write that, "in the relationship between the teller and the tale, and that other relationship between the teller and the audience, lies the essence of narrative art." (p.240) The narrative stance is revealed through the author's basic choice between the literary conventions of 'first-person' ('I') and 'third-person' ('he/she') narration, and to a lesser known degree 'omniscient' narration. Yet these choices of narrative representation are more than linguistic signs of mediatory presence; they are (indicators) of the nature and the content of information delivered. For it is erroneous to suggest that narrative positions are purely formal structures designed to passively deliver information, because to choose a narrative position is not just the decision of how to deliver the message, but firstly what the message is.

Although the previous paragraph briefly explains the role of point of view in defining the narrator's relationship to the story, it does not explain the role of point of view in relation to the reader or the author. The narrative position used by the writer is crucial in the development of the reader's relationship to the text. Depending on the point of view employed a reader could empathise with the character because of an awareness of their thoughts and feelings, or consequently feel less personally involved because they have no direct insight into the characters emotions. Thus point of view "determines the extent to which a reader becomes intimately involved in the action of the story and with the characters, or the extent to which he stands, like a spectator, separated from the
story.” (Dietrich and Sundell: 148)

But it is the third and final relationship predicated by point of view that is the most relevant to my research: the relationship between the author and the narrator, which sets up a useful paradigm with which to understand the encoding process in design. “Point of view” writes Roger Fowler, is “the author’s rhetorical stance towards his narrator.” (1977: 52) The author’s choice of where the narrator stands is arguably one of the most important decisions a writer makes. And although it is “the very essence of a story’s style, what gives it its ‘feel’ and ‘colour’,” (Simpson, 1993: 5) it can also make possible stories that would otherwise cease to exist. Wallace Martin gives the example of Katherine Mansfield’s “Bliss” which “could not exist as a tale told by her husband, since from his perspective nothing significant happened that evening.” (1986: 130) Therefore he argues, “technique is not simply an auxiliary aspect of narration, a necessary encumbrance that writers must use to convey meaning, but rather that the method creates the possibility of meaning.” (p.132) (my emphasis)

Even though setting a ‘mood’ and creating the ‘potential of meaning’ are fundamental aspects of literature it is not this aspect of point of view that motivates my research, but rather, it is the role of point of view in the creation of the author-narrator paradigm. It is important to note the sequence of this relationship. Point of view is not a consequence or an independent by-product of the author-narrator relationship because the narrator and point of view are born of the same moment. The rhetorical capacity of point of view is revealed through the authorial placement of the narrator in order to determine how the story is told, and subsequently, how it may be understood. This device is a readily accepted convention of literature, and has revealed much about the process of writing and in particular the creation of distance. And as I will continue to argue, it is a technique that is used by designers and will similarly reveal much about the process of designing.

Before discussing, in detail the contribution made by literary
structuralism to my model, I will give a brief historical account of the development of the point of view, which details the evolution of ideas such as ‘mimesis’ and ‘diegesis’, as well as their patterns of use. But more importantly this historical account will indicate how the issues concerning perspective became attached to the debate concerning ‘showing’ versus ‘telling’, causing an incorrect conflation of the terms and one that still causes confusion when discussing aspects of point of view. My model attempts to clarify these often confusing relationships by separating showing and telling from first and third person, by separating absence and presence from detachment and involvement, by separating degree of distance from kind of distance.

THE EVOLUTION OF POINT OF VIEW

Like many aspects of narrative theory, the earliest mutterings of this perspectival notion can be traced back to the classical Greeks - Plato and Aristotle in particular - even though the actual phrase ‘point of view’ appears much later. Plato proposed two modes of narrative delivery: either the writer presents themselves as the speaker, with no attempt to disguise the origin of delivery (diegesis or ‘pure narrative’), or the writer delivers the story as if they were someone else, or a character (mimesis or ‘imitation’). Aristotle had a liking for the ‘mimetic,’ regarding it to be the more ‘pure’, ‘realistic’, and therefore ‘truthful’ means of representation. This difference was resurrected and relabelled as showing versus telling in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by critics Henry James and Percy Lubbock, both of whom also viewed showing (‘mimesis’) rather than telling (‘diegesis’) as the preferred literary method, evidencing greater creative integrity. (Genette, 1980: 162-3) As Lubbock writes, “...the art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself.” (1965: 62)

This preference for ‘mimesis’, for creating in fiction the illusion of ‘real life’ almost became a prerequisite for novelistic acceptance in the first half of the twentieth century, and in doing so positioned
8. Lanser discusses why point of view became more central in the beginning of Chapter Three, The Narrative Act (98-9).

point of view as the central issue of literary criticism. The Jamesian belief in adopting a single point of view ('a central perceiving consciousness') and again, the belief in authorial 'absence' over intrusion led to one of the most significant moments in literary history: the 'disappearance of the author.' Writers such as James Joyce, Gustave Flaubert and of course, Henry James himself, became ambassadors of this technique, preaching often the merits of the 'effaced' author. In A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Joyce claims that the author should be 'like the god of the creation, who remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.' (CITED IN LODGE: 359) Likewise, Flaubert in a letter to George Sands writes, "I feel an unconquerable aversion to putting anything of my heart on paper. I even think that a novelist hasn't the right to express his opinion on anything whatsoever. Has God ever expressed his opinion?" (FLAUBERT AND SAND, 1999: 48)

9. To which Sands responds: "Not put any of one's heart into what one writes? I don't, I simply do not understand. For my part I don't see how one can put anything else? Can one separate one's mind from one's heart? - are they two different things? Can limits be set to what one feels, can one's being be split in two? Not to give the whole of oneself in one's work seems as impossible to me as weeping with something other than one's eyes or thinking with something other than one's brain." (FLAUBERT AND SAND, 1999: 49)

The distinguishing feature of 'modern' fiction became this predilection for an 'indirect' method of narration over the antiquated use of first-person or omniscient narration. And as Lanser points out, this approach persists well into the mid-twentieth century because authorial absence corresponded with the demands of many groups. Modern psychology, Existentialism and then the New Criticism all lauded the redirection of focus: from the external to the inner world; from the "superior, authorial prophet-priest" to the 'experiencing agent'; and, from an authorially bound document to an autonomous text. (LANSER, 1981: 27)

Oddly enough such favourism endures. Although the use of a first-person narrator is no longer shunned, many contemporary critics are still convinced of the superiority of showing over telling irrespective of the attempts by writers such as Wayne Booth to expose the fallacy of such an idea. In, The Rhetoric of Fiction (1961), Booth calls for the acknowledgment of the illusionary nature of 'mimesis' - that the very notion of showing is a fantasy, and that in fact all that is available to the writer is degrees of telling. And, he argues,
that although "the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear." (1961: 20) Such effacement, he claims, is just one of the many authorial devices used by the narrator to form a certain relationship with the reader.

The admission of the 'artificiality' of fictional work, invited by critics such as Booth, has made way for a postmodern fiction that emphasises its construction. Within this work, labelled as 'metafiction', the writer often refers to themselves, to the reader, and to their craft, during the telling of the story. Italo Calvino's, If on a Winter's Night a Traveller, is a classic example, starting "You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, If on a winter's night a traveller. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world fade around you." (1981: 3) Robert Alder, explains clearly the play that occurs between the real and the imaginary in this type of work:

> A self-conscious novel is one that systematically flaunts its own conditions of artifice and that by so doing probes into the problematic relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality. ...A fully self-conscious novel is one in which from beginning to end, through the style, the handling of narrative viewpoint, the names and words imposed on the characters, the patterning of the narration, the nature of the characters and what befalls them, there is a consistent effort to convey to us a sense of the fictional world as an authorial construct set up against a background of literary tradition and convention. (Cited in Chatman, 1978: 250)

But this is by no means mainstream as there seems to be an emotional attachment by the wider reading community for the fictional world to remain enclosed. The desire to still be able to believe in the 'make-believe' seems sacrosanct.

A similar predilection for revealing the material as constructed rather than natural can be found in visual communication outcomes of the past decade. Although the 1980s may have being saturated with the faux-rendering of typographic forms, the less romantic inclusion of
registration marks, colour bars and other production notation was common in the 1990s, the latter being a reference decidedly more artificial than 80s artisan. Although not making the same argument, Jack Williamson in his article, ‘The Grid: History, Use and Meaning,’ (1989) describes a shift in the use of the grid in modernist and postmodernist design, noting that the modernist grid is “not visibility present in the finished design,” whereas the grid in postmodernist graphic design is “a prominent piece of visual iconography.” (p.171) In a more subtle way, this again, suggests the preference for the postmodern designer to reveal the devices used to construct their outcomes, to perhaps, like the writer, test the relationship between the real and the imaginary. This interpretation is confirmed by Margolin, whose introductory comment on Williamson’s article, sees the shift in strategy as “the philosophical debate between modernists and postmodernists about the nature of reality”, (1989: 23), a debate being played out on the designed page.

The previous example again emphasises the similar roles that literature and design play as reflectors of the social milieu, paralleling through (words and images) the predominant cultural values of the time.

The choice to discuss the evolution of point of view in terms of showing and telling is both necessary and problematic. It is necessary because the terms are intrinsically related and discussed in relation to one another. As Friedman states the conflict between ‘showing’ and ‘telling’, which is where “literature derives its very life from”, is connected to “the particular problem of point of view” (1967: 109-110) If a narrative is delivered from a first-person point of view the narrator’s presence is more likely to be felt – not only do they say ‘I’ but their opinions, values, judgements and emotions infiltrate the text, which suggests ‘telling’. An effaced narrator on the other hand, is barely recognisable, and therefore can hardly be presumed to be telling the reader anything, and is consequently aligned with ‘showing’. But this understanding is also problematic (as I suggested in the introduction to this section) because the terms ‘point of view’ and ‘showing’ and ‘telling’ are often therefore
perceived to be the same as each other. Although this conflation is logical, the more present the narrator seems to be the more likely it is that the narrative is being directed (and vice versa), it is not always the case. Overt mediation does not always presume telling and similarly that covert mediation does not always presume showing. This apparent transgression leads me back to the earlier discussion in relation to the two types of distance: degree and kind. I argued that ‘to be present you do not have to be engaged, and similarly to be absent you are not necessarily detached’, which is why my model consists of a two axes diagram.

The significant of this discussion to my model is that it again emphasises the need for the two axes. In the context of my model ‘point of view’ and ‘showing and telling’ are therefore ways to describe mediatory involvement (type of distance), but the type of involvement they are describing is different. The axis degree of distance is founded on discussion of ‘showing and telling’, and the axis kind of distance draws it inspiration from the aspects of point of view not understood by showing and telling, which will be revealed in the following pages.

11. Generative: “The term generative is suggested because the linguistic perspective which informs this work is the transformational-generative (TG) model developed by Noam Chomsky and his followers. Such ‘Chomskyan stylistics’ is often characterised by the painstakingly detailed analysis of sets of sentences (attested or contrived) with a view to expounding a generative theory of narrative communication.

Unlike the structuralist approach, which seeks to develop a grammar of narrative, the generative approach seeks to develop a grammar of the sentences which make up narratives. The former approach thus concentrates on the macrostructures of literary communication and the latter on its microstructures.” (Simpson: 34-35)

12. Interpersonal: “Although the interpersonal approach shares both the structuralist concern with the macro-units of narrative and the generative interest in the sentence-level representation of point of view, what sets it apart is the way in which it attempts to isolate the linguistic features which create a text’s ‘personality’. For instance, an interpersonal analysis may examine the system of modality, which is the means by which a speaker’s attitude towards what they are saying is conveyed.” (Simpson: 38-39)

A STRUCTURALIST POINT OF VIEW

In the book ‘Language, Ideology, and Point of View’, (1993) Paul Simpson divides the research that has shaped the understanding of point of view into three groups: structuralist, generative and interpersonal.12 But it is the structuralist approach that has had the most measurable impact on literary theory’s conception of the term.

And even though there have been numerous attempts to create other models, the legacy of structuralism remains. As many of the models are reactions to the limitations proposed by this approach they are therefore circuitously defined by structuralist concerns. Because of the centrality of this approach, and because I develop my model for design from this position, I will focus mainly on the structuralist analysis of point of view, or rather the intersection of the analysis of point of view and structuralist poetics.
The desire for a theory of literature that is governed by general laws can be traced back to Aristotle who is still regarded as one of the most influential critics in Western literary history. In Poetics, Aristotle attempted to identify the organising elements of Greek tragedy in order to understand how emotions such as ‘fear’ and ‘compassion’ were manufactured (and, why the reading of such material is a pleasurable activity). It is this approach, the urge to understand a text’s structures and devices that is the defining aspect of the structuralist study of literature. The structuralist intention, writes Jonathan Culler,

\[ ...\text{was to develop a poetics which would stand to literature as linguistics stands to language and which therefore would not seek to explain what individual works mean but would attempt to make explicit the system of figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do. (1980: 8)} \]

Synonymous with this approach are the names Tzvetan Todorov, Gerard Genette and Boris Uspensky, all of whom were preoccupied with the discovery of the abstract codes that governed literary communication. It is their classifications of the existing structures of narrative, or more specifically, their analysis of point of view on which I base my model for design.

Todorov supposes “that the very secret of literary art” is hidden in the problem of point of view, pointing out the significance of calling the first systematic study of this field, 'The Craft of Fiction' (Lubbock, 1921). (1981: 32) And, it is the perceived importance of point of view that has made it one of the focuses of structuralist poetics. Todorov, Genette and Uspensky, among others, have all attempted to create typologies of narratorial modes, at which point of view is at the heart.

**TODOROV**

One of the contributing members of this ‘new poetics’ was Tzvetan
Todorov, a French structuralist who re-initiated the search for a coherent and ordered theory of literature that was begun by Aristotle centuries ago. Todorov was heavily influence by the Russian Formalists - Vladimir Propp in particular, whose *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (1928) is credited as one of the earliest examples of the great structuralist project - the study of the forms and structures of literature. The Russian Formalists, writes Culler redirected “attention from authors to verbal ‘devices’” and claimed “that ‘the device is the only hero of literature.’” (1997: 123) In *Morphology*, Propp reduced all folk tales to seven ‘spheres of action’ and thirty-one fixed elements or ‘functions’, (Eagleton, 1983: 91), the various combinations providing the determined sequences that make up Russian fairy tales. Such an approach echoes Todorov’s belief in the existence of a ‘grammar’ of narrative.

In his *Introduction to Poetics* (1981)\(^3\) Todorov conceives of ‘three principal aspects of texts’ that a reader must be aware of, consciously or unconsciously, in order to understand a literary work: the semantic aspect, the verbal aspect, and the syntactic aspect. He notes that favouritism toward the study of each type can be tracked through the history of poetics. The semantic aspect, a concern for “the general conditions of the genesis of meaning,” has been foregrounded by interpretive criticism. Whereas, the verbal aspect, the concern for the method of presentation, has been recently addressed by issues of ‘style’ (in ‘stylistics’), ‘modes’ of narration (in German morphology) and ‘viewpoints’ (in the Jamesian tradition in England and the United States). And lastly, the Russian Formalists in the 1920s, and more recently structural poetics have studied the syntactic aspect, which is concerned with the structure of a text. (p.15)

Although Todorov looks at all three aspects in the analysis of a literary text, it is the verbal aspect that is the most relevant to my model, as it describes the way in which the information exists or is delivered, and how it is ‘modulated’ and ‘qualified’. How information is mediated as opposed to what it means (semantics) or how it is formalised (syntactics), is the focus of my research.
figure 12
Todorov's "Degree of Exactitude" in relation to my model
It is the verbal aspect that ‘characterises information’, according to Todorov, (p.28) and which will impact upon the readers relationship with the narrator. Even though he divides this aspect into four categories: mode, time, perspective and voice, it is only mode and perspective that relate specifically to my model. (Time and voice refer to characteristics which are more specific [and relevant] to a literary text.) The category of mode refers to “the degree of exactitude with which this discourse evokes its referent: a maximum degree in the case of direct style, a minimum degree in the case of the narrative of nonverbal phenomena; intermediary degrees in the other cases,” (p.29) which is descriptive of my model’s axis, degree of distance. And the category of perspective referring to the “point of view from which we observe the object and the quality of this observation (true or false, partial or complete.)” (p.28), is descriptive of my model’s axis, kind of distance.

TODOROV AND DEGREE OF DISTANCE

Even though the terminology differs (the degree of distance is not the same as ‘the degree of exactitude’) both groupings ascribe specifically to issues of variations in narratorial presence and absence, that is, how evident or aware of mediation is the reader or viewer. For instance, in the communication process a high degree of ‘exactitude’ or accuracy is more likely to occur if there is as little interpretation or mediation as possible. Therefore the greater narratorial absence (usually) tends towards a greater degree of exactitude. Todorov then goes on to identify these ‘degrees of exactitude,’ from maximum to minimum, as ‘reported discourse’, ‘transposed discourse,’ and ‘recounted discourse.’ (p.29) Figure 12, illustrates how Todorov’s category of mode is used to inform the degree of distance axis of my model.

TODOROV AND KIND OF DISTANCE

The next of Todorov’s categories to influence my model is perspective or vision, as it refers essentially to issues of point of view, and more specifically to what this research refers to as the kind of distance. Todorov sees this category as ‘the first importance'
Figure 13
Todorov's "Perspective" or "Vision" in relation to my model
as point of view determines our understanding of matter and experiences. He writes:

*We never deal, in literature with events or facts in the raw, but with events presented in a certain fashion. Two different visions of the same phenomena constitute two distinct phenomena. All aspects of an object are determined by the vision we are afforded of it.* (p. 33)

Todorov’s discussion of perspective is valuable as unlike other theorists he does not describe the kinds of perspective (for example, first or third person, limited or omniscient), but rather he describes the characteristics that contribute to the difference between the kinds of perspective. I have summarised them as follows:

1. Quality of information: subjective or objective knowledge
2. Quantity of information: extent (internal or external) and depth
3. Unicity and multiplicity (consistency and variability) of information
4. Information can be true or false
5. Evidence of judgment (moral evaluation) may be present or absent

(p. 437)

The extremes or the variations available in these five characteristics produce the kinds of perspective that will become a part of my model. For example, objective knowledge as extensive quantity of information, but with not much depth, and which is non-judgemental lacking in personal commentary or interpretation, is indicative of what is commonly known as a ‘third-person’ perspective, and interpreted by my model as an invisible visual narrator. On the other hand if the information is seemingly more subjective and in depth, there is evidence of moral evaluation by the mediator, the perspective is more likely to be ‘first-person’, or in the case of my model an idiosyncratic visual narrator. Figure 13, illustrates how Todorov’s category of perspective is used to inform the kind of
distance axis of my model.

GENETTE

Of all the Structuralists it is the work of Gerard Genette that has brought most to bear on my model of distance. In his book *Narrative Discourse* (1980), described as “perhaps the best exemplum of where structuralist poetics and the analysis of point of view intersect,” (SIMPSON, 1993: 31) Genette systematically develops a theory of narrative analysis, created by the categories of ‘order’, ‘duration’, ‘frequency’, ‘mood’ and ‘voice’. The first three categorisations refer to issues of temporality within a text, and borrow much from Todorov’s category of time. But it is his discussion of the last two categories, ‘mood’ and ‘voice,’ that distinguish his contribution to theories of point of view. And as I will make apparent, it is the category of ‘mood’, that relates most significantly to my model.

In his category ‘mood’ Genette discusses the same issues addressed by my model of distance. And, just as I divide ‘distance’ into two subcategories – degree and kind – Genette divides ‘mood’ into distance and perspective. Therefore, the difference lies in the terminology rather than in the description or function of these terms: mood = distance, and distance = degree of distance and perspective = kind of distance, the former of each equation being the terms used by Genette. What makes Genette’s approach unique is that he groups distance and perspective under one category yet is explicit in their difference. As I have discussed, there has been a tendency in the theory of point of view to confuse issues of perspective with issues of distance. For example, to assume that an effected narrator always ‘shows’ rather than ‘tells’ and vice versa. Genette provides the necessary demarcation, making each term autonomous, but acknowledging their relationship by placing them in a singular category. It is for this reason that Genette’s model is so valuable to my own model, as it too emphasises the necessity of distinguishing between the degree and kind of distance.

Genette’s category of narrative mood refers to the “regulation
Figure 14
Genette's 'Distance'
in relation to my model
of narrative information." (p.162) He states that in the process of delivering information decisions are made about how much to tell, and from which viewpoint to tell it. These two factors are categorised, respectively, as ‘distance’ and ‘perspective’. He writes, “the view I have of a picture depends for precision on the distance separating me from it, and for breadth on my position with respect to whatever partial obstruction is more or less blocking it.” (p. 162) The similarity between Genette's mood (distance and perspective), Todorov's mode and perspective, and my own distance (degree and kind) is again revealed through the common concern of the mediation of information.

GENETTE AND DEGREE OF DISTANCE

Genette's subcategory of 'distance' which concerns 'how much to tell' implies that there are more or less direct ways to tell the story: that a story can be recounted (obvious mediatory presence) or represented (minimal mediatory presence), and all the stages between. He writes:

Narrative ‘representation’, or, more exactly, narrative information, has its degrees: the narrative can furnish the reader with more or fewer details, and in a more or less direct way, and can thus seem (to adopt a common and convenient spatial metaphor, which is not to be taken literally) to keep at a greater or lesser distance from what it tells. (p.163)

His discussion of distance is based on the Platonic separation of narrative into two modes, which evolved into extremes of ‘mimesis’ and ‘diegesis,’ or to use the more contemporary versions ‘showing’ and ‘telling’, (as discussed on page 9). As I have mentioned, but will discuss in greater detail, showing and telling can be readily linked to absence and presence, respectively, making the Genettian classification of ‘distance’ a mirror of my own model's degree of distance. Figure 1.4. illustrates how Genette’s category of distance is used to inform the degree of distance axis of my model.
figure 1.5
Genette's 'Perspective' in relation to my model
GENETTE AND KIND OF DISTANCE

What I designate as kind of distance, Genette calls ‘perspective,’ the second mode of regulating information. Genette's subcategory of ‘perspective’ addresses issues more traditionally dealt with by the term ‘point of view’, which he prefers to replace with the more abstract term focalisation. But it should be noted that ‘perspective’ or ‘focalisation’ is not an equivalent term for point of view, as it refers only to ‘who sees’, not ‘who speaks’ - ideas commonly conflated by most studies of point of view. 14 ‘Focalisation’ refers to the angle “from which things are implicitly seen, felt, understood, and assessed.” (TOOBY, 2001: 60) One of the reasons Genette adopts this term is because he feels it avoids the visual inference associated with ‘point of view,’ but this intention seems quickly lost as the term itself and any further description of focalisation (eg. ‘seen’) usually employs similarly visually determined language, a point also made by Tooan (2001: 60), who suggests that the term ‘orientation’ would avoid such confusion.

Genette then divides focalisation, ‘the angle from which things are seen’ into three levels: zero focalisation, internal focalisation and external focalisation. The first category, zero focalisation, is typical of classical narrative, where the narrator is omniscient, knowing and saying more than the characters. In the second, internal focalisation, the narrator may be fixed, or variable, and knows an amount equal to the characters, and has access to their thoughts and feelings. Whereas, external focalisation, the final category, is characterised by a narrator who can only report what they can see, they have no access to the characters inner thoughts, they know less than the characters. And while these categories seem firm, Genette comments that focalisation is not always easy to establish and can vary constantly throughout the novel.

Genette's categorisations of internal and external focalisation become the opposing points, which create the axis kind of distance in my model, but the word ‘internal’ is replaced with ‘engaged,’ and ‘external’ with ‘detached’. (figure 15) The reason for the shift is that personal/impersonal are already employed as descriptors within
the design discourse whereas internal/external would need further explanation for them to become effective. That said, there is a logical relationship between 'internal thoughts' and 'engagement', but the literary use refers foremost to the narrator's place within the story as a character, and only secondly to the kind of information which is the point of relevancy to my model. This is also true for the relationship between 'external' and 'detachment' - it is relevant as a description of the kind of information rather than as a position relative to the story.

USPENSKY

This division between the 'internal' and 'external' had already been thoroughly developed by Boris Uspensky, whose "A Poetics of Composition: the structure of the artistic text and typology of a compositional form" (1973) preceded Genette's study by ten years. Uspensky, unlike Genette, focused solely on the structural technique of point of view, developing a four-part typology with which to examine its manifestation. He proposed that differing points of view could be revealed on four different planes: the psychological plane, the ideological plane, the spatial-temporal plane and the phraseological plane. But apart from the differentiation between the planes he notes a commonality of 'pervasive character' in the form of the oppositional 'internal' and 'external' points of view, within each plane. As Uspensky writes,

> In the one case the author, during his narration, assumes a position which is deliberately external to the represented events (he seems to describe them from an outsider's point of view); in the other case, he may place himself in a position which is internal to the narration: specifically, he may adopt the point of view of a particular character taking part in the narrated events, or he may assume the position of an observer who does not participate in the events but who is present at the scene of action. (p.130)
Figure 16
Uspensky's "Psychological / Perceptual" Point of View in relation to my model
USPENSKY AND KIND OF DISTANCE

Although this distinction appears in all planes it is the articulation of the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ on the psychological plane, considered to be the most significant, and it’s revision by later theorists (notably Fowler: 1986) that most clearly articulates the kind of distance proposed by my model. The ‘psychological’ point of view or the ‘perceptual’ point of view⁶ “refers to the ways in which narrative events are mediated through the consciousness of the ‘teller’ of the story.” (SIMPSON, 1993: 11) This definition becomes immediately relevant to my model, which sees the designer as the ‘teller’ and varying distances as a result of differing ways of mediation. But more specifically the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ points of view relate directly to the opposing coordinates of my kind of distance axis, which are, ‘engaged’ and ‘detached’. As Uspensky writes,

When an author constructs his narration he usually has two options to him: he may structure the events and characters of the narrative through the deliberately subjective viewpoint of some particular individual’s (or individuals’) consciousness, or he may describe the events as objectively as possible. (p.81)

What is described by Uspensky as ‘the deliberately subjective viewpoint’ is interpreted by my model as an ‘engaged’ viewpoint, and conversely, ‘events described as objectively as possible’ would be described from a ‘detached’ viewpoint. Further support for the relationship between Uspensky’s external point of view and my model’s detachment is his claim that “the external point of view, as a compositional device, draws its significance from its affiliation with the phenomenon of ostenation, or estrangement.” (p.131) Figure 16, illustrates how Uspensky’s internal and external viewpoints are used to inform the kind of distance axis of my model.

CONCLUSION

The implication of this research into point of view, on my model for design, is two-fold. Firstly, having defined point of view as the ‘epistemological boundaries inscribed within the text’, its value and applicability to design is made apparent: the choice of point
of view (or type of visual narrator, who may now be seen as the epistemological boundary rider) becomes a way of regulating information in design. And the regulation of information in this context creates variations of distance, depending on the perceived absence/presence and engagement/detachment of the visual narrator. The second implication of this research is that not only has my claim that the visual narrator is positioned by two different aspects of distance (or types of involvement) been validated, but these aspects – degree and kind – have been more clearly articulated, setting up the foundational ideas behind each axis, and thus the model, which will be summarised in the following section.
4. the model
In the previous section I made an argument for the role of point of view in creation of distance within design. Then I cited the major ways in which key literary theorists have understood the relationship between point of view and distance and how these understandings have informed the axes of my model.

The function of this section is to clearly define the axes of the model before applying design outcomes. I will reiterate some points, expand upon others, and discuss the potential effects of shifting from absence to presence, and engagement and detachment, in order to begin to expose the rhetorical consequences of varying distances. I will also discuss the model in terms of the four quadrants it creates, which become the four types of visual narrators proposed by my research. But before summarising the axes of degree and kind of distance, I will briefly reinstate how I have reinterpreted a literary framework so that it is appropriate in a design context.

Up until this point I have argued that the creative process that occurs between a writer and their work is analogous to the design process and therefore has much to offer the practicing designer. The result has been the development of a ‘theory of distance’ for design. Following is a summary of how I have arrived at this point.

The first stage was the identification of the rhetorical nature of both design and fiction, that is, their part as sites through which to deliver convincing visual and verbal arguments. More significantly, these arguments are created through a process of invention, rather than a process of discovery, which is representative of the scientific methodology that has had previous association with the practice of design. This acknowledgment of parallel ‘creative’ processes exhibited in design and fiction legitimised the further examination of the literary structure as a potential means with which to depict the rhetorical resources available to the designer.

The next stage of research was then to address issues of ‘authorship.’ Not only is this the most common point of entry into
literary theory by design discourse, but it is also the logical place
to begin an enquiry into the relationship between the creative
agent and the created product. And while the proposition of a
‘designer as author’ seemed to encourage the ‘cult of the individual,’
further entrenching the design process, the study of authorship
revealed a longstanding debate around the relationship between
creativity and technique that provided a possible comparative
model for the examination of the processes of invention. It was
the acknowledgment that there is not a clear delineation between
creativity and technique and that the process of invention is one
of rhetorical composition rather than authorial expression, which
was the crucial finding of this stage. This realisation enabled an
understanding of the techniques of representation to be equated
with an understanding of an aspect of the creative process.

Subsequently, the techniques of representation available to the
writer became the next logical area to research in order to gain
insight into how messages are constructed by the designer. It
was revealed that one of the most crucial devices available to the
writer was the narrator, who, as I previously stated symbolises ‘the
rhetorical dimension of literature.’ - that is, how an author delivers
their story. But for the concept of the narrator to be valuable to
design there needed to be an initial acceptance of narratorial
existence in all design work. I argued this position from the
rational assumption that if communication is taking place (which is
immediate when the viewer engages a designed outcome), then a
communicator is in existence. But it becomes important at this point
to note that this research interprets a visual narrator as a ‘mediatory
presence,’ not a character or person, and most importantly, not
the author. And although this understanding of the narrator is not
exclusive to design, it is fundamental for this thesis to interpret the
narrator as a metaphorical ‘figure’, or more effectively, as a rhetorical
device available to the designer. The visual narrator can then be
manipulated to create levels of involvement in a designed outcome
that are perceived to be varying, and which affect the viewers
perception of the designed outcome.
So far the modification of literary theory’s key terms - fiction, author, and narrator - ensure their adaptability to a design context, and make it feasible to continue using a literary framework with which to reveal the design process. So, in keeping with this strategy, I borrow the literary term ‘distance’ as a starting point with which to describe the varying levels of involvement that are, I have argued, inherent in all designed outcomes. And, I also argue that this ‘distance’ is manipulated by designers to create particular communicative effects in ways that are similar to an author’s manipulation of distance. It is on this premise that I propose that an understanding of how (and why) author’s use distance provides a valuable model by which to understand how (and why) designer’s might use distance. Ultimately, this leads to a better understanding of how designers create messages that will in turn give designers greater control over the viewer experience.

And finally, the term point of view was introduced as the representational technique (or structural device) most responsible for the creation of distance in literature. But again, for it to be useful to design it needed to be defined in a way that concentrated on its role as a regulator of information - an ‘epistemological boundary’ - rather than the more traditional (and limited conception) of it as a narratorial position in a fictional yet (physical) world. There are two reasons for the necessity of this perception. Firstly, the concept of ‘regulating information’ is one that translates relatively easily from literary theory to design: designers have often been described as mediators, which is suggestive of a regulatory role. Therefore, by focusing on this aspect of point of view an obvious connection between the creative techniques available to writers and designers is made. Secondly, and more importantly, the ‘regulation of information’ – the control of the nature (eg. personal/impersonal) and extent (eg. summarised/recounted) of information - is the principle means by which ‘distance’ is created. Therefore, the choice of point of view affects the kind and degree of ‘distance’ evident in the material, which in turn affects the level of involvement of the viewer with the material.
figure 17
Any decision made by an author/designer as to ‘how’ to present their material is a rhetorical decision. Certain decisions are made to achieve certain effects. For this reason, this research interprets the manipulation of distance as a rhetorical technique that is used - intentionally or unintentionally - by designers. And in order to better understand this rhetorical technique or device I have developed a model that was briefly introduced in the section on ‘distance’, but is expanded on in the following pages.

THE MODEL

When I introduced the model, (figure 17) I established that there are two related yet different aspects that create distance: degree of distance, and the less obvious, kind of distance. Their point of relation being that they both refer to the perceived level of involvement of the author, interpreted by this research as the level of distance established between the designer and their outcome. Their point of difference is in the description of the level of involvement: degree of distance describes involvement along a scale of ‘absence’ to ‘presence’ whereas kind of distance describes involvement along a scale of ‘detachment’ to ‘engagement’. And although ‘absence’ and ‘detachment’ are at times interchangeable, and similarly, ‘presence’ and ‘engagement’, they are not always equivalent. This research argues for the possibility, for example, of being ‘present’ yet ‘detached’, or of being ‘absent’ yet ‘engaged’. As I have previously mentioned, the awareness of kinds as well as degrees of distance, enables a greater flexibility in the model, lessening the potential to label similar work as ‘the same’, which is a potential consequence of limited categorisation. But before the four ‘fields’ (absent/engaged, engaged/present, detached/present, and detached/absent), are individually distinguished it is necessary to produce a detailed account of how this research defines the ‘degree of distance’ and the ‘kind of distance’.

In the previous paragraph, and at other times during this thesis, I refer to the ‘perceived level of involvement of the author,’ not just the ‘level of involvement of the author’. The reason for my emphasis
on "perceived" (and the reason I address this issue yet again) is that this distinction is crucial to the understanding of my argument. This research maintains that the varying levels of involvement of the author/designer are illusionary – that is, an author/designer's involvement with the material is constant, but available to them is the ability to manipulate the viewer's perception of their involvement through varying narratorial positions (absent/engaged, engaged/present, etc.). As Booth writes:

The author's judgement is always present, always evident to anyone who knows how to look for it. As we begin now to deal with this question, we must never forget that though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear (1961: 20)

These 'disguises' articulated through narratorial positions (or points of view) are the primary factors (or structural devices) that effect the creation 'distance', and in turn the relationship of the viewer to the material. I make this point at this time because 'absence' and 'presence' and 'engagement' and 'detachment', that is, the degree of distance and the kind of distance, are some of the author/designer's disguises – or rather the rhetorical techniques available.

4.1 DEGREE OF DISTANCE

The axis degree of distance is a quantitative measure. It refers to the perceived degree of absence or presence of a mediator, simply, how aware is the viewer of a visual narrator?

In the previous chapter I identified the work of Todorov, Genette and Uspensky, as being a major influence on the development of my model. As the figures 12 and 14 indicate, Todorov's 'degree of exactitude' and Genette's subcategory of 'distance' ('distance' and 'perspective' make up the category of 'mood') become the guiding (frameworks) for my 'degree of distance'. 'Maximum exactitude' or 'reported discourse', and 'showing' or 'mimesis', are the terms
that Todorov and Genette use, respectively, to describe (what) my model interprets as ‘absence’. Similarly, the descriptors, ‘minimum exactitude’ or ‘recounted discourse’, and ‘telling’ or ‘diegesis’ are substituted, in my model, by the term ‘presence’. The main reason for the substitution is for clarity, ownership and efficiency. Not only are the literary terms numerous, but their history of use (in particular mimesis/diegesis and showing/telling) is contentious. Like many literary terms, their understandings are historically determined (shifting) and endlessly debateable. To use these terms as endpoints of an axis invites debate that potentially obscures the issue at hand: to what degree, or how evident is the mediator? For this reason the terms absence and presence are more suitable — they are widely understood, which makes their introduction into design discourse more efficient.

While the typologies formed by Todorov and Genette specifically influenced the development of this axis, it should be noted that the impetus for the degree of distance derives from a much wider discussion around ‘showing’ and ‘telling’ that occurs in literary theory. (The inclusion of this idea by the two Structuralists [Genette more obviously as he actually uses the terms ‘showing’ and ‘telling’] is evidence of its significance as a concept in this field.) And although the debate over the merits of showing versus telling, which I briefly discussed in the history of ‘point of view’ section, is interesting as an historical preference it is not relevant to the understanding of the model. What is necessary at this stage is to explain why I have substituted the word absence for ‘showing’ or ‘mimesis’ and presence for ‘telling’ or ‘diegesis’.

Literary commentators have often drawn attention to the connection between absence / presence and showing / telling. Wallace Martin, for example writes that telling, “always serves as a reminder of the narrator's presence.” (1986: 133) And Edward Branigan is even more pointed, stating that, “basically, it [the distinction between showing and telling] is founded on the perceived presence/absence of an author in a text.” (1984: 191) Genette also makes the connection but points to ‘two cardinal precepts of showing’, which are “the
absence ← DEGREE OF DISTANCE → presence

implicit
drama
inference
transparency of narrator
scene
showing
mimesis
direct (immediate)
the story tells itself
presentation (depict, exhibit)
simultaneity

explicit
narrative
statement
evidence of narrator
summary
telling
diegesis
indirect (mediated)
the story is told by an author
exposition (describe)
succussion

"increasing order of intrusiveness"

figure 18
Jamesian dominance of scene (detailed narrative) and the (pseudo-) Flaubertian *transparency of the narrator,*" (1980: 166) (my emphasis) — a maximum of information and a minimum of the informer. And likewise, he perceives the relationship of information to informer to be in an inverse proportion if the dominant mode of narration is ‘telling’. That is, minimum information and maximum informer. (p.166)

In my model the terms ‘showing’ and ‘telling’ therefore become one of the potential indicators (descriptors) of the transition from a perceived increase or decrease in the level of mediatory involvement that this research designates as degrees of absence and presence. What becomes evident from investigating this discussion is that there are many ways to describe this transition. (Figure 18) (Some of the terms/descriptors are generic [e.g. implicit/explicit and inference/ statement] whereas others are specific to a literary context [drama/ narrative and mimesis/diegesis]. The terms with the least literary specificity become the ones that are useful to design.) And even though the terms (in the column under ‘absent’, for example) are not necessarily synonyms, as pairs they all refer to an “increasing order of intrusiveness – of narratorial presence,” (Toolan, 2001: 69) or conversely a decreasing order of intrusiveness – of narratorial absence. This increase or decrease in order of intrusiveness is the founding concept behind the axis, degree of distance, in my model.

These lists of terms also indicate that there are many factors that can contribute to the perception of narratorial involvement. This issue is addressed by Toolan who states that it is possible to:

"...assess the visibility of a narrator by looking for the following kinds of textual material, which are indicative -

in increasing order of intrusiveness - of narratorial presence:

1. descriptions of settings;
2. identification of characters;
3. temporal summaries;
4. definition of characters;
5. reports of what characters did not think or say;"
He states “narration embracing only types 1-3, for example, would not be unlike the kind of official and minimally interpretive account of an incident that might be found in a police report or a description of an accident for insurance purposes.” (1997: 69) This is the exact type of conclusions/points that I make in the application of my model to design material.

As Chatman points out, other textual material that makes the narrator less covert in literature are ‘expressive features’ such as “exclamations, questions, expletives, imperatives, repetitions and similar emphases, interruptions, the words ‘yes’ and ‘no’, colloquialisms, and other forms of ‘unnarrative’ diction (for example, pet names, technical jargon, foreign language elements, etc.)” He also lists exclamations as unlikely tools of a covert narrator “because they express strong feelings – deprecation, enthusiasm, whatever.” (p.202)

These characteristics, emphasised by Toolan and Chatman, become loose descriptions of the environments that necessitate the perception of authorial absence and presence. The task for this research is to similarly define the aspects of a text that lead to an increasing or decreasing level of awareness of the mediator in a design context – to identify the visually equivalent characteristics that shift the narrator further towards absence or presence.

**ABSENCE AND PRESENCE AS RHETORICAL STRATEGIES**

Following is a brief discussion about why an author/designer might choose to increase their perceived levels of absence or presence. This will be discussed in much greater detail, in the context of designed outcomes, in the case studies that follow in Chapter 5.

Why has the perception of authorial presence and absence been the focus of so much debate? If it were purely an historical preference or a stylistic variant - a different means of presentation with no
greater bearing on the delivery of the narrative - the debate between ‘showing’ versus ‘telling’ might less likely have garnered so much attention. Obviously, the decision to choose one representational technique over the other is strategic, making the decision to diminish or intensify authorial presence a rhetorical strategy. Literary theorists and writers alike have long being aware of the effect of ‘showing’ and ‘telling’ on the reader’s relationship with the text. Although only a general rule (and by no means unbreakable), it is supposed that if the dominant mode of presentation is ‘showing’ rather than ‘telling’, (a perception of authorial absence) then the reader presumes that what they ‘see’, and the judgements they make are, to a point, their own. This lack of mediation can result in the reader being more personally involved with the text. Leaks writes,

When the author subdues his own vociferous presence, he, in a sense, forces the reader to deduce, from all the details he has seen and heard, his own generalisations as to what is going on and what his own attitude should be towards the spectacle placed before him. (1996: 162)

If the reader is persuaded that they are responsible for the interpretation of the text, through the rhetorical function of authorial absence, they have an invested interest in the proceeding events, and a sense of agency within the text.

Conversely, authorial presence may be the required rhetorical strategy needed in material that is necessarily didactic, where a singular authoritative voice delivers material that benefits little personal interpretation. So, where authorial absence or impersonal presentation requires a personal involvement with the reader, personal presentation (or authorial presence) seems to create a more impersonal reader relationship. Although the reader is required to activate the text, their own judgement or perspective is not necessary for the material to evolve. The necessity for the co-requisites of impersonal and personal involvement by the author and the reader is illustrated most effectively by Booth who writes, “distance is never an end in itself; distance along one axis is sought for the sake of increasing the reader’s involvement on some other
axis.” (1961: 123) This statement supports the hypothesis proposed by this research: that ‘distance’ is a rhetorical technique that can be manipulated to achieve certain effects. And as the previous examples show, the appropriateness of a rhetorical technique is dependant upon the desired result. Ultimately, a writer or designer who is aware of the consequences of certain rhetorical techniques can manipulate them in order to create specific effects, with the purpose of enriching reader experience.

As I have pointed out the degree of distance is only one aspect of the creation of distance proposed by this research to measure the quantitative aspect of distance. Following is a discussion of kind of distance, which measures the qualitative aspect of distance.

4.2 KIND OF DISTANCE

The axis kind of distance is a qualitative measure. It refers to the perceived kind of involvement of a mediator, how engaged or detached is the mediator.

As figures 13, 15 and 16 indicated, the axis labelled kind of distance is influenced by Todorov’s category ‘perspective’ (or ‘vision’), Genette’s equally named category, ‘perspective’, and Uspensky’s category, ‘psychological/perceptual point of view’. In my model I replace the descriptors ‘subjective information’ etc., ‘internal focalisation’ and ‘internal (point of view)’, which are used respectively by Todorov, Genette, and Uspensky, by the term ‘engagement’. Likewise, ‘objective information’ etc., ‘external focalisation’, and ‘external (point of view)’, are substituted in my model by the term, ‘detachment’. And again for reasons of ‘clarity, ownership and efficiency’ (the reasons I replaced the numerous descriptions of the extremes of the degrees of distance with the words ‘absence’ and ‘presence’), these new terms are introduced. Clarity – because, as I will discuss, terms like ‘subjectivity’ and ‘objectivity’ are particularly unstable in a literary context. And also because, as I have mentioned, the terms ‘internal’ and ‘external’ refer
specifically to the position of the narrator in relation to the narrative – are they a character within the story, or are they outside of the events/action reporting on what they see? (This is a simplification of the positions but addresses the basic difference.) This distinction is redundant in a design context (or in the context of my research), as I do not borrow the character/narrator structure offered by literature. Instead I use the terms ‘internal’ and ‘external’ as ways to describe kinds of information delivered (personal thoughts, judgements etc. versus impersonal description). Also, the words ‘engagement’ and ‘detachment’ are in common usage, which will make their application to design more efficient, and productive.

Now that I have made clear the founding influences of my kind of distance axis it is necessary to explain further the surrounding terms, or arguments that inform both the Structuralists, and my own oppositional terms – internal/external, subjective/objective and engagement/detachment. Or rather what I am specifically referring to with the axis kind of distance, and how it differs from the degree of distance. Just as the larger issues of ‘showing’ and ‘telling’ inform the axis - degree of distance, the axis, kind of distance, can be traced back to the persistent discussions by literary theorists of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘objectivity’. The debates around ‘showing’ versus ‘telling’, and ‘subjectivity’ versus ‘objectivity’, have occupied those particularly concerned with issues of authorial involvement – and its rhetorical effects. This is why these arguments have become the starting points for the axes in my model of distance.

So by briefly looking at the central concerns surrounding ‘subjectivity’ and ‘objectivity’ in the context of literary production I hope to make clear the essential argument for a kind of distance. It is possibly best to repeat the following statement by Uspensky, which not only makes apparent the relationship between the internal and the external with the subjective and the objective, but also makes clear the use of the latter terms:

*When an author constructs his narration, he usually has two options open to him: he may structure the events*
and characters of the narrative through the deliberately
subjective viewpoint of some particular individual's (or
individuals') consciousness, or he may describe the events
as objectively as possible. In other words, he may use
the données of the perceptions of one consciousness or
several, or he may use the facts as they are known to him.

(1973: 81)

Importantly, Uspensky writes that 'these two compositional
processes' occur in the 'everyday narration of event', not only literary
narration, because:

...whenever we tell about an event that we have witnessed,
we are confronted by the same dilemma. We can relate
only our own first-hand observations, that is, the facts, or
we can reconstruct the state of mind of the people who
were involved and the motives that governed their actions,
even though those motives are inaccessible to an observer.

(1973: 81)

This statement is important because it emphasises the point that any
representational process, for example, the delivery of information
through a designed outcome, is automatically positioned somewhere
between the poles of subjectivity and objectivity.

In a literary context, when the term 'objective' (opposed to
'subjective') is used to describe the account of a narrative event
there is the suggestion that the information is presented from a
position of 'neutrality' opposed to one of bias or prejudice – that
the account is based on fact or actuality rather than inference or
speculation. And also, that no 'editing' of events has occurred, that
everything that has happened is revealed, and finally, that each
detail is accorded significance in relation to the event not the teller.
But for the same reasons that I revealed that 'showing' (or 'absence')
is illusionary, the concept of 'objectivity' in literature is also
illusionary. 'Absence' and 'presence', 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity'
('engagement' and 'detachment') are nothing more than literary
Figure 19

```
engagement

KIND OF DISTANCE

detachment

subjective
internal
personal
partial
'self-centred'
biased
'demand'
interested
passionate

objective
external
impersonal
impartial
'transcends self-interest'
unbiased
'offers'
disinterested
dispasionate

"increasing order of emotional involvement"
```
devices or modes of presentation employed by the author to achieve a desired effect.

For example, a more objective perspective is believed to be presented by a narrator who is identified as an external observer, rather than as an internal participant (for example, an omniscient narrator opposed to first-person narrator). But the ‘objectivity’ of the omniscient narrator is still “an internal feature of fictive content - a matter of narrative style - as is the ‘subjectivity’ of the narrator’s persona.” (Lamarque and Olsen, 1994: 156) Lamarque and Olsen explain further that,

The distinction is explicable in terms of what a reader is invited to imagine: a reader imagines, under the fictive stance, that the events described by an omniscient narrator are depicted more ‘as they really are’ than those portrayed by a narrator who participates in the events and perhaps has less than impartial view of those events. There is no further objectivity here, in the sense of independence.

(Lamarque and Olsen, 1994: 156)

So, even though ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity’ are impossible goals of a narrator (and an author), they are very real ‘imagined’ states of the reader.

It should now be clear why I have abandoned the terms ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity’, replacing them with ‘detachment’ and ‘engagement’, respectively. The latter terms, instead become possible ways to identify or describe the perceived shifting level of emotional involvement. And just as there are many ways to describe an increasing (or decreasing) ‘order of intrusiveness’, (figure 18) there are also numerous terms used to describe the shift from, what this research identifies as, ‘engagement’ to ‘detachment’, or rather an ‘increasing order of emotional involvement’. Some of these terms will be specific to a literary context whereas others will translate readily to a design understanding. (figure 19)

And just as the terms listed under the degree of distance axis are an
indication of factors that can contribute to the perception of varying narratorial involvement, the above terms are an indication of the factors that can contribute to the perception of varying emotional involvement. To expand further, an environment of ‘engagement’ is revealed, Uspensky writes, through the inclusion of “the internal processes of thoughts, feelings, sensory perceptions, emotions” which is markedly different to the “external observer (who can only speculate about such processes, projects his own experience onto the external manifestations of someone else’s behaviour).” (1973: 83) Booth also places “commitment, engagement, involvement” in contrast to the “symptoms” of objectivity – “Impersonality, detachment, disinterestedness, neutrality.” (1961: 67) But again the real task of this research is to identify the equivalent visual indicators that create a perceived environment of ‘engagement’ or ‘detachment’ in a design context.

ENGAGEMENT AND DETACHMENT AS RHETORICAL STRATEGIES

Following is a brief discussion about why an author/designer might choose to increase the levels of engagement or detachment. This will be discussed in much greater detail, in the context of designed outcomes, in the case studies in Chapter 5.

Again the question arises as to why the imagined states of either ‘objectivity’ or ‘subjectivity’ (detachment or engagement) are evoked in a reader? What is the purpose of these representational techniques? Previously, I argued that the decision to increase or diminish authorial presence was strategic, not purely stylistic – that ‘presence’ and ‘absence’ affect the readers’ relationship with the text. That, for example, the more absent the author is from the text, the greater the readers' sense of agency. Similarly, I will argue, the decision to shift the level of qualitative involvement (a shift in kind of distance), between the extremes of detachment and engagement, is also strategic.

In visual communication there has been a tendency to delineate between outcomes that are predominately ‘persuasive’ (eg.
advertising, promotional material, packaging) or predominately ‘informative’ (e.g. instructions, timetables, scientific illustration).\(^2\)

These two types of visual communication are characterised by more subjective or objective images, respectively. But why do designers have a tendency to choose a language of ‘objectivity’ or, deliver the information from a ‘detached’ position – purport neutrality – when the design process on either account requires personal judgement and decision, an emotional involvement? Because, in Western society, there is an inherent feeling that emotions, or subjectivity, distort the truth; that they deal with appearances – what is sensed, rather than what ‘is’. This sentiment is expressed in the following phrases “don’t let your feelings cloud your judgement” and “you’re letting your emotions get in the way.” A personalised account is therefore more likely to be interpreted as a distortion, speculation rather than fact, which, unsurprisingly is disadvantageous when informing the viewer of the time the train leaves the platform, or how to set up a computer. In these instances the visual narrator positions themselves as detached – reducing the feeling that the decisions they make, or the information they deliver is personally motivated. The viewer, in contexts where accuracy and efficiency are paramount, does not have to decipher idiosyncratic visual codes or negotiate personal belief systems in order to access the desired information.

Conversely, the primary intention of all visual communication is not always accuracy and efficiency. It can be used, for example, to promote an event, or advertise a product or service. This instance calls for a more engaged mode of delivery. If personal judgement, speculation, inference and opinion is evident the viewer is made aware of the imposition of an individual value system, or set of beliefs, that may either concur with, or contest their own.

This approach is successful in its ability to personalise communication, to reach specific target audiences with their attitude and authenticity. (This is discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 5.)
figure 20

figure 20a
When outlining the rhetorical strategies associated with both 'presence' or 'absence' (degree of distance) and 'engagement' or 'detachment' (kind of distance), I used extreme examples to emphasise their functional (rhetorical) value. The use of these examples may seem repetitious - both 'presence' and 'engagement' indicating an increase in mediatory involvement, and 'absence' and 'detachment' indicating a decrease in mediatory involvement. But what becomes apparent is that the desired effect can be approached in different ways, through 'presence' or 'engagement' (for more subjective, personal work), and through 'absence' or 'detachment' (for more objective, impersonal work). It is therefore, of no surprise, that extreme examples of personal or impersonal work use both rhetorical strategies. (figure 20)

Yet the use of exaggerated examples has tended to 'flatten' the subtleties between the degree and kind of distance. And although I have explained the influences and characteristics of each axis individually, it is necessary to join them to refine the model, and more importantly understand the instances of four rather than two rhetorical strategies.

A NOTE ON COGNITIVE/PERCEPTUAL MAPS

Using cognitive/perceptual maps avoids the problems created by linear categories in which the content can only be horizontally or vertically integrated, often reducing the complexity of the information for the sake of 'best-fit'. And although the visual outcomes are seemingly categorised by their location at a specific point, it is the actual relationship of each plotted point (or visual outcome) to the other that is the most revealing/relevant. For instance, in figure 20a, even though outcome (a) shares a quadrant with outcome (b), grouping them as 'present/engaged', outcome (a) may in fact have particular characteristics that are more similar to outcome(c).

This method makes it possible to avoid what Genette refers to as the 'hypostatising of terms', converting "into substance what is each time merely a matter of relationships." (1980: 32) Another advantage
"In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. 'Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone', he told me, 'just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had.'"

He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgements, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few serious bores. The abnormal quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men."

F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (1925)

---

"N.B. — Southern gentlemen. — Churchyard — apostrophe to grim death — way a cow feeding on a grave — metabolicoa — who knows but the cow may have been eating up the soul of one of my ancestors — made me melancholy and pensive for fifteen minutes; — men planting cabbages — wondered how he could plant them so straight — method of mole-catching."

Washington Irving, Salmagundi (1807)

---

"They shot the six cabinet ministers at half past six in the morning against the wall of a hospital. There were pools of water in the courtyard. It rained hard. All the shutters of the hospital were nailed shut. One of the ministers was sick with typhoid. Two soldiers carried him downstairs and out into the rain."

Ernest Hemingway, In Our Time (1924)

---

"The left hand scene presented the view of a very fine park composed of very unequal ground, and agreeably varied with all the diversity that hills, lawns, wood, and water, laid out with admirable taste, but owning less to art than to nature, could give. Beyond this the country gradually rose into a ridge of wild mountains, the tops of which were above the clouds."

It was now the middle of May, and the morning was remarkably serene, when Mr. Allworthy walked forth on the terrace, where dawn opened every minute that lovely prospect we have before described to his eye."

Reader, take care, I have unhappily led thee to the top of as high a hill as Mr. Allworthy's, and how to get thee down without breaking thy neck, I do not well know. However, let us go to the hotel; slide down together, for Miss Bridget rings her bell, and Mr. Allworthy is summoned to breakfast, where I must attend, and, if you please, shall be glad of our company."

Henry Fielding, Tom Jones (1749)
of using this method of spatial classification is that the content is more readily accessible through the simple diagramatizing of complex information.

THE FOUR PARTS

I have discussed in detail the axes that determine the theoretical space of ‘distance’ in design set up in my proposed model. These axes, degree of distance and kind of distance, intersect to create quadrants, which up until now have been described by this research through alternating binary pairs: present/engaged, absent/engaged, absent/detached and present/detached. But before I relabel these quadrants with single design terms, it is necessary to identify the terms used by literary theory to describe the narrators that inhabit these four areas.

Starting with the rational pairing of present/engaged and absent/detached, are the respective terms first-person and third-person, which represent the opposing choice of point of view available in narration. (figure 21) This fundamental split has been well documented, whether it is separated by the commonplace terms first and third person, or by Genette’s ‘homodiegetic’ and ‘heterodiegetic’, or by Uspensky’s internal and external perspectives. Although not always faithful equivalences, they do mirror the two basic categories in my model of ‘present/engagement’ and ‘absent/detachment’ - the two extremes. At one end a highly evident, identifiable mediator, who exhibits – to differing levels: judgements, authority, personality, interpretation, partiality and subjectivity; and, at the other a mediator who is ‘barely audible’ – who seems impartial, impersonal, disinterested, objective. For example, found in a textbook on how to research (or write up research) is the following quote:

The third person is standard for much research writing, and conveys an impression, whether justified or not, of considered and distanced objectivity. The first person comes across as more immediate, personal and committed, and does not deny any inherent subjectivity. Whether you used

---

3. "According to Genette, there are two basic positions: that where a narrator is outside the story and that where a narrator is a character within the story. The terms reserved for these positions are respectively, heterodiegetic (meaning 'different to the story') and homodiegetic (meaning 'same as the story')." (Simpson, 1993: 32)
the first or third person will depend on your discipline, your politics, your purpose and your audience.” (Blaxter, et al., 1996: 222)

From this choice, 'more immediate, personal and committed' over 'distanced objectivity', it becomes apparent that the quadrants present/engaged and absent/detached correspond to the terms first and third person.

Similarly, the lesser-known terms used to describe points of view - 'omniscient' and 'non-narrated' – have parallels to the quadrants present/detached and absent/engaged, respectively. (figure 21)
(Although less likely the pairing of absence with engagement and presence with detachment is needed to avoid the inevitable homogenisation of a binary scheme, and to more accurately describe range of distancing techniques available to the designer.) ‘Omniscience’ and ‘non-narration’ are less common in literature and can be most easily explained as extreme versions of the primary terms: omniscience being a derivative of third person, and non-narration being a derivative of first person. But in the context of 'distance' they have some fundamental characteristics in common with the opposing primary points of view, which explain the relationship indicated in the model.

There are various reasons for the abandonment of these literary terms, even though 'first person' and 'third person' are a part of general language and make ready reference to many of the ideas that my model sets out to explicate. Firstly, they have a troubled existence within their own domain, as the type of distance created by the author cannot be singularly attributed to the choice of pronoun. The use of 'he' or 'she' does not ensure that the form of narration will be impersonal; similarly the existence of 'I' in a text does not guarantee a highly personalised account of an event.
Therefore the terms, first- and third-person as primary indicators of narratorial mode are inadequate. A consequence of this shortcoming, as I have mentioned is the preference by some literary theorists to introduce terms such as 'homodiegetic' or 'heterodiegetic' (Genette)
or 'internal' and 'external' (Uspensky), to articulate the difference in a way that does not take lead solely from the existence of the designated pronouns.

More significantly, the direct application of the terms first- and third-person (and their derivatives) in a design context would at best suggest absolute equivalency between a verbal and a visual text, which would be misleading, and at worse, reduce the visual to a 'shadow' language – relying on the verbal for both its existence and form. Instead, it is important to acknowledge the rhetorical device of 'distance' shared by literature and design, and identify the factors that characterise various distances. As the latter task has been undertaken in literary theory but not design, the categorisations identified in literary theory can act as the foundations (origins), but not the boundaries of an understanding of distance particular to design. It is for this reason that the qualities of first-person, third-person, omniscience and non-narration bare a close relationship to the design modes acknowledged by the quadrants in my model. And, it is also for this reason that are referred to as idiosyncratic not 'first-person', implicit not 'third-person', imperative not 'omniscient', and esoteric not 'non-narrated'.

MORE OR LESS DISTANCE

I have argued that inherent in all designed outcomes are varying degrees of distance that can be manipulated to create particular effects, and that this 'distance' describes varying levels of mediatory involvement. I have also argued that the highly engaged and present visual narrators are more involved and therefore less distanced than visual narrators who are barely detectable and detached (and therefore more distanced). As the esoteric (non-narrated) visual narrator is an exaggeration of the idiosyncratic (first person) visual narrator the level of distance is also exaggerated: reduced distance (high mediatory involvement) becoming even further reduced. Likewise, the imperative (omniscient) visual narrator level of distance is increased, being an exaggeration of the implicit (third-person) narrator. The esoteric and imperative visual narrator become the
least and most distanced visual narrators, respectively.

*Figure 22* depicts the perceived level of authorial involvement in a visual outcome: the most evidence of narratorial involvement (and therefore the least use of distance), to the least level of narratorial involvement (and therefore the most use of distance).

In the following chapter the relationship between the literary points of view and my own visual narrators will be discussed in greater detail, as will the relationships between first-person and non-narrated, and, third-person and omniscience. But most importantly, in the next chapter I will test the model, and the subsequent narratorial modes, through the application of existing visual communication outcomes.
5. testing the model
point of view
FIRST-PERSON

design mode
IDIOSYNCRATIC

personal
individual
subjective
emotional
intimate
genuine
idiosyncratic
self-conscious
self-centred
candid
lively
direct

figure 23
5.1 THE IDIOSYNCRATIC VISUAL NARRATOR

The characteristics of an idiosyncratic narrator

When presented with a written text whose narrative mode displays ‘first-person’ characteristics the reader is confronted with the narrator’s inner thoughts, feelings, values, attitudes, and observations; they may share intimate details and personal opinions or judgements, speculate and infer. Such evidence of a mediatory presence can create an atmosphere of intimacy and immediacy. And although the reader will be aware of the narrator’s subjectivity, they may also presume them to be genuine, honest, and reliable, because they reveal their own weaknesses. As I have outlined, these are some of textual qualities that are shared by design outcomes delivered in the idiosyncratic mode, all of the terms listed in figure 23, having been repeatedly used to describe such visual work.

But how are these characteristics displayed when the narrator’s tools of communication are compositional elements instead of grammatical structures, colours instead of adjectives, and typography instead of words? What does the work placed in the idiosyncratic quadrant look like? Why are these designers perceived to be more highly involved – present and engaged - in the delivery of the message? Or, restated, what are the visual mannerisms that make the visual narrator seem less distanced than in other design outcomes? The task is not necessarily to equate the visual with the verbal, but rather identify the design decisions that lead to the creation of work that is exemplified by the idiosyncratic mode. As I have listed a mode whose work that is described in many of the following ways: individual, subjective, intimate, genuine, idiosyncratic, self-centred, self-conscious, candid, lively and direct.

It is the function of the strategy, unconscious or otherwise, suggested by the consistency of the physical evidence (the isolated visual mannerisms that support the creation of the idiosyncratic design mode), which is the true focus of this research. What is the purpose of the idiosyncratic mode? How does the lessening of distance effect audience relationship and response? And, what are
the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?

These issues—the identification of visual indicators and their ultimate function—will be analysed in detail through the work of Edward Fella and David Carson, but firstly, I will give a general description of the stylistic approaches common to this mode.

THE VISUAL MANNERISMS OF AN IDIOSYNCRATIC NARRATOR

An obvious rejection of conventional aesthetics is primary to work in this quadrant. Grids controlling line length and dictating image placement are seemingly abandoned, and compositional elements defy the laws of ‘good design’. Visual anomalies and ‘unnecessary’ marks are in abundance. The random is favoured over the predictable. The governing rules that promote legible typography are all but forgotten: fonts are discordant, base-lines are constantly shifting, kerning seems arbitrary, and text boxes shun right-angles. Some words cannot be read. Photographic portraits lack heads, and illustration is often atmospheric, evocative, and ambiguous but rarely figurative or pictorial. Registration marks, and other evidence of production are not omitted.

The content delivered in this mode is both a record of events and self-revelatory, as the visual narrator’s value system is exposed to the viewer. Most often this work is termed as ‘personal’ or ‘subjective’, and ‘expressive’ or ‘emotional’, as the action of rejection of the usual and the common. This deliberate disruption of a standard process and the subsequent creation of the atypical heighten an attentive viewer’s sense of mediatory involvement.

The description of this work reads not unlike a ‘How-to’ for the Postmodern designer. In fact much of the work popularly defined as ‘cutting-edge’ in the 1950s fits this profile. The Modernist tenets of rationalism, objectivity and neutrality are subjugated by personality, subjectivity and expression-ism. An approach, states Laurel Harper, that can be paralleled to the 1950s and 1960s literary movement, the New Journalists, whose membership included writers such as Hunter
S. Thompson and George Plimpton. These writers, states Harper, “resurrected the art of reporting, which had deteriorated through the years into mostly a cold, factual diatribe, by thumbing their noses at the sacred tradition of objectivity.” They “recognised that certain types of stories called for a passionate stance”, and as a response infused “their stories with an emotionally articulated point of view.” In a similar manner, writes Harper, radical designers – whom can generally be identified by their ‘passionate self-expression’ and ‘Individualism’ – “inject their work with emotion and a personal point of view.” (1999: 28) Harper identifies Edward Fella and David Carson as two such designers.¹

5.1.1 EDWARD FELLA

It’s not difficult to identify Ed Fella’s work. It all looks the same.² And yet like no one else’s. While the clients (usually cultural institutions) may vary the visual approach does not. This is perhaps because the work, “with only occasional exceptions...has nothing to do with the subjects it advertises.” (POYNOR, 1998a: 73) The work reads as a series of experiments, each one a response to a common, yet very particular, personal call. The information provided by the client becomes nothing more than Fella-fodder; the posters seemingly accidental in their purposefulness, the client little reason for their existence. This work is idiosyncratic. And while this work announces dates, locations, galleries, artists, speakers, etc., it does so after announcing first, a mediating presence.

Fella’s work reveals a visual narrator archetypal of the idiosyncratic mode, not entirely because of the distinctive visual language but rather as a result of this narrator’s primacy in each utterance. As if to concur Wild writes, in response to Fella’s work, “the presence of the designer is noted more aggressively than custom allows” and further, “design...is highlighted with a vengeance.” (WILD, 1991: 3) And even more pointedly, Poynor claims, “Fella takes the artist’s vision and, without compunction, apology or the artist’s permission, replaces it with his own.” (1998a: 73) The suggestion of a vision that is unashamedly the messengers, a vision that replaces the

¹ Although Harper only includes Ed Fella in the book, Carson is mentioned in the Introduction, ‘Radical Roots’. (p.12)

² This is a slightly ironic remark, not meant to denigrate Fella’s work. Difference in his work cannot be located in grand gesture, as it is far more acute. Fella does not so much redesign as he does tinker, as if the page were an instrument needing fine-tuning, as he searches for the appropriate pitch.
subjects, and in doing so becomes the subject, is indicative of an idiosyncratic visual narrator.

Using specific examples of Fellä’s work, I will introduce the key strategies employed by this visual narrator - subversion and fallibility. Subversion, being evidence of the visual narrator’s attitude, or system of values; and fallibility, ensuring the visual narrator’s genuineness and authenticity. These strategies, and the subsequent audience experience and response will then expanded on through discussion of work by David Carson.

DETROIT FOCUS GALLERY

When working for art galleries most designers, as if to defer aesthetic judgement to the artist, (their presumed visual leaders/ select/superiors/ purists), resort to a level of austerity matched only by the white cubes that house artistic endeavours. Design, forever the bridesmaid, taking care not to outshine Art’s bride. Paynor expands on this idea, writing:

_The principal measure of success in design for art’s sake is its restraint, its dignity, its obeisance, its absence. Art undertakes a dialogue with the world and the critic pursues a dialogue with art, while design, the medium through which this interaction takes place on the page, is given the role of mute and witless observer. Art’s grand purpose is to pose searching questions about social relations, political power structures, the hierarchy of values: design, like a good servant, must meekly tow the line._ (1998: 74)

‘Restraint’, ‘dignity’, ‘obeisance’ and ‘absence’. ‘Mute’ and ‘witless’. ‘A good servant’. Not Ed Fellä’s narrator. (figure 24.) There could barely be a list of terms more hostile to Fellä’s cause. Yet this inversion of the designer’s usual role is only half of the subversive act. The other half is found in his rendering of typographic form, which dismisses design etiquette altogether: each choice of letterform, the kerning of each word, and the selection of each baseline is transgressive. But the significance of these transgressions to my research is that
the consistency of the misdemeanours, of the indiscretions, cry of a mediator who is ever present and engaged.

The flyers made for guest lecturers visiting California Institute of the Arts (figures 25 and 26) are on first sight, similarly subversive, although once their context is revealed – the graphic design program – their rebellion, to a degree tapers. Unlike the posters for the art gallery this kind of approach would be expected, even encouraged by this school. Nonetheless the visual narrator is still undoubtedly idiosyncratic; both necessary and unnecessary information is interpreted in a highly personalised way, primarily as a form of self-expression; and, lecture times and dates merge with word play and personal musings (for example, “there are so many of us”, figure 25 presumably graphic designers who are teachers, and in figure 26 the list of words that not only rhyme with ‘fuse’, but act as possible commentary of Neville Brody’s experimental type magazine of the same name). In receiving the information the viewer learns much about the visual narrator, not only the logistic details.

Perhaps, within the context of a design institution, Fella’s brand of typographic subversion might be read more productively as a kind of fallibility. This visual narrator is apparently no expert, unless you borrow from Poynor the phrase, “expert at the inept.” (1998a: 73) These flyers deny evidence of any knowledge of typographic conventions; exhibit no adherence to rules followed by lapses in formal judgement. Fella’s work has, in fact, been described as “completely unprofessional in appearance and riddled with graphic design solecisms and errors,” and further that “it looks bungled, amateurish, incompetent, ugly.” (POYNOR, 1998a: 73) Even Fella himself uses the term “anti-mastery” (CITED IN KEEDY, 1991: 14) to explain his method. But because this approach is saturated by typographic faux paxes (and hand-rendered letterforms) the visual narrator is again foregrounded as the viewer is presented with fallibility, and in turn a humanness or authenticity, which presupposes mediation.
5.1.2 DAVID CARSON

The work of David Carson is difficult to categorise within the bounds of conventional graphic design, and for some, defiant of adequate description altogether. Yet, in accordance with this research Carson, like Fela, is an exemplar of a designer working within the idiosyncratic mode, his work being labelled in all of the following ways: personal, subjective, individual, intimate, genuine, idiosyncratic, self-centred, self-conscious, candid, lively and direct.

David Carson is mostly known (and heavily awarded) for his art direction of the magazines *Beach Culture* (from 1989 - 91) and *Ray Gun* (1992 - 95). His work on these periodicals making him arguably the most famous designer of the 1990s, and possibly the first whose celebrity transcends the confines of the insular design industry, having been interviewed by the New York Times.

His success has been attributed to his ability to create a set of visual codes that speak directly to youth culture, “to reconnect with audiences for whom print had failed in its emotional range.” (Blackwell, 2000: 5) This demographic – the MTV generation – is thought to have left magazines behind in favour of media that pulses and flickers. Apparently, David Carson bought them back. “You can’t give an eighteen-year old a page of solid grey type and expect him or her to read it,” (Cited in Poyner, 1997: 253) he says. But whether they actually read *Ray Gun* is arguable. It’s also beside the point. For *Ray Gun* does not appear to be bought for the content traditionally offered in music rags – band-bios, CD reviews, etc., - but instead for the less tangible, but no less real attitude that is projected throughout the magazine. An attitude that the readers identify with so strongly, that the process of reading becomes instead a process of self-actualisation – or so we are led to believe by the letters page:

“I sit here in my quiet, dark, snow-covered world only
brightened and energised by your fine periodical. It is the
first and only to examine my inner conscious and pound
right through the other side.” Stephen Goodal Ridgeown,
Andrew Blauvelt attests to the regularity of this sentiment, stating, “A majority of the letter writers to *Ray Gun* seem to identify the magazine with immediate, personal connection and self-discovery.” (1996: 59) But to what exactly are the readers connecting? Not the physical magazine and its not-quite-white pages, nor its revelatory prose about life as a Rock Star. They are connecting to the personality that is presented through the explicit design decisions evident on each page. This personality, I would argue, is constructed through the two major themes of subversion and fallibility. The way in which the reader relates to these aspects of the narrator, their level of identification, is crucial to the success of the design outcome in the idiosyncratic mode.

**The revolution will be visualised**

The following spreads from *Beach Culture* and *Ray Gun* are specific examples of the 'subversive' at work.

*Figure 27.* The conventional rules of reading are defied on this page, as what appears to be a standard piece of three-column typesetting, is actually a continuous line, broken twice, by the vertical boundary of an artificial text box. An attempt to read the lines in the order suggested by the designated columns would result in a nonsensical piece of writing. The sentences actually scan from the far left to the far right of the page.

*Figure 28.* The articles are in chronological order, and the numbers included could possibly be their page numbers – except that there is no obvious correlation between the two. Furthermore, a glance through the magazine would reveal the fact that there are no page numbers anyway. Therefore, this so called ‘contents page’ ignores one of its fundamental functions – to guide the reader, as directly as possible to their chosen destination. It becomes instead, a kind of visual lip-service to the traditional requirements of magazine design – the visual narrator thumbing his nose at convention.
Figure 29. The unusual thing about this advertisement for a ‘Beach Culture t-shirt’ is that the actual t-shirt is not shown. This approach implies a relationship between the producers (of the magazine, t-shirts) and the potential consumers that is based on reciprocal trust. The readers trust that the ‘attitude’ (and aesthetic values) of the magazine will be maintained in cloth, and equally, the producers of Beach Culture trust that the reader’s will rise to the challenge of the unseen shirt. Together, in an environment of mutual understanding, they practice one of their shared beliefs: risk-taking. They are dependent upon each other to fulfil their individual obligations for this enterprise to be successful.

Figure 30. The opening paragraph of this article is treated with disregard - rendered illegible by the layering and repetition of type. The visual narrator asserts their power over the writer, abandoning the usual rules of the relationship, which require design to display, in extreme cases ‘transparency’, or at least, respects. This approach also displays a derisive attitude towards the magazine format, whose supposed function is to deliver articles that can be read (and which have been paid for).

Figure 31. In this opening spread John Lennon has been deleted by a large white sphere. To some a sacrilegious act, a deliberate sign of contempt towards a band perhaps favoured by the parents of this readership. To Ray Gun devotees, further evidence of the narrator’s understanding of their need to rebel against all that is associated with their guardians (or anyone over 40).

Figure 32. The caption to this spread reads: “Probably a little difficult to read, unless you are keen on the subject. The attitude of this design involves a quiet laugh at optimum line-length.” (Blackwell, 2000: 98) Another snubbing of typographic convention, as well as the opportunity for the reader’s to prove that they capable of taking up the challenge. The visual narrator asks, “How committed are you to this relationship?”
Figure 33. The cover shot of the band, printed full-bleed in other music magazines, loses the battle of visual hierarchy to the barcode – it's closest opponent. Again, apart from the obvious defiance of the mainstream codes of cover design, it is a subtle reference to the power of the narrator. Through visual metaphor the band is belittled. But rather than it being a reference to the ‘individual power of the narrator’, it could be interpreted as an allusion to ‘the power of the individual’ – to the readers, not the rock stars. Again the visual narrator gives the viewers a wink.

Earlier, I stated that the readers were connecting to the ‘personality’ that is presented through the explicit design decisions evident on each page. Yet, to the readers of Ray Gun these are only design decisions on the surface, underneath they are the private codes of rebellion and revolution: the absence of page numbers is a sign of non-conformity; the unreadable sentences, an anarchic act; and the non-literal illustrations, manna for the cause. These signs of subversion project an anti-establishment attitude that is all-important to the readership of Ray Gun, who find a peer, even a comrade in this narrator. They identify with the visual narrator: “Ray Gun is me” cries one of the readers from the letters page. (CITED IN POYNOR, 1997: 252)

The other equally important aspect of this narrator is their fallibility, represented by the visual and verbal ‘mistakes’ that frequent the pages of Beach Culture and Ray Gun. While these mistakes may be accidental in their making, their inclusion is deliberate – signalling to the reader that the narrator is less than perfect, human, authentic. In fact, just like them.

Evident in both of these images (figure 34 and 35) are printing mistakes. In the profile of the surfer Jeff Booth, a ‘colour printer error’ means that only his nose and mouth are shown; and, at the bottom of the article on David Lynch, a black shape indicates
misadventure when photocopying. To Carson these mistakes are rationalised as conceptual triggers: the minimal exposure of Booth's face being appropriate because he is a shy surfer, and the shadowy form referencing "the subtle rule-breaking of Lynch's work". (CITED IN BLACKWELL, 2000: 79) But whether the readers interpret these printing errors as anything more than 'printing errors' is arguable. While I am not suggesting that the readers are naïve enough to assume that the inclusion of the errors is unintentional, I do believe that they understand how they are meant to read these mistakes – as 'mistakes'. This process of reading the image is akin to the reading of fiction: you can believe the story but not that it is not real. Or rather, you understand the separation between the author and the narrator.

Figure 36. This is perhaps the ultimate sign of authenticity – the inclusion of Carson's blood - a result of a cut finger during a 'hurried paste-up': an unknowingly poetic signal of mortality, 'human-ness' and thus, fallibility. While the blood may be that of the author, the decision to include it is that of the visual narrator, as the decision as to what information to deliver (the extent and depth) is that of the visual narrator. They are epistemological boundary riders of - in this instance - the 'IDIOSYNCRATIC mode'.

The philosopher Odo Marquard writes, "To get rid of what is accidental would...mean...to rid man of all his too humanness...", (CITED IN GERBER, 2001: 24) a sentiment obviously shared by the readers of Beach Culture and Ray Gun. This visual affectation - 'mistake-ism' - becomes a sign of authenticity, an aspect crucial to the process of identification. It is difficult to identify with someone who does not display a range of human characteristics – in this case fallibility. This level of honesty must be a relief to an audience who are distrustful of mainstream media, or any other power-base (family, school, etc) – their designated moral custodians - who protect them by imposing various degrees of censorship.

The currency of 'mistake-ism' is well understood by the makers.
of youth-oriented products, who employ it as a strategy. Poynor tells how the original 'formal' style of MTV, which was 'too close to conventional television', was abandoned in favour of a less professional looking approach. Poor lighting was used, adlibbing encouraged, and, mistakes ignored, because these aspects made it look 'real'. "It took a little while,' noted Rolling Stone's Steven Levy, 'but MTV finally got what it wanted - a well-designed studio that looked like something casually thrown together, scripted patter than sounded like it was made up on the spot, an ironclad format that proceeded like a random chain of events..." (POYNOR, 2001A: 51)

As we have seen, a new worth is allocated to these 'mistakes' – their deliberate inclusion becoming a rhetorical strategy in a manner similar to Carson's defiance of the conventional rules of graphic design. These strategies - 'mistake-ism' and subversion - are employed to create an environment of sincerity and a degree of familiarity or understanding toward the narrator's value system. The viewer feels that they know (aspects of) the narrator (identification being the aim) and what they know of the narrator is authentic. Both of these aspects set the foundation for a strong relationship between the viewer and the narrator, encouraging a response that is trusting and empathetic. The subsequent empathy felt by the viewer toward the narrator, as a result of the visual narratorial strategies, is interpreted by this research as a manipulation of distance – in this instance, a lessening of distance between the two involved parties.

THE FUNCTION OF THE IDIOSYNCRATIC VISUAL NARRATOR

It is said that the success of a story narrated in the first-person is closely related to the relationship developed between the reader and the narrator. This, as we have seen, can also be said for the idiosyncratic mode: the success of Beach Culture and Ray Gun being dependent upon the high degree of empathy and trust felt by the viewers toward the visual narrator. But what is the purpose of having such an audience? What are the communicative functions of a reduction of distance beyond 'the page', beyond increased empathy
and trust? When is this strategy – the idiosyncratic mode - most effective? What are its weaknesses? The answer to these questions leads to a potential increase in control of the communicative intentions of the designer, and therefore an increase in the effectiveness of their design outcomes.

To the designer, the primary function of the reduction of distance is to personalise the mode of communication, which is achieved through both the ‘presence’ and ‘engagement’ of the visual narrator. Via the unconventional manipulation of text and imagery the visual narrator makes their presence felt, and through the visual evidence of reaction, response and comment the visual narrator engages with the content. Viewers of this work are aware that it is mediated through an ‘individual consciousness’, and they are mindful of the expression of individual values and attitudes.

THE STRENGTHS OF AN IDIOSYNCYRATIC VISUAL NARRATOR

The ability of the idiosyncratic mode to communicate to a specific audience is possibly its greatest strength. As we have seen, a highly individual, idiosyncratic, visual language enables a particular perspective to be delivered – one that is far from neutral. Such evidence of a ‘narratorial attitude’ enables the viewer to make an informed decision about the possible level and type of interpretation that has occurred in the delivery of the information. For this reason it could be considered to be an empowering position for the viewer as they are (supposedly) given access to the visual narrator motivations, making the process of communication seem transparent.

We have also seen, through Carson’s work, how this empowerment inspires an audience that is loyal, committed and captive. But perhaps most importantly an audience that is empathetic: an audience who understands the message, but even more impressively, feels understood. Between the pages of Ray Gun, they find not articles and images, but “a kindred spirit”.⁴ Through it’s emotionally motivated and untraditional visual approach Ray Gun has managed

---

4. “To the groovy people at raygun: The magazine is amazing. From the layouts and illustrations to the artists and stories, it renewed my faith in the printed medium. I felt the instant recognition of a kindred spirit, seriously, keep up the intensity. Convert the masses. thank you, Respect, N.R.R. Naran” (CITED IN VANDERLANDS, 1993: 27)
to speak to its readership with uncanny precision. Such precision, is undoubtedly the key to Carson's work, and as I have stated, the strength of the idiosyncratic mode.

Importantly, the idea of 'precision' suggests a narrowing. The readers of independent-style music magazines are not the same as the reader's of, for example, a senior's golfing magazine or a magazine for young female horse riders. Nor, more significantly, are they the same readership as mainstream music publications (or so the producers would like to maintain - although with a circulation of 150 000+ is becomes increasingly difficult for Ray Gun to claim cult status). The producers and readers of Ray Gun, for whom differentiation is essential, carefully guard this distinction.

For the producers, a point of difference is a necessary marketing tool, but for the readers, it is vital for the process of self-definition. As Mary Douglas argues, in her article, 'On Not Being Seen Dead: Shopping as Protest', “shopping is an agonistic struggle to define not what one is, but what one is not.” (1996: 104) She sees shopping as a form of protest, people often choosing what others reject as a form of ‘cultural affiliation’. (p.82) This could certainly be said to be true for the consumers of Ray Gun who seem to revel in the levels of visual discomfort and illegibility that would frustrate many, because it frustrates many. This magazine has deftly joined together a set of readers who would ordinarily remain isolated, and would possibly eschew formal groupings. Ray Gun has managed to maintain the feeling of ‘restricted entry’ whilst its popularity increases. One of the writers states, “just by opening this very magazine you’ve gained admittance into an exclusive club.” (CITED IN POYNOR, 1997: 253)

Because of the rarefied visual dialects often evident in the idiosyncratic mode it could hardly be regarded as a democratic method of communication – it is a private conversation rather than a public announcement, which makes it such a powerful method of communication in a world saturated by messages for the masses. It is harder to ignore someone speaking directly to you, particularly if they are speaking to you in your own language.
Carson's ability to directly access the inner-consciousness of the youth market did not go unnoticed by the advertising companies who were looking for a way to connect with this demographic, or more pointedly, their disposable incomes. It seems that the Carson formula of individualism over information is the perfect vehicle for an advertising style that favours the presentation of a brand-attitude rather than the discrete features of its products. David Peters identifies this shift in advertising direction, writing, "Now, advertising is more about the identity and image of a brand – and the aspirations it mirrors in its target audience – than it is about products." (1997: 44) Mike Jorkovac, who worked with Carson on a campaign to launch a new style of Levi Strauss jeans, claims that Carson is ideal to facilitate this shift:

David came back to us with a phenomenal packaging position that really helped reposition the brand. It was to appeal to the same target that David's Ray Gun magazine appeals to; the work he did was like a Rorschach collage. When we did the testing on it, the kids were saying, 'this is exactly how I feel in terms of life'. (CITED IN POYNER, 1997: 253)

Jorkovac sees this mode of communication as the future for all targeted messages, not only those directed towards youth subcultures, which is the current application. But at this stage the idiosyncratic mode is the ideal strategy for advertising's new objectives as it is renowned for revealing as much, if not more about the mediator's attitude than the 'content', as well as creating an empathetic audience.

Apart from Levis Strauss, Nike and Pepsi, were also among the corporations wanting Carson to avoid the obvious 'big sell' by packaging their brands as 'cultural content.' Figure 37 depicts two of the five Pepsi advertisements design by Carson. Even though they lack some of the rawness evident in his magazines, they still have the essence of an individual mark - the use of the first-person in the copy ('I wanna...') is reinforced by the personal style.

5. In his article titled, 'Branding', David Peters mentions the movement to package brands as cultural content. (1997: 50)
The refinement of Carson's graphic language, through the reduction of highly idiosyncratic visuals, is an attempt to widen audience appeal. Although this ad is still targeted towards the youth market, it is not as narrow as the audience of *Ray Gun*. Such refinement is akin to changing the mode of communication from a local dialect to a regional dialect. As the evidence of specific personal mediation is reduced so too is the likelihood of alienation – the less someone knows the less there is to dislike. That said, there is still enough evidence of an individual approach for identification to occur, it not entirely absent of 'personality' - these advertisements are far removed from the typical glossy product shot equipped with beading water droplets. This strategy of a moderated idiosyncratic mode is appropriate for a piece of communication targeting a youth demographic that drink cola, which would be wider than the demographic who buy ‘indie’ music magazines (but not necessarily exclusive). *(figure 38)*

According to my research, this widening of the audience is achieved through an increase in the kind and degree of distance between the visual narrator and their outcome. In these advertisements I would argue that visual narrator is still present and engaged, but not as present and engaged as in *Ray Gun*. This is an example of how the author/designer Carson controls the level of distance through a visual narrator in two different instances.

I have discussed the way in which the Pepsi advertisements heighten the possibility of audience identification through the use of a first-person narrator in the copy, in conjunction with an idiosyncratic visual mode. Nike also employs this bilateral approach in the Nike Air advertisement. *(figure 39)*

This advertisement has all the hallmarks of a visual narrator operating in the idiosyncratic mode. Their presence and engagement is evident through the subversion of traditional graphic design rules, which in the slick world of advertising are even more persistent. In a manner similar to Carson's magazine art direction (but less chaotic),
THE resemblance BETWEEN YOU AND ANDRE IS
UNCANNY BECAUSE YOU BOTH ARE
WEARING THE NIKE AIR CHALLENGE FUTURE SHAPE POT FROM NIKE WITH THE
EXOSKELETAL STRAPPING AND THE HUARACHE-TM INNERBOOT SYSTEM WHICH MOLDS
AROUND YOUR FOOT AND GIVES HUGGING IMPRESSION BECAUSE OF THE
INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF CUSHIONING INSIDE THE SHOE
HEEL AND FOREFOOT AND THERE ARE
MYRIAD OTHER THINGS YOU HAVE IN COMMON LIKE
THE FOOTFRAME-TM SHOES AND THE MATED HOOK AND LOOP CLOSURE AND THE BACKLAP HOOK AND LOOP ITSELF
AND THE HAIR AND THE WIMBLEDON
IF YOU ARE IF HE ISN'T FOR THE HAIR
IT'S THE SHOES AND THE WIMBLEDON
CUP YOU GUYS COULD BE LIKE
TWINS.
TWINS.
we see upper and lower case letters appearing randomly, shifting baselines, varying leading, no discernable justification, minimal punctuation and seemingly haphazard logo and image placement. The image of Andre Agassi is also unusually small considering the likely financial cost of his endorsement; the visual narrator showing a degree of irreverence toward the sporting hero: more evidence for the viewer of narratorial ‘attitude’ (or engagement), which transcends mere mediatory involvement (or presence). By presenting a personalised visual narrator who has the desirable attitude of subversion (albeit mild subversion - nothing overtly political or explicit that could cause unwanted consumer estrangement) - an opportunity is created for the viewers to develop empathy. And, when an empathetic consumer is created by an astute designer they are more likely to feel that their desires are in fact understood needs. This audience perceives, or wants to perceive, that the seller is in fact someone who is like them and therefore to be trusted and listened too, rather than a construction of an advertising agency, who is employed in the marketing department of a large, faceless multinational (an impersonal collective possibly made up of white middle-aged, middle-class men with incomes, values and personal tastes vastly different to those espoused by the narrator in the advertisement).

In has also been noted that in radio advertising, first person narration (from which the idiosyncratic visual narrator is founded) is used by companies who have flawed reputations and therefore need to improve their image. Stern writes:

*An FPN may thus be a good choice for rehabilitating the credibility of a firm whose image has been tarnished.*

*Since attitude change is regarded as a more difficult goal than attitude formation, a firm that has been the object of negative publicity might want to utilise the simple expedient of first-person narration to humanise itself.* (1991: 12-13)

Whether or not Nike employs this mode as an attempt to repair their dire corporate citizen rating (brought on by the exploitation of
workers in developing countries), Stern's comment does support the humanising affect of a first person narrator, and in turn the visual narrator described in this chapter.

To reinforce this feeling of camaraderie and connection, the verbal text is written from a second-person point of view. Here the viewer is spoken to directly via the pronoun 'you', an approach that is relatively frequent in advertising copy, but rare in literature. Although this is not the archetypal personal perspective, it is still effective in personalising the narrator. The copy is as follows:

The resemblance between you and andre is uncanny because you both are wearing the new Air Challenge future tennis shoes from nike with the exoskeletal strapping and the huarache-fit™ Innerboot system which molds to your feet and you both enjoy the better lateral motion because of the longitudinal flex lines and herringbone outsole and you share an incredible amount of cushioning hats off to the Nike-Air® cushioning in the heal and forefoot and there are myriad other things you have in common like the footframe™ device and the midfoot tension strap with rugged hook-and-loop closure for instance and let's face it if it weren't for the hair and the earring and the wimbledon cup you guys could be, like, twins. twins.

The narrator is immediately assumed (made present) by the use of 'you', which in this instance presupposes an orator. Secondly, hints as to the nature of the narrator are given throughout the written piece. The narrator is overly familiar/confident ('Andre', on first name-basis); opinionated ('uncanny'); presumptuous ('you both enjoy'); and, colloquial ('hat's off' and 'let's face it'). But overall the narrator is playful. In the beginning the narrator proposes a likeness between the reader and Agassi, if they have the same footwear, but towards the end the real differences are revealed: 'if it weren't for the hair and the earring and the Wimbledon cup.....' This narrator could be taken in two ways. Firstly, it could be interpreted as a subtle reference to the usual 'sales spiel' that promises success via product association. By making reference to an advertising standard the
narrator signals to the reader their honesty and the possibility that they are 'on the same side'. The alternative interpretation is that, from the beginning, the viewer is meant to immediately understand that the narrator's tongue is firmly in their cheek – it is obvious that there is no real resemblance between you and Andre, regardless of the shoes. Either way, both strategies require an implicit understanding between the viewer and the narrator.

So far I have explained the success of the _idiosyncratic_ mode in creating an empathetic target audience – a group of people who strongly identify with the visual narrator. I have also hinted at the potential alienation that is an inevitable result of such pointed communication. But rather than regarding this alienation as a weakness of this approach I will argue that, when managed appropriately, it is one of its most unique and powerful characteristics, and that the _idiosyncratic_ mode's ability to engender identification is as important as its ability to engender non-identification. This idea was raised earlier when discussing the importance of 'differentiation' to maintain market share and audience interest in _Ray Gun_. The creation of a point of difference suggests a departure from a standard or norm, which can be achieved through the singular action of recruitment – the product draws to it a group of people; or, differentiation can be achieved through the dual action of recruitment and alienation – where alienation is actively encouraged (eg. extreme visual tactics - illegibility), rather than it being a result of a more benign process of exclusion by default (eg. different interests – 'independent' versus 'country and western' music).

Therefore, the visual narrator's ability to simultaneously recruit and alienate via the _idiosyncratic_ mode is ideal for a publication such as _Ray Gun_, whose attraction is that it speaks to a subculture rather than a popular culture: its appeal to many may well be its lack of appeal to most. For _Ray Gun_, mainstream acceptance could spell disaster. This delicate system can be balanced by considered application of the _idiosyncratic_ mode. This concept of the dual
action is supported by Mary Douglas’s earlier assertion that consumption is motivated as much by knowing what is not sought after, as what is sought after, and, subsequently, that ‘shopping is an agonistic struggle to define not what one is, but what one is not.’ Shopping in this context becomes a form of protest that signals allegiance between groups. Such allegiance can be found among the readers of Ray Gun.

THE WEAKNESSES OF THE IDIOSYNCRATIC VISUAL NARRATOR

Any aesthetic declaration that is ‘extreme’ (beyond what is considered to be in the ‘normal range’), whether it is a particular visual style, music genre, etc., is likely to garner responses that are equal and opposite in force. After reading much of the commentary on Ray Gun it becomes apparent that there are as many dissenters as there are sympathisers. But, it would be too simplistic to claim that all alienation is strategic – used to monitor audience appeal – as was previously argued. It is more than likely that a visual narrator operating in the idiosyncratic mode could cause misdirected alienation – that is, they alienate those that they are attempting to attract. This is one of the potential drawbacks of a mode that unashamedly reveals an explicit perspective. The more that is revealed the more there is to dislike, a lack of ambiguity leaving little room for bipartisan support. Consequently, to effectively exercise the idiosyncratic mode an astute understanding of the target audience is required to prevent the potential of bypassing all audiences as there is no guarantee that misdirection captures another, albeit unintended, group of consumers.

Just as the process of identification can fail when using a personalised narrator, so too can the desired audience experience of authenticity. Even though I have argued that the strength of this mode is its ability to portray fallibility (via ‘mistake-ism’), and in turn trustworthiness, there is the potential for a misreading. What could be interpreted as a sign of ‘honesty’ and ‘humanness’ could equally read as ‘incompetence’, ‘carelessness’ and ‘inanattentiveness’, resulting in very little trust or faith in the quality of the information delivered.

167
by the visual narrator. There are some occasions where fallibility is not appropriate – operating instructions, road signage, financial statements – too name a few. But, just as the previous issue of ‘misdirected alienation’ showed, this is a problem of inappropriate application rather than an inherent weakness of the idiosyncratic mode.

Another weakness of this visual narrator is the potential for them to be perceived as self-centred. The problem of communication that is filtered through a singular, opinionated, idiosyncratic mediator is that the perspective is limited - potentially myopic; one-sided - potentially unreliable; egocentric - potentially solipsistic; and, self-indulgent - potentially tedious. In fact, the novelist Henry James refers to its literary cousin, first-person narration, as that “accursed autobiographic form which puts a premium on the loose, the impoverished, the cheap and the easy. Save in the fantastic and the romantic...it has no authority, no persuasive or convincing force...” (Leak, 1996: 167) Whilst David Carson may think that, “it can be deadly boring if you don’t put yourself in it” (Cited in Blackwell, 2000: 133) others are sure to disagree. And, as can be seen in the context of fiction, any highly distinctive character can easily evolve into a caricature – consisting of nothing but predictable idiosyncrasies and meaningless characteristics. Once belief in the character is lost, the reader’s interest will diminish.

The same can be said for design, where the visual mannerisms become clichés, appearing on similarly oriented products but with vastly different ideologies. Take for example Poyner’s comments on a recruitment campaign for the army, who shares with Ray Gun, youth as a target market:

*In the space of just four years from its launch in November 1992, a design language heralded inside and outside the design world for being ‘radical’, ‘subversive’, ‘revolutionary’, ‘innovative’ and in every sense ground-breaking had been so thoroughly assimilated by the mass media that it could seem an appropriate mode of address for an organisation*
as unsubversive, unrevolutionary and completely establishment in outlook as the army. (2003: 48-9)

Before long these visual mannerisms lose sight of their heritage altogether and become fodder for the next round of annual reports, whose audience and ideologies bear no relation to the one it was originally targeting. Because overt mannerisms are easily identifiable, they are easy to appropriate by those who want to personalise their visual communication. But a result of this *stylised speech* can be the creation of the ironically termed, generic individual.

Lastly, a visual narrator operating in the idiosyncratic mode could be perceived as being manipulative by an audience who is aware of their trade in emotions, as well as feeling at times uncomfortable with the explicit orchestration. While most viewers understand that the process is inherently manipulative, there is a balance that needs to be maintained in order for the viewers to feel that an emotional range has been explored rather than exploited. Regardless of the attentive viewer’s understanding that the visual narrator is an authorial construction, and in turn, that the ‘subjective’ point of view is illusionary, a level of sentiment can still be regarded as inappropriate (either excessive or unworthy). The viewer could see this as an attempt at cheap sentimentality, which is a misuse of their personal involvement. Such an abuse of trust would make any further investment, by the viewer, unlikely. Again, a better understanding of how it works, and in which contexts it is most effective could circumvent this potential weakness exhibited by the idiosyncratic mode. This research offers a better understanding.

Section 5.2 THE IMPLICIT VISUAL NARRATOR

The characteristics of the implicit narrator

In direct contrast to the heightened mediatory involvement evidenced in the idiosyncratic mode is the near erasure of mediatory existence in the implicit mode. A text that displays the thoughts, feelings and judgements of the visual narrator is
point of view
THIRD-PERSON

design mode
IMPLICIT

impersonal
objective
neutral
restrained
rational
transparent
disembodied
dispasionate
non-participatory
unmotivated

figure 40
abandoned in favour of a text that does all to remove evidence of an individual's participation in the communication process.

The characteristics of the **idiosyncratic** mode – 'engagement' and 'presence' – are replaced by 'detachment' and 'absence'; the work is presented rather than represented. And just as the foundational concepts of the **idiosyncratic** mode are derived from the characteristics of a first-person narrator, the principles that define the **implicit** mode are derived from the characteristics of a third-person narrator. When narrated from this position a story can appear to be unmediated to the inexperienced reader, similarly, work created from the **implicit** mode can be described as being 'un-designed'. In **figure 40** are terms shared by literary and visual texts narrated from a third-person point of view or the **implicit** mode, respectively.

Again, the task of this research is to identify the features of a designed outcome that locate it within the **implicit** mode, that is, to isolate the visual mannerisms that warrant the descriptions listed above. What does the work placed in the **implicit** quadrant look like? Why are the designers of this work seemingly more 'detached' and 'absent', or distant, than those of the **idiosyncratic** mode? What are the specific formal devices that create this increased distance? What are the design decisions that lead to work being described by the terms listed in **figure 40**.

It is arguable that these design decisions are strategic. I am showing through my research that the intent (strategy), which may or may not be named as such by the designer, is an increase in the level of distance between the author/designer and the visual narrator. And this increase in distance, which translates as a reduction in perceived mediatory involvement, is instrumental in the control of viewer experience.

This manipulation of distance as a rhetorical technique will be examined through the work of Tibor Kalman and Dan Friedman. Through the work of these designers I will identify the visual indicators of increased distance, and more importantly, the ultimate function of this strategy. I will also address the strengths and
weaknesses of this approach. But before highlighting the specifics of individual work I will give an overview of the formal devices shared by work created from this mode.

THE VISUAL MANNERISMS OF AN IMPLICIT NARRATOR

The stylistic devices evident in outcomes from the idiosyncratic mode are, as my model suggests, diametrically opposed to those of the implicit mode. In this mode individual mannerism is all but eliminated – the hand-generated is replaced by processes that foreground the mechanical – the maker happily retreats behind a media that does its best to erase individuality.

Photography is favoured over illustration because of its ‘neutral rhetoric’. The photographic image is perceived as being descriptive, rather than interpretive, the latter being a characteristic of illustration. This distinction is supported by Edward Triggs who states, “hand-constructed representations exhibit a value-laden rhetoric peculiar to the artist,” opposed to photographs, which “continue to be perceived by the casual reader as representing a non-interpreted reality.” (1995: 83) A sentiment also supported by Jan Tschichold, who according to Poynor believes:

\[
\text{The fault of the early advertising artists was the way they made their own ‘handwriting’ so central to their work.}
\]
\[
\text{Photography’s advantage over drawing is its freedom from the ‘overwhelming’ personality of the artist. The efficient forms needed to express the modern world could “never be found in the work of a single personality and its ‘private’ language”}. \text{ (Poynor, 1998: 22-3)}
\]

Even though those schooled in contemporary theory no longer believe that photographic images show an unmediated ‘reality’, they are still understood to represent that which is ‘real’ – they are still seen as being capable of faithfully recording events, if required.

Photographic and non-photographic images in the implicit mode are usually pictorial. They are readable in the sense that they
present definable objects / scenarios / geographies / persons etc. There is barely any visual ambiguity (although ambiguity in the overall piece is quite common - usually created by accompanying text that it is incongruous to the image). Colours are true, cropping is conventional, and placement is traditional. Any manipulation is within the bounds of the ‘real’, making it at times unnoticeable. These images are designed to describe, and, designed to be interpreted, they are not ‘atmospheric’, ‘indistinct’ or ‘expressive’ - common descriptions of images in the implicit mode.

The importance of legibility indicated by the use of images is also maintained typographically. Digital typefaces are favoured over hand-rendered scripts whose letters defy facsimile; and, even the manufactured idiosyncratic fonts that suggest an action of decision rather than default, are cast aside in preference of ‘vanilla typography’ which Andrew Blauvelt defines as, typography that has “been reduced to a near-zero degree of expression – neither pretty nor eccentric, but quite plain.” (2000: 43) Apart from the choice of font, the typographic decisions of line length, kerning, and leading are all ‘rational’ and are in sight of conventional design standards. The grid is stable, and sustained. Page numbers appear in likely places; and, compositional elements maintain a balance, or at least create a precedent for the proceeding leaves. Visual dissonance is uncommon.

Within this work there are no extraneous details, no random marks or gestures. All visual data is determined. The barely evident visual narrator - the subsequent absence of a definable ‘voice’ - forces the viewer to make sense of the message being delivered. The desire to organise the material into a 'whole', or to achieve perceptual closure if it is not readily offered, is an innate response of the viewer. And this desire for closure is satisfied by the interpretation of all the available visual information.

Such close attention demanded of the viewer is compensated by a designed outcome that is at times uncluttered, simple, reductionist, restrained and unassuming. (In turn, this sparsity affords close
attention). This work is described as being ‘un-designed’ as it eschews any of the usual indicators of designer-ly involvement – indicators that were so prevalent in the work of Fela and Carson. This shift in attention away from the delivery of the message (the syntactics), to the message itself (the semantics) characterises the implicit mode.

5.2.1 Tibor Kalman

“Tibor and company don’t have a signature style, and that is a worthy ambition in life. My own ambition is to write a song that sounds like I stole it – like “I” didn’t write it, but it has always been there. To get the ‘I’ out of the song is the ultimate compositional coup, whether in music or design.” (David Byrne, 1998: 87)

The limited way in which design is discussed becomes strikingly apparent when the very same adjectives used to describe Carson and his work, are also used to describe the work (and personality) of Tibor Kalman (1949-1999). The terms ‘revolutionary’, ‘subversive’, and ‘cutting-edge’, are often used with reference to these designers, yet one look at their work will reveal a vastly different visual approach. And while this may have little bearing on the viewer’s experience of this work, it does highlight the lack of appropriate ways in which to discuss design.

At this point I will argue that my model offers an explanation for this conflict - similar descriptors yet differing visual qualities – through its articulation of the concurrent roles that the designer holds, as both author and narrator. I will argue that the descriptors are valid for both designers, but not in the same role. That is, as a visual narrator Carson could be described as ‘subversive’, since he subverts the conventional design rule. That is the way in which he delivers the message is subversive. But as an author, as one who decides which work to undertake, he is not subversive. Whereas, Kalman, I would argue is largely labelled a subversive because of the type of work he takes on, and less so, because of the way it is executed. His use of type and image is hardly revolutionary, yet as I will demonstrate, his
attitude towards design is. This, I would argue is Kalman in the role of the designer/author not the visual narrator. The confusion or the blurring of these roles has long been identified in literature, where the inexperienced reader will assume that the values or morals of the narrator are that of the author (for example, the extreme right-wing actions of the narrator are an indication of the author's fascist ideologies).

Kalman first rose to prominence in the 1980s through M&Co, a New York based design studio, but became well known internationally as the creative director of *Colors* magazine during the 1990s. He has always been provocative – publicly challenging the design industry and its players to avoid taking on meaningless corporate jobs, as well criticising the homogeneity of contemporary design. For example, figure 4.1 is a piece designed by Kalman, printed in I.D Magazine (March/April 1987), which pilloried the (then) recent design of logos.

But his stardom and reputation as design's 'bad boy' peaked after one of his images from *Colors* - of the Queen (Elizabeth II) looking African – found its way into the UK's tabloid press. (figure 4.2)

Kalman's reputation as a troublemaker had transcended the bounds of the design world.

Ironically, Kalman's recognition within the design industry has been through work that is referred to as 'anti-design' (Kalman, 1998: 52) and 'non-design'; (Farrelly, 1998: 12) and, similarly as having a 'non-style' (Farrelly, 1998: 13) or a 'zero degree of design'. (Byrne, 1998: 87) These descriptions are a consequence of his routine avoidance of the overtly manipulated visuals that emphasises the formal aspects of design, and subsequently the designer. Instead, he favours outcomes that privilege the content, diminishing evidence of design and the designer. As Rick Poynor writes, under the heading 'Non-visual design':

*Most designers are designers because of an exceptional intensity in their response to visual form coupled with a*
degree of talent for manipulating it. Kaiman is unusual among those who choose design as a profession in not being a visually motivated person in this sense... He continued to make design decisions according to the dictates of the underlying idea rather than aesthetic preference. (2001: 151-2)

As I mentioned in the introduction, this focus on the message rather than its delivery is indicative of the implicit mode, and gives rise to such work being described as objective, neutral, restrained, rational, dispassionate, non-participatory, and non-reflexive.

Just as I argued that the idiosyncratic mode was constructed through the two major themes of subversion and fallibility, I will argue that the implicit mode is constructed through the traits common to work in this quadrant, which are: anonymity and irony. ‘Anonymity’, in this model refers to the inability to identify specific evidence of the visual narrator – a relatively straightforward term. ‘Irony’ on the other hand is less easily characterised as its definitions are numerous.10 But for the purpose of this model I will use the term in a manner similar to many literary theorists, in this context ‘irony’ is:

\[(A) \text{ method of achieving meaning via understatement, concealment and allusion, rather than direct statement. . . .} \]
\[\text{Ironists manage to suggest many different ways of considering their material, and may conceal entirely their own attitudes. (Gray, 1992: 153)}\]

This last point – the ‘concealment’ of ‘their own attitudes’ – as well as the term ‘understatement’, translate directly to the characteristics already assigned to work that is produced in this mode. Further support of the relationship between ‘irony’ and the implicit mode is offered by Wayne Booth who groups ‘ironic’ among the descriptors (of the attitudes required of the author) ‘objective’, ‘detached’, dispassionate’, neutral’, ‘impartial’ and ‘impersonal’, and, in opposition to the terms ‘passionate’, ‘engaged’, and ‘involved’. (1961: 38)

10. While recognising the limits of dictionary definitions, this definition captures the issue clearly and consiliently. In the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1993) ‘irony’ is defined in the following ways: 1. dissimulation, pretence; esp. the pretence of ignorance practised by Socrates as a step towards confuting an adversary 2. the expression of meaning using language that normally expresses the opposite; esp. the humorous or sarcastic use of praise to imply condemnation or contempt 3. discrepancy between the expected and the actual state of affairs; a contradictory or ill-timed outcome of events as if in mockery of the fitness of things 4. the use of language with one meaning for a privileged audience and another for those addressed or concerned.
Following are examples of Kalman's work that exhibit either (or both) the characteristics of 'anonymity' and 'irony'.

These three images (Figures 43, 44 and 45) are ideal examples of the restrained vocabulary that is characteristic of Kalman's work. They are remarkably sparse, made up of simple word and image relationships that stabilise, rather than destabilise the message. The objects in the first two examples are likely restaurant items—a saltshaker and a steak. In the last example, the objects while not all restaurant related (boxer shorts and comb), do refer directly to the text, 'breakfast'. In this example the images become instructional: 'get dressed...comb hair...have coffee,' and are reminiscent of educational flash cards that are used to communicate without the use of a written text. All of the images in these examples are generic and unambiguous—photographed (rather than illustrated) from an angle that reveals as much information about them as possible, there are no awkward perspectives, they are shot as they are most often seen. This almost 'forensic' approach denies the obvious presence of the photographer/designer as there is little evidence of a personalised approach. Lupton and Miller agree, stating "M & Co's ironic use of over-the-counter graphics suggested the absence of art, the erasure of ego, and the disappearance of the designer." (Lupton and Miller, 1996: 161)

Equally unassuming typography accompanies these images. It is straightforward, legible, coherent, and altogether unsurprising. The typeface is a common serif and set in a conventional way: centred to the images, if not the page; predictable hierarchy (type size of diminishes in accordance with the importance of the text); and pronouns are used where expected. It is the combination of this type and image treatment that leads M&Co's work for Restaurant Florent to be described as "calculatingly 'undesigned'" (Pearlman, 1993: 20) generic imagery is placed with generic typography; both words and images have an express purpose (there are no random elements that suggest the designer's whimsy); and, the dictates of symmetry place the elements, suggesting the mechanical over the individual.
NOVEMBER
SOUP  BOUDIN & WARM TARTS
GUSTY WINDS
HIGH UPPER 40s TO MID 50s
LOWS UPPER 30s TO MID 40s
FLORENT
OPEN 24 HOURS 989 5779
WATCH FOR HEAVY RAINS
WEAR YOUR GALOSHES

MNCO
Even though we logically assume the designer’s role (these outcomes are not a natural phenomenon), we do not credit the designer with the production of meaning, only the delivery of information: the designer presents the information in the form of words and images (boxer shorts, comb, cup of coffee, and ‘breakfast’), but does not explain or interpret the relationship of the elements. By leaving the act of cognition up to the viewer, the perceived involvement of the designer is further eroded. And, in direct relation to the visual narrators diminished interpretation of the information is an increase in the level of autonomy experienced by the viewer: the less involved the visual narrator is in the delivery of the message the greater the independence of the viewer. The renouncement of statement in favour of inference, of the explicit in favour of the implicit - as is the preference of a visual narrator operating in the implicit mode – leaves the viewer to believe they are all but alone to decipher the message.

A preferred strategy of Kalman’s was to reference vernacular advertising and signage, which according to him is “design so familiar that we don’t really see it.” (Kalman and Jacobs, 1990: 124) as opposed to vernacular design, which “happens when a small business hires the local sign painter, print shop, or commercial artists to take care of its design needs.” (Kalman and Jacobs: 124) This ‘unstudied’ approach, (figure 46) encourages anonymity of the designer in two ways. Firstly, by referring to a system (a signage board with its movable letters) that is used more often by non-designers than designers, the requirement of expertise is eliminated. This sign could have been produced by anyone. There is also the subtle suggestion that a schooled designer would not have created this piece because of the treatment of the word ‘rains’ - a clumsy attempt at ‘word as image’. Secondly, the typographic treatment is largely dictated by the manufacturers of these signboards: the letters are standardised – no variation in font or size - and their placement, guided by the lines on the board. A combination of these factors produces the transparency that leads Kalman to refer to vernacular design as ‘invisible design’.12 Room for interpretation of the message

11. Kalman is careful to distinguish between ‘nostalgia’ and ‘vernacular’, the former “knocking off something from the past and making it look like it happened 50 years ago in Italy” (Heller, 1990: 75)

12. “Seeing the vernacular is seeing the invisible,” Kalman states. (Kalman and Jacobs, 1990: 124)
through the usual methods of image and text manipulation is all but removed, reducing the role of the designer to that of a typesetter, and again leaving the viewer to deduce the relative importance of each piece of information. ‘Soup boudin & warm tarts’ versus ‘lows upper 30s to mid 40s’, and ‘open 24 hours 989 5779’ versus ‘wear your galoshes.’ This process of qualitative categorisation heightens the degree of independence or autonomy experience by the viewer.

Apart from the ‘anonymity’ displayed by the visual narrator in these examples, there is also evidence of ‘Irony’ - the other common characteristic of work in the observer mode. The use of the vernacular by Kalman is an ironic strategy: the awkward spacing; the non-specific images; the ‘monumentalised’ saltshaker given value beyond its worth; the uncooked, unappetising, floating steak garnished only by a cursive ‘Florent’; the letters of ‘r’, ‘a’, ‘i’, ‘n’ and ‘s’, as raindrops; and, the inclusion of the weather report (changeable) on a printed menu (unchangeable), are all carefully calculated design decisions. These examples are deliberately unrefined and unsophisticated, a conscious rejection of “high-brow theory and tasteful elitism.” (Farrelly, 1998: 12) But they are ultimately ironic because of the necessity for the viewer to understand that these tactics are intentional, that for example the awkward spacing is deliberate, and that the combination of weather details and a menu (or vice versa) is purposely anomalous. Such use of irony relies on shared values and knowledge. As Gray writes,

\begin{quote}
In certain cases the context of an ironical comment will make clear the true meaning Intended. But more often a writer will have to rely on the reader sharing the values and knowledge in order for his or her meaning to be understood. (Gray, 1992: 153)
\end{quote}

In this instance it is an understanding of design standards and visual references in order for the communication to be successful, for the viewer to perceive these as humorous and clever as opposed to primitive and careless. There is no direct statement about the intent, only reliance that the audience is not visually naïve.
One of the appeals of irony to the viewer is the feeling of confidence bestowed in them by a visual narrator who prefers suggestion to statement. In this situation the viewer is offered an opportunity to ‘complete the message’, signalling a degree of trust and belief in the viewer’s capacity to make the necessary associations between word and image by the mediator.

Figure 47 shows a magazine advertisement created by M&Co for the fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi’s first print campaign. The reason for its inclusion is as a point of comparison to the advertisement for Nike produced by David Carson. Even though it may seem ineffective to compare advertisements for different products the exercise still emphasises the vastly different levels of involvement by the visual narrator. For instance, in the Mizrahi advertisement, it would be difficult to produce a visual narrator with less engagement or presence.

There is no suggestion of image manipulation, instead a straightforward, pseudo-documentary, behind-the-scenes photograph that describes a part of the clothes making process – the fitting session. Shot by a young British documentary photographer, and appearing in Vogue, Interview and W, this image is markedly different to the overtly stylised images common in much fashion photography. It has a well-balanced composition – the gutter of the magazine unobtrusively dividing the image into the action of the foreground (right) and the background (left). The subjects themselves seem unaware of the presence of the photographer; no one is looking directly into the camera, which is a common method of drawing attention to the construction of the image, and therefore the process and the presence of a designer. This lack of orchestration results in this advertisement being described as having an “informal note.”

(KALMAN, 1998: 176)

Similarly the typography is treated in a manner than denies the involvement of a specific designer. Firstly, the words – Isaac Mizrahi,
Bergdorf Goodman – are informative, providing a caption for the shot rather than creating any ambiguity. Secondly, they are placed in a predictable position – in the part of the image that is light and consistent in tone, providing ample contrast for the black letters to be easily read. This visually logical placement of the text may not preclude the designer, but it does little to emphasis an individual set of design decisions. Nor has the visual narrator created any visual dissonance, which can turn the viewer’s attention towards the act of designing rather than the subject of the advertisement: they leave no idiosyncratic gestures, they remain transparent, or rather anonymous.

Curiously, this aspect of the anonymous designer/author is mirrored in the photograph. The fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi is shielded by the model; his face not shown, preferring Instead to expose the dress. Although we can be sure the decision by Kalman to choose this shot was not because of its metaphorical value - its evocation of the anonymous graphic designer – it is, consistent with this narratorial mode, a reflection of his intention to, wherever possible, foreground the product, whether it be a garment or an advertisement, over the creator.

Figure 4.8. As the title suggests Chairman Rolf Fehlbaum, is an exploration of the work and life of Rolf Fehlbaum, chairman of the Swiss furniture company Vitra. What is unusual about this book is that it avoids the standard design publication structure: a slick documentation of the design process and the products; essays written by critics and lifelong collaborators/colleagues; as well as, personal asides, musings and anecdotes by the designer themself. Instead, Kalman has delivered a photographic essay running just under 600 pages, creating a loose narrative through which to investigate not only Fehlbaum’s work, but chairs in general.

Again, the visual narrator disappears behind a sequence of images (selected from Fehlbaum family snapshots, stock images and photographs from the Vitra archives) (Kalman, 1998: 353) that are at times clearly a part of a visual sentence, and at others, seemingly
In the beginning, people went over doors tonight.

Eventually someone came inside sitting.

and their nights lying down.

figure 49
random. (figure 4.9) Kalman had said to Fehlbaum, “Come on, we’ll make a fairly tale. It doesn’t have to be chronological, not very picture has to be clear and obvious to everybody, and not everything thing has to be accurate. It’s just a metaphor.” (p.352)

This ambiguity or lack of overt direction, as well as the ‘anonymous’ photographs lessen the perception of direct narratorial involvement, or at least, of the sense that a visual narrator is personally motivated in the process of mediation – making decisions that are reflective of individual biases or judgements. There is no evidence of image manipulation or unusual cropping, and the full-bleed images are placed in the most logical positions – with the main focus of the images being central to the page: the content, not their delivery, is premium. Therefore, the only evidence of a design decision is the selection and ordering of the pictures, which is occasionally arbitrary but more often that not a grouping of images which share the same theme: famous buildings, film stills, portrait paintings, office environments, fellow designers, etc.15 Because of the mutual content these sequences have a natural relationship that precludes obvious design intervention. Once more, the viewer experiences autonomy – provoked but never coerced into making the intended connections.

The minimal text also does little to create an awareness of the visual narrator. Acting more as section headings than explanatory prose, it appears scattered through the book: “In the beginning / people spent their days upright / and their nights lying down. / Eventually someone invented sitting.” And later, “1953: Rolf’s father Will Fehlbaum, goes to America and sees a chair that blows his mind. / (Fehlbaum is obsessed with chairs) / He begins to collect them like people collect bugs.” Although it is informal at times (‘sees a chair that blows his mind’) the text is still largely descriptive, rather than interpretive, adding to the impersonal tone of the design.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Fehlbaum approached Kalman to design this book, as he claims a shared love of the “anonymous stuff,” (or the ‘vernacular’ as Kalman would have described it), which to him is “more interesting than the world of ‘authored’ design that I
inhabit professionally.” (cited in Kalman, 1998: 352) But apart from the obvious characteristic of ‘anonymity’ that is evidenced in this work, there is also evidence of ‘irony’. Although never explicitly stated in the publication, the exterior was modelled on a copy of The Thoughts of Chairman Mao (commonly referred to as ‘the little red book’) - the now famous manifesto of the Chinese Communist leader, Mao Zedong. While the obvious play is on the word ‘chairman’, (Fehlbaum is not only the chairman of Vitra but also a man who has a passion for chairs), it would be erroneous to assume that the only reference is in relation to nomenclature. Given Kalman’s preference for provocation, it is more than likely that his intention was political.

This use of irony – attaining meaning without making a direct statement – again, demands a ‘shared knowledge’ between the audience and the visual narrator. But it is important to remember that this required knowledge is of the associations of an historical artefact, and less so of the designer/author Kalman’s political beliefs. It is not a required knowledge of the visual narrator’s ideological persuasion – of which there is little evidence. This is in contrast to design that is delivered from the idiosyncratic mode, where an understanding of the visual narrators values and attitudes is a precursor to understanding the intention of the work. Finally, the focus towards the external, ‘shared knowledge’, rather than towards an internal, ‘subject knowledge’ of the visual narrator, further erodes the perceived level of involvement of the visual narrator in the implicit mode, as they are seemingly inconsequential to the communication process.

If you are familiar with Kalman’s work it is not difficult to identify, which suggests strong evidence of the designer, perhaps making his work, more typical of the idiosyncratic mode. But, it is important to note that recognising a piece of work as that of a particular designer is not evidence of an idiosyncratic approach. Again, this distinction between the designer/author and the visual narrator arises. Kalman’s strong authorial presence can be attributed to his absence at the narratorial level. We know it is Kalman’s work, precisely because he is nowhere to be found in it. Scholes and Kellogg explore this
scenario in a literary context:

The result of the disappearance of the narrator is not the refining away of the artist but a continual reminder of his presence – as if god were omnipresent and invisible, yet one could continually hear Him breathing. Like Joyce, he (James) does not intrude in his own person into the narrative, but the ineluctable rigidity of his style makes him always visible. He wears only one mask, and that one looks exactly like his face. (1966: 270)

It is this idea that makes an understanding of distance such a useful design tool, because it explains the paradox of the 'undesigned' or the neutral design. A style of absence is not an absence of style; rather it is the distancing of the designer at the point of narrating, not at the point of designing.

The recurrent strategies of anonymity and irony function in Kalman's work in a number of ways. I have discussed how the anonymity exhibited by the visual narrator in this mode enables the audience to experience a sense of autonomy when interpreting the message, an experience similar to the reader of a text written in the 'dramatic' mode (the literary equivalent of the implicit mode). "One important rhetorical function effected by the dramatic mode," writes Leaks "is to persuade the reader that he sees and ultimately judges for himself." (1966: 163) The same can be said for the viewer of design. Even though they may be shown particular material that encourages a certain response, they are not being guided by the visual narrators response to that material – again the visual narrator describes (through words and images) rather than interprets the information. The argument for this mode is therefore the degree of impartiality that the viewers feel is displayed, rather than their own, complete independence.

And just as an audience's experience of autonomy is a consequence of the 'anonymous' visual narrator, this research proposes that the audience's feeling of confidence (that is, the experience of an author confiding in them) is a result of an ironic visual narrator. As
I have discussed, when using irony the mediator depends on the viewer to understand this visual strategy for the communication to be successful – such dependence signalling a degree of trust in the viewer's ability to make the correct interpretation. ('Successful' and 'correct' refers to message fidelity in context of the designer's intention.) But apart from the correct identification of the tone, the viewer is often required to close the cognitive gaps that appear in a message delivered by a visual narrator renowned for their use of understatement and their preference for allusion. This process requires the viewers to contribute to the activation of the message, creating a more equal partnership between the participating agents (visual narrator and viewer); the viewer is no longer relegated to the passive role of message reception, and instead plays an active role in message formation. However, this new role offered to the viewer is more specific than 'participation', which indicates involvement but does not suggest the level of 'shared values and knowledge' necessary for successful Ironic communication. For this reason the viewer's response to this strategy is better described by the term 'collusion'. In this mode it is the viewer, rather than the mediator who is personally motivated and showing commitment to the message dissemination, rising to the challenge offered by the visual narrator and their ironic message.

These two strategies – anonymity and irony – heighten the perception of the visual narrator's absence and detachment, which functions to increase the distance between the designer and the outcome.

THE FUNCTION OF THE IMPLICIT VISUAL NARRATOR

When the designer engages in a strategy of reduced distance, as seen in the instance of the idiosyncratic mode, the likely audience experience is a sense of identification and authenticity, and the audience response – trust and empathy. And, as I have discussed, the primary strength of this approach is that it effectively engages with specific audiences – it creates highly personalised or targeted messages through mediums that occupy the public domain. But even
though it can create an audience that is loyal and forgiving, it can also create an audience that feels overly manipulated, directed and altogether alienated by a visual narrator who clearly expresses a singular perspective.

In order to avoid the scenario of overt mediatory control some designers opt for an increase in distance, which leads the audience to believe they are more independent in the communicative process. According to my model a visual narrator who is seemingly ‘absent’ and ‘detached’ creates this increase in distance: ‘absence’ expressed by the minimal manipulation of word and image, and ‘detachment’, by the preference for suggestion instead of statement. It is the viewer’s perception of independence and their participation or collusion that, I will argue, are the greatest strengths of the implicit mode.

THE STRENGTHS OF AN IMPLICIT VISUAL NARRATOR

I have briefly discussed how an ‘anonymous’ visual narrator creates an audience who experiences autonomy, but it is the audience’s response of ‘criticality’ that is crucial in understanding the potential strengths (and weaknesses) of an increase in distance. The German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1896 – 1956) experimented with the notion that an increase in distance – referred to as the ‘alienation effect’\(^6\) - enabled the audience to engage critically with the content. Brecht rejected what he perceived to be “cheap theatrical emotionalism” (Lukács, 1996: 347) - theatre that seduced the audience into identifying with the hero and his tumultuous life, and thus dragging them along for an emotional ride that is a result of the fated hero rather than any engagement with political or social issues. So in an attempt to remove the possibility of the audience identifying with the hero, Brecht destroyed the illusion of reality created by dramatic theatre, which would in turn reveal the hero as a prop rather than a ‘real’ person who could suffer such fortunes or misfortunes.

Although Brecht’s strategy of exposing the illusion of reality may seem contrary to the strategy of the visual narrator in the implicit

\(^6\) The ‘alienation effect’ was achieved by: “the abolition of all ‘impressiveness’ in the acting, of all lyricism and all ‘pathos’: al fresco acting; the austerity of the set, as if to eliminate any eye-catching relief (cf. the dark ochre and ash colours in Mother Courage); the ‘flat’ lighting; the commentary placards to direct the readers’ attention to the external context of the conjuncture (reality), etc.” (Althusser, 1996: 372)

It should be noted that Althusser sees these technical elements as not the sole contributors of alienation, which he claims has too often been the interpretation.
mode - who does little to highlight the artificial - the concept of 'alienation' is still relevant to my model. While Brecht alienates the audience through various technical distancing devices – sparse set, flat lighting, and scene disjunction – the implicit visual narrator never reveals enough about themselves for audience identification to become possible. Even though the methods are different the endpoint is the same - an audience, according to Brecht's writings, "that would be distanced, thoughtful, experimental, the reverse of illusionary empathy and identification," (Adorno, 1996: 353) that is, an audience who is removed enough to maintain criticality.

Apart from the more obvious reference to issues of audience identification and empathy revealed in writings about Brecht, there are many other parallels with the implicit mode that make it a worthy comparison. Brecht, it seemed "rejected aesthetic individuation as an ideology", (Adorno, 1996: 353) a similar position to the implicit visual narrator whose mark making offers no sign of personal idiosyncrasy. And, in a manner similar to the designer who creates open-ended or incomplete message, Brecht creates an 'unfinished' play that requires the viewer to answer, or find their own way out of the issues raised. All of these approaches are in direct opposition to those preferred by the idiosyncratic narrator who, thrives on the emotive over the cognitive; prefers exaggerated expression to austerity; provides solutions for deficient answers; and, most significantly, relies purely on viewer identification for its success.

Having an audience adopt a critical attitude, that is, making them think, draw their own conclusions, and exercise moral, ethical, and political beliefs, is a strategy found in designed outcomes that do not aim to deliver a definitive position, but instead explore or question issues. The Post Human, (1992) exhibition catalogue designed by Dan Friedman for the Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art (USA), exemplifies such an approach.

With the use of stock photography and large print text this
publication is easily compared to the *Chairman* book, which it precedes by 5 years. Although Friedman's catalogue is more text intensive than Kalman's work there is a shared commitment to a restrained visual language that, again, suppresses an individual's designer-ly decisions, exposing instead the photographic content, which remains largely intact – unfettered and un-manipulated. Even though a visual narrator is hinted at, by use of the diagonal to split the images and the white text boxes with black type (that occasionally change point size), their importance diminishes as these design decisions are repeated throughout the introductory essay pages, making them seem automated rather than individual – an approach so unlike that of the idiosyncratic visual narrator in *Ray Gun* whose presence is constantly reinforced/reintroduced with each new grid on each new page. As Poynor writes,

> What makes these catalogues so fresh to eyes jaded by a surfeit of unnecessary styling is that they use only as much ‘design’ as they need. It is not that they look undesigned - both books have a strong image and presence as objects. But this is precisely because Friedman has the confidence to allow the revelatory picture material to speak for itself. (POYNOR, 1993: 12)

While it is apparent that an implicit narrator has been employed in this work, it is still not apparent as to why this mode has been used, or why it is appropriate or successful in the delivery of this kind of material. Firstly, this narratorial mode was the ideal vehicle to deliver content on post-human-ness. The implicit visual narrator erases all evidence of personal mannerism and idiosyncrasy, a perfect accomplice to the plot which reveals an increasing predilection for plastic surgery, as well as the potential for modification at a molecular level (genetic engineering) – procedures aimed at the erasure of ‘imperfection’.

Secondly, I will argue that the strength of this mode is that it enables a level of criticality that is crucial to a publication that attempts to both ‘explore’ and ‘question’, aims that are stated on the
inside cover:

This book explores the implications of genetic engineering, plastic surgery, mind expansion, and other forms of body alteration, to ask whether our society is developing a new model of the human being. It poses the question of whether our society is creating a new kind of post-human person that replaces previous constructions of the self. (Detrich, 1992)

To enable exploration and questioning to occur an atmosphere of impartiality, open-ended-ness, and intrigue needs to be created. There should be no dominant, singular perspectives; no evidence of a predetermined agenda or ulterior motives; and, no dissenting voices or declarations of support. Instead, the information should be presented in a way that causes consideration and reconsideration to be constant states of the reader/viewer. The reader/viewer must be made to think rather than be delivered a moral stance or ethical position. They must feel that their decisions or associations are arrived at independently, that they are coming to their own conclusions. The absent and detached implicit visual narrator is ideal for this role. By using stock photography (which negates originality, a degree of control and all personal idiosyncrasy) and accompanying text (which does not caption, but instead suggests potential relationships and meanings between text and image), the implicit narrator successfully completes the task of silent provocation rather than fervent persuasion.

The selection and placement of the images generates contrasts and extremes, as if outlining the boundaries of the arguments – showing both angles of the debate. Figure 50 depicts a pregnant woman alongside a photograph of Pro-Life and Pro-Choice demonstrators, with the accompanying statement, “The issue of using genetic engineering to ‘improve’ the foetus will potentially become much more highly charged than the controversy over abortion.” Neither the visual or verbal texts take a direct position on abortion or genetic engineering, only the written suggestion of a potential heated debate placed with two ‘innocuous’ images that are media staples.
On most people's lovely face, Steven Silver would be a hit.
A broad, blue-eyed, soft-spoken New York model, she has
steadily parceled out the money for two Saint Laurent
in Paris and has gained the cover of fashion magazines. But
until recently, when Ms. Silver looked to the mirror she saw
less perfection and more flaws, "I was self-absorbed," Ms.
Silver said. "The model school taught me how to put
myself forward as much as my true self."

Ms. Silver achieved her ultimate goal by losing weight.
She is not alone.
The New York Times, 1 February 1972, food page
Stories about breast implants, crash diets, and mood drugs
have moved from the health and beauty pages to the front page.

The public has been shocked by explosive testimony about
sexual harassment and by the sensational rape trial of public
figures. Questions about the new boundaries of appropriate inter-
personal behavior are altering unprecedented interest. There is
a growing sense that we should take control over our bodies and
our sexual circumstances rather than just accepting what we
inherited.

Social and scientific trends are converging to shape a new con-
cept of the self, a self-reinforced with what it means to be a human
being. The不断完善 emphasis on inner mental, social and meta-
mental elements is being augmented by growing sense that we
must re-define our belonging. The Freudian notion of the "psychological per-
spective" is becoming itself a new self that encourages individuates to
display with the attendant analysis of self-discovery. Childhood
experiences molded men's behavior. There is a new sense that one can
simply construct the new and self-aware, freed from the constraints of
men's past and civic and cultural gender roles.
a pregnant Demi Moore on the cover of Vanity Fair and a 'press shot' of a demonstration. Abandoned are the more sensationalist pictures of genetic mutations or 'murdered babies' favoured by those with a particular agenda. The viewer is left to ponder the information, perhaps rethink their understanding of genetic engineering.

On first glance the viewer may read figure 51 to be a depiction of a newborn baby hooked up to life saving technology, and possibly below the doctor responsible for this medical feat. There could even be a sense of relief by the viewer that they live in a time where previous illness and loss of life can be prevented. Yet a closer look at the image will reveal a caption that identifies the medical practitioner as Dr Jack Kevorkian with his 'Suicide Machine.' What was possibly a celebration of modern technology, prior to reading the fine print, becomes an opportunity to examine the role of interventionist medical procedures, and perhaps the contradictions that surround technologies and practices that save a premature baby on one hand, and yet enable, what some would perceive to be premature death on the other. No direct reference is made to these images in the body of the essay, so they become visual provocations that again, do not offer answers, but propose differing ways of understanding the presented material.

And finally, the implicit narrator who presents intriguing and contradictory statements encourages exploration, independent discovery and inquiry. (figure 52) By placing the words 'With the embrace of artificiality, realism as we used to know it may no longer be possible' over an image of a Barbie Doll and next to a series of portraits of different women that are strangely similar, an ambiguous relationship is set up that motivates the viewer to resolve the relationships. To do this the reader could turn to the picture captions at the back of the book which would reveal that Barbie is the original 1959 model, and that the portraits are if fact the six versions of Betty Crocker, the imaginary person placed on General Mills packaging from 1936-1986, no doubt, to imbue the products with all of the characteristics that are associated with this homely/motherly woman. She has been 'updated' over the years to stay relevant to
the potential consumer.

Even though the uncaptioned images have been resolved, their relationship to the text is still uneasy. It seems to suggest that which was real, (which was in fact artificial - Barbie and Betty Crocker), will be replaced by the artificial – causing the viewer to perhaps question their understanding of what ‘realism’ is, and whether it was ever ‘possible’. This double page spread seems to pointedly suggest that the viewer reconsider any nostalgic thoughts about how it was once possible to demarcate the real and the artificial. So rather than attempting to define the terms used in the ‘post human’ conversation, the visual narrator contributes to the viewers precarious relationship with the text by exposing Betty Crocker as a fake. The viewer is asked to rethink what they thought they knew. And think again.

In literary theory it is argued that “Impersonal presentation creates a more personal involvement of the reader with the story,” (Leaksa, 1996: 163) a statement that would seem to dissolve the differing viewer experiences of material narrated from an idiosyncratic or implicit mode. But it is important to emphasise that the viewer’s personal involvement differs in kind rather than degree: involvement in the idiosyncratic mode being directed towards the mediator or narrator – an involvement extracted through feelings of trust and empathy, whereas the involvement in the implicit mode is directed towards the content or what has been said, rather than how it is being said, (or who says it) - a consequence of narratorial absence and detachment. It is this kind of audience response – identified as ‘collusion’ by this research - that is the basis for another of implicit mode’s strength. By making the audience feel like an integral part of message formation, rather than purely digesters, the likelihood of the message being retained, and identified with, by the audience is increased.

Tibor Kalman’s use of ironic communication that depends upon the audience’s visual literacy and their ability to join-the-dots, has
openly discussed this approach. He claims such messages have greater retention “because it's up to you to close the circle you become a participant in the process, and the information stays with you much longer.” (Farrelly, 1998: 12) I would also argue that ironic communication is an effective tool in targeting a specific audience, although in a manner that is different to that of the implicit visual narrator.

It is for this reason that irony becomes an increasingly coherent tactic to use for Restaurant Florent – a “hip down-town diner” (Lupton and Miller, 1996: 162) - located in New York. To leave much ‘unsaid’ speaks volumes to the targeted audience, it becomes a way of attracting those who can ‘share the joke’, and excluding those who don’t ‘get it’. As Wayne Booth writes:

*Irony is always thus in part a device for excluding as well as including, and those who are included, those who happen to have the necessary information to grasp the irony, cannot but derive at least part of their pleasure from a sense that others are excluded.* (1961: 304)

This process of inclusion and exclusion parallels the action of alienation and recruitment produced by a visual narrator operating in the idiosyncratic mode. And while the end result may be the same – the targeting of a specific audience through dual actions – the methods are quite different. The visual narrator’s strategy in the idiosyncratic mode is subversion rather than ‘irony’, requiring the audience to identify with the subversive mediator. On the other hand, the implicit visual narrator exposes not themselves, but instead incomplete communication, which requires completion. This ‘collusion’ signals a degree of visually literacy (not only the ability to name pictures, but decipher heavily coded images) – a necessity for conversation within contemporary Western society. Therefore, a viewer that conspires in the successful delivery of ironic communication displays visual acuity, and as a result, cultural citizenship. (Likewise, it could also be said, that the idiosyncratic modes aims for a more tribal citizenship) Either way, there is a
process of (sorting, filtering) that effectively engages a specific audience, and equally importantly, estranges another.

3.2 THE WEAKNESSES OF AN IMPLICIT VISUAL NARRATOR

The ability of the implicit visual narrator to create an audience that is both critical and collusive comes at a cost as an increase in distance can also result in an unintentional increase in alienation felt by the audience. Unless properly managed a communication strategy that is cool can turn cold. The open-ended can seem impenetrable, esoteric, and the intentionally unfinished can read not as an offering to the audience but instead an abandonment of narratorial responsibility. In this instance the sacrifice of overt control made by the seemingly detached and absent visual narrator may be too great as the audience, weighed down by confusion, doubt and frustration, surrenders their commitment to the process. This is potentially the greatest weakness of the implicit mode.

Apart from the possibility of viewer fatigue or impatience, there is another weakness that takes the form of an ethical/moral question surrounding the exclusionary tactic of ironic communication favoured by this mode. For instance, the type of collusion that occurs through Kalman’s ironic, vernacular, visual language, is not perhaps, as innocuous as either getting or not getting the joke – and that is when the joke is at the expense of the visual language through which it is mediated. In this situation the appropriation of the vernacular is patronising rather than celebratory, as it can “project a barrier between a sophisticated ‘us’ and a naïve, spontaneous ‘them’”, where “the ordinary commercial artefact is an innocent object that fails to comprehend its own genius.”17 (LUPTON AND MILLER, 1996: 158) Or as Jeffery Keedy more simply states, the use of the vernacular is tantamount to the designer it is saying, “Hey look at what this so-called illustrator did... isn’t it corny? I could never do anything that silly, I’m too sophisticated, I really wish I could but I’m just too clever to do anything like that.” (1994: 102)

17. Lupton and Abbot Miller also write, “yet while creative director Tibor Kalman publicly promoted non-design, he built his career on the mystique of the artist-as-witch doctor, the impresario of taste who turns lead into gold, low into high.” (1996: 161)

18. Kalman: “What I’m appropriating is a process opposed to a look, okay? And the process is how to think about something in a clear and uncomplicated and unfiltered and uneducated way.” (CITED IN HELLER, 1990: 73-4)

While Kalman is careful to distance himself from this critique by
claiming appropriation of "a process not a look" it is a blurry line of which the viewer may well not be aware. The point of collusion between the visual narrator and the viewer could be interpreted as the demarcation between 'us' and 'them', high and low culture, rather than the more innocent discovery (and delight) in a shared and appreciated, simple rather than simplistic, visual language. There is the potential for this type of communication to slip into the territory of smugness or mockery.

Although, when discussing the weaknesses of each of the modes, it is important not to criticise their lack of ability in achieving what is possible from the other narratorial distances. For example, it would be unreasonable to identify the inability of the audience to find a "kindred spirit" or a sense of intimacy with the implicit visual narrator, as a flaw. Likewise, to fault the idiosyncratic narrator for not being impartial, is also inequitable. The blame at this point lies not with the modes themselves but rather with the designer who has chosen an inappropriate or less effective visual narrator through which to communicate their message. It is therefore important for a designer to manage to control each mode, so they do not transform into weaknesses.

5.3 THE IMPERATIVE VISUAL NARRATOR

The characteristics of an imperative narrator

In many ways the idiosyncratic and implicit visual narrators fill the void left by each others particular approaches: the absence of the visual narrator in the implicit mode being countered by the possibility of a very present visual narrator in the idiosyncratic mode, and similarly, a 'detached' visual narrator being offset by an 'engaged' visual narrator, in the implicit and idiosyncratic modes, respectively. But as I have previously suggested, my model also identifies two other visual narrators who exhibit the qualities of either engagement and presence, or, detachment and absence. This research refers to these respective modes as imperative or esoteric.
Figure 53: A diagram illustrating the relationship between different kinds of distance and degree of distance.

- **Kind of Distance**
  - Engagement
  - Esoteric

- **Degree of Distance**
  - Absence
  - Presence

- **Impressive**
  - Implicit
  - Detachment
It is the imperative mode that is the focus of this next section.

Although the imperative visual narrator inhabits a quadrant that is equally bound by detachment and presence, (figure 53) it is best described as a derivative or an exaggeration of the implicit mode. Even though mediatory existence is strongly evident there is little indication of a prevailing personality and subsequently a viewer of this work is left with a feeling of being firmly guided as to what to feel and think by an invisible hand. This mediator cannot be easily located through the usual means, such as typeface choice, image manipulation, and compositional decisions. They are similar to the implicit visual narrator as they reveal little of themselves. They seem objective, and yet they are defiantly ‘someone’ opposed to ‘no one’ who is easily assumed to inhabit the implicit mode. This ‘someone’ favours the explicit and direct, they summarise and interpret, they prefer to tell rather than show, and for these reasons they exhibit characteristics of an idiosyncratic visual narrator. But equally, this ‘someone’ is does not display individual features – they do not exhibit obvious personal preference, whimsy or idiosyncrasy. Simultaneously, they are from nowhere\(^\text{19}\) and everywhere, and for this reason they are portrayed as both present and detached.

Just as the idiosyncratic and implicit modes were founded on the literary notions of the first and third person, the imperative visual narrator is based on literature’s omniscient narrator. In a literary context this narrator is understood to hold ‘the view from God’, borrowing the points of view of both internal and external narrators – delivering observations from an outsider’s perspective as well the inner thoughts or musings of a specific character. But what is most pertinent to my model is the omniscient narrator’s “readiness to place himself between the reader and the story to clarify a point, to make a confident interpretation of what otherwise may remain ambiguous and bothersome.” (Leaksa, 1996: 163) Likewise, the visual narrator in this mode is characterised by their ability to deliver information that is often essential or urgent and for that reason clarity and economy are paramount. This is why I have termed it the imperative mode.
point of view
OMNISCIENT

design mode
IMPERATIVE
rational
stable
factual
informative
didactic
authoritative
sterile
superior
interventional
judgemental
Just as this research has isolated the visual mannerisms that contribute to the categorisation of a designed outcome as either idiosyncratic or implicit, it is necessary to similarly identify the design decisions that lead to work being described in the terms in figure 54. What are the formal devices that characterise work of a visual narrator who is both present and detached? How is this work both similar and different to the ‘boundary’ modes – the personal and the impersonal? And, why does this research claim the imperative mode as having the greatest distance? What is the function of this level of distance? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this strategic position?

**THE VISUAL MANNERISMS OF AN IMPERATIVE NARRATOR**

Examples of information design – maps, charts, diagrams, timetables, instructions, signage – will be used to discuss the rhetorical dimension of the most distanced mode of narration proposed by my research – the imperative. Since information design is defined as that which is “concerned with conveying essential information to the user with the least distraction and ambiguity.” (Wildber, 1989: 7), it is perhaps unsurprising that my research identifies the imperative as the preferred visual narration for this genre.

It is usually at this point that I introduce a list of designers whose work epitomises that of a particular mode, for instance David Carson and Tibor Kalman as the respective archetypal idiosyncratic and implicit narrators. But in this instance I have introduced a genre – information design – rather than an individual. It is familiar, universal, frequent, conventional and ordinary. Like the implicit mode it could be referred to as ‘anonymous’, but unlike the implicit mode its anonymity is derived from narratorial detachment rather than narratorial absence. Detachment in this instance is a result of remoteness or superiority rather than indifference or disinterest. Yet such work is not ‘undesigned’. It is precise, ordered, clear, logical, rational and unambiguous, even mechanical, leading the viewer to assume mediating involvement although unable to sight it directly.
for it is difficult to separate the form from the content, and the delivery from the delivered in this material.

I will also examine Colors magazine designed by Tibor Kalman, as a way of describing the difference between the implicit and the imperative mode — how a subtle shift in a designer’s visual language can fundamentally change the viewer experience. Interestingly, it is more likely that a designer will select a visual narrative position between the bounds of the implicit and the imperative or the idiosyncratic and the esoteric, but rarely is there evidence of a large shift in the degree of distance — from absence to presence. The modification is along the kind of distance axis, between the poles of detachment and engagement. This suggests a preferential way of working that is modified accordingly. For example, the implicit visual narrator chooses the imperative mode over the idiosyncratic mode as a means of direct statement.

5.3.1 INFORMATION DESIGN

Fearful of the potential multiple readings offered by the photographers and illustrators whose metaphor and illusion seek evocation rather than enunciation, the imperative visual narrator finds stability in a written language that seeks to explain, instruct and inform. For this reason they often (but not always, as I will show and discuss), use words. Information design is structured according to the precepts of utility: the heading at top of the page in the largest or boldest text, possibly underlined to assure the reader of its importance; text size descending in order of importance, usually justified left; grids clearly evident, the horizontal and the vertical rules often left in to demarcate territory, emphasising order and structure; images sitting separately from the text, rarely are boundaries breeched; often large amounts of text, signifying comprehensiveness, at a small point size signifying economy; information of corresponding significance at corresponding size; elements reduced into their purest form, the perpendicular preferred; abstract lines or marks, translated in legends; and, colour used sparingly, but systematically.

207
The 'Tax file number declaration' form (figure 55) has many of the listed characteristics common to work in the imperative mode: bold heading, economic use of colour, conventional typeface, a strong use of the horizontal and vertical with grid lines included. It is an authoritative piece of design that systematically leads the user through a series of questions that are clearly ordered by a numerical sequence. Significantly, the style of the user's written response is pre-designed by the white boxes, which direct and confine their script. This approach supports the commanding tone of the text, which poses questions answerable with a 'yes' or a 'no', (except for the personal details). The overall design creates a user that conforms to the demands of the page, obeying the implicit (e.g., boxes) and explicit instructions (e.g., black or blue pens, block letters and 'X's) to ensure the successful completion or the task.

The imperative visual narrator is also evident in the 'bus timetable'. (figure 56) Again, they have an authoritative presence, using a highly structured grid to deliver the information in a clear and efficient manner. Any visual shorthand, such as the shift to bold numbers to signal the change from 'am' to 'pm' in the listed times is reiterated by written text (the footer 'am – normal type / pm – bold type) to ensure clarity. The information is precise (location and time), and conclusive leaving little possibility of doubt or alternative readings for a viewer who is literate in timetable reading. (It does require the viewer to understand how to line up the location and the route number to reveal the expected time, a skill assumed of the majority of public transport users.)

The map of the London Underground, (figure 57) designed by Henry Beck in 1933 became a template for future visual transportation design. The imperative visual narrator is most obviously recognised in this piece by the translation of unstructured geographical information (no consistency, no patterns), into a cohesive and constant diagram. By creating a representation of the natural and built environment, this visual narrator has reduced the linear elements to variations of 45 degrees, editing out any 'unnecessary'
Figure 58

Figure 59
information that could prove detrimental to the effectiveness of
the communication. Even the Thames River has been 're-routed' to
ensure consistency, its inclusion essential as a point of orientation
for the viewers of the map. The use of colour is also indicative of an
imperative visual narrator - it is descriptive rather than decorative
as the seven separate train lines are represented by an individual
colour.

Although words are usually preferable, images are at times
necessary, if not essential in the delivery of information that is set in
stages (such as assembly instructions), or is representational (such
as scientific diagrams, maps, plans, symbols – pictograms, icons,
etc.). Instructional images, usually accompanied by written step-by-
step prompts, are often basic outlines of objects with arrows and
dotted lines showing movement.

In the figure 58 the imperative visual narrator has reduced the music
conductor into an outline and their movements to a series of arrows,
the three drawings depicting three rhythms – 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 - as
captioned. At the bottom of the diagram, there is also the text
'The right hand (with baton) beats time. The left hand indicates the
degree of loudness required.' – a combination of words and images
to ensure clarity, and depth of information.

In a sequence explaining how to replace cutter blades, (figure 59)
the visual narrator has used two further techniques common to
the imperative mode: cropping and colour. Each frame depicts
only the part of the cutter that is relevant to the particular stage,
emphasising through colour the specific part that is the focus of
each step. The imperative visual narrator controls the framing,
limiting the viewers access to content and revealing only what they
regard as essential. In doing this they display their role as an editor,
removing extraneous detail whilst maintaining information that is
intrinsic to their objectives. Each stage is numbered and supported
by explanatory text to circumvent ambiguity and miscommunication.
This constant reiteration whether through colour, words or arrows
serves to remind the viewer of an ever-present mediator, who tightly
8. Pick up the teacup from the left hand. Wipe the top, then place the teacup in front of the water jar in the position where the tea bowl was previously.

9. Behind the ambient in preparation for dipping the tea spoon. Use your the tea spoon with the right hand and wipe the other hand. The second tea spoon, wipe the sides of the spoon (lay the spoon on top of the tea container).

10. Still holding the teacup in the left hand, take the tea while holding the teacup and set it next to the tea container. Pick up the bowl with your right hand and move it slightly closer to you.
controls the content, yet remains unknowable.

In the imperative visual narrators' pursuit of efficiency and clarity they develop impossible perspectives that reveal, as in the picture of the British Library (figure 60), information that is unavailable to the naked eye. This diagram, using a two-point perspective, shows two levels of the library, removing the walls and ceilings, lowering the ground floor, and placing the viewer (with the visual narrator) hovering, from a point of view that would defy the laws of physics. As such the image displays an "unnatural wisdom," seeming again authoritative and correct, and creating an audience response that has little option but to comply - to use the information as it has been intended - as an orientation map.

Should an image escape such reduction, and be presented instead as a photograph or an illustration, there are a list of likely characteristics. The imperative visual narrator favours colour photography, as it reveals information 'as it is most often seen' (the exception being medical and scientific imaging which presents information that is unattainable to the human eye because of either scale or location); or black and white photography, as it reveals all that is necessary for successful communication. Lighting, in both instances is 'flat' - no heavy shadows, or obscured details or suggestion of a time of day. Framing and cropping decisions would be utilitarian rather than aesthetic.

Figure 61 depicts a sequence of movements in a Japanese tea ceremony. On the left hand side, the host is pictured making tea from the perspective of the guest, the images to the right showing the host's perspective. Like a truly omniscient narrator, the perspective slips from host to guest, surrendering consistency for practicality. This ceremony is highly intricate and ritualised, requiring precision and accuracy if it is to be done correctly, which is why an imperative narrator is appropriate for this task. I would argue that the decision to use photography in this situation was largely functional rather than aesthetic. It is diagrammatic in its approach with closely framed images that focus the viewer's gaze toward
the necessary details. The photographic value of these images is marginal. For example, this medium has not been used because of its associations with realism nor is the black and white printing being used to manipulate the viewer's perception of the material, making it perhaps more nostalgic or sentimental. These decisions are purely utilitarian. It is clearly the most straightforward, efficient way to display such material.

In this mode illustration is also practical as opposed to expressive, serving to represent for example, generic individuals in generic situations doing generic activities. These 'people' are often genderless, of no particular age (possibly either a child or adult) and of no particular ethnicity. The advantage of using illustration in this instance is that highly prescriptive images can be produced. But apart from the level of content control, there is also the ability to depict potentially offensive material - delivering at times the unpalatable from a position distant enough so as not to confront, offend or repulse.

Take for example the image from a First Aid book. (figure 6a) Aside from the logistical, ethical and humane issues (either waiting for such wounds to occur or inflicting them upon a willing/unwilling subject) involved with photographing various lesions, there is also the potential of alienating the more squeamish members of an audience who find it difficult to look at real injuries. The imperative narrator is able to solve this problem by illustrating the event, but offering little interpretation.

What is common to all of these visual outcomes is the employment of a language that is steeped in the rhetoric of the rational and the objective. Any imagery, unlike their counterparts in the other modes, does not threaten to confuse the singular readings necessitated by the imperative mode. The information - both words and pictures - seem to be accurate and factual, rather than biased, borrowing the authority of scientific discourse to disguise what is often subjective information as actuality.
This association between information design and an imperative narrator has been made previously by the design theorist Ann Tyler, in the article “Shaping Belief: The role of the audience in visual communication.” (1992) Although Tyler does not use the term ‘imperative visual narrator’, she does use the phrase ‘omniscient voice’ to describe the delivery of information that is designed to educate an audience. In an argument very similar to my own, she claims, “the elimination of individuality and emotion suggests an omniscient voice and the presentation of fact.” (TYLER, 1992: 26)

Using the example of the Congaree Swamp brochure (map and guide), (figure 63) Tyler writes,

...various formal devices such as detailed illustration

*techniques, minor changes in scale, and a lack of tension in

*margin and spacing mitigate against an emotive response

*by the audience, while a heightened sense of order is

*achieved through the clearly visible organisational grid

*system." (p. 26)

She further states that the suggestion of “individual authorship” is negated through the absence of “expressive characteristics.” (p.26) My research would interpret this analysis by Tyler as support for the labelling of the visual narrator as both detached and present: present, because of a ‘heightened sense of order’, and detached because of the erasure of ‘individual authorship’ (remembering that detachment in this research refers to the lack of an individually motivated response to the content). Tyler's also comments that “the image lacks a sense of drama or emotion, eliminating the appearance of interpretation or perspective,” (p.26) further supporting the notion of detachment in this work.

5.3.2 COLORS

While information design is an archetypal site for an imperative visual narrator, it is not their only location. As I stated in the introduction, Colors magazine, designed from 1990 – 1995 by Tibor Kalman, displays many of the characteristics that are typical of a
### Japan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount (kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottles</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrol</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount (kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottles</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrol</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>318.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount (kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottles</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrol</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 65*
visual outcome that is designed in this mode. With the by-line ‘a magazine about the rest of the world’, this publication aimed to explore cultural similarity and difference through theme based issues - AIDS, sport, religion, travel, shopping to name a few. Interestingly, the 15 – 22 years old age group it was aimed at was very similar to that of Carson’s Ray Gun, yet there is a markedly different approach. Ray Gun is anti-authoritarian, highly idiosyncratic and unwillingly to claim control or expertise, whereas Colors is didactic, highly controlled and information rich, with a preference for words and images that are in accordance with the implicit mode – documentary style photography and ‘vanilla’ typography. (figure 64)

Yet unlike the implicit visual narrator, this mediator ensures the communication is unambiguous and immediate, which is why I have placed it in a different mode. Kalman himself claims that “design-wise the idea was to present information with a zero degree of design – as clearly and concisely as possible.” (Cited in Farrell, 1998: 13) And to achieve this Kalman has borrowed the tools of information design, favouring charts and diagrams where possible, (figure 65) and the unmediated photograph elsewhere, as he saw Colors as, “more like a series of textbooks about different subjects,” (Cited in Cullen, 1996: 13) than a magazine.

One of the distinguishing features of this magazine is the prolific use of the photographic image, much of which is in the tradition of documentary photography. People (individuals or groups) are presented to the viewer as “facing or slightly turned from the viewer, and looking directly out of the picture plane to make eye contact with the viewer,” writes Ann Tyler in her article “It’s a nice world after all: the vision of ‘difference’ in Colors”. (figure 66) She writes further that,

While the subjects build a bridge out to the viewer, the viewer also is made aware of the act of looking, thus creating an awareness of the picture plane surface. An invisible ‘wall’ is articulated between the audience and the subject. (1996: 3)
This statement supports the idea of the imperative visual narrator being present, as Tyler draws our attention to the fact that mediation is emphasised by the viewer's 'awareness of the picture plane surface.' Such awareness draws attention to the design process, destroying the possibility of this image appearing to be a natural, unmediated occurrence. This point highlights a difference between the style of documentary photography used by the implicit narrator who favours imagery that supports mediatory anonymity or absence. For example, in the implicit mode, even though subjects may be facing the photographer they are not looking directly into the lens, thus negating the potential for the subject and the viewer to create eye contact.

Lastly, the use of a verbal text that is neutral, factual and straightforward in tone supports the visual strategy of the imperative mode. Tyler describes the prose in the following way, "the caption-like manner of reporting: limited in length and utilising an omniscient, anonymous voice; is phrased to give a non-interpretive impression which also communicates objectivity." (1996: 3) The term 'non-interpretive' supports my labelling of the imperative mode as detached. The words provide contextualisation, description and further information, they do not offer juxtaposition or discordance. There are also questions posed in large, bold type, but they are usually answered by the text and images, or they are rhetorical.

Yet as much as the words and images, utilising the grammar of reporting, claim objectivity, this magazine is strongly editorial in attitude. Kalman openly admits an agenda and a desire to be an editor, "to use his skills as a communicator to 'change the way things are'". (Poyner, 2001b:153) Amongst the information is a carefully orchestrated position that denounces the ideologies of fascists, racists, homophobes and multinationals, to name a few - the information provided supports a specific editorial position rather than as the provisions of a balanced argument. Such an explicit perspective (in this instance condemnation) is another characteristic that places this magazine in the imperative rather than the implicit mode.
THE FUNCTION OF THE IMPERATIVE VISUAL NARRATOR

Not all communication benefits from being highly individualised, as is the case with the idiosyncratic mode - it is often not necessary for audiences to feel 'trust' and 'empathy' towards the visual narrator. Likewise, not all audiences need to respond with 'criticality' and 'collusion', as seen in the implicit mode. The absence and detachment exhibited by this visual narrator can cause ambiguity and confusion. But there are instances, as I have demonstrated, in which 'absoluteness' and precision of information is mandatory, and audience compliance and comprehension, is paramount. In this instance the type of distance controlled by the imperative visual narrator is useful.

3.1 THE STRENGTHS OF AN IMPERATIVE NARRATOR

Most information design – that which is aimed at informing, educating, explaining, directing – benefits from a confident and respected visual narrator. To present, for example, a 'swamp ecosystem' from a position that was anything other than authoritative would be unwise as the value of this type of communication is not in its expressive qualities, nor its ability to provoke criticality, but rather its ability to provide "dispassionate knowledge." This ability to provide what the audience perceives to be objective, rational, and factual information ('dispassionate knowledge') is crucial in an educational context where it is necessary that the viewers accept what is being presented. It is therefore the ability to manipulate the viewers' acceptance or compliance of the information that is the major strength of the imperative mode.

While authoritativeness is an obvious attribute in educational literature (particularly secondary schooling), there are further instances where this characteristic is advantageous. For example, although the bus timetable (Figure 56) is possibly best described as informational rather than educational ('what' rather than 'how' or 'why') it still benefits from an authoritative tone, and similarly, benefits from an audience that is compliant (if the audience did not
believe the information to be reliable to some degree, they would not consult the timetable and subsequently not use the service to their greatest advantage, causing complaints, decline in usage etc.) But perhaps more significantly authoritative mediation in this instance acts as a reflection of the organisations general reliability, efficiency, capability and competency. Imagine, for a moment, a timetable that is hand-rendered, with no straight lines, no consistent typeface, and little attention to issues of clarity. In this context the visual outcome is likely to be perceived as a reflection of this service's lack of professionalism and organisational skills, which could in turn raise issues of the expected quality of service. It is therefore, the ability to make an audience feel confident in the services offered or advice given that is another of the strengths of the imperative mode.

Another characteristic of the imperative visual narrator, and one that is also advantageous to particular communication outcomes, is the use of clarity. Clarity, I have claimed, leads the audience to experience lucidity and respond with comprehension. Although it is arguable that 'clarity' could be a requisite for 'authoritateness', (which is why it is strongly evidenced in the examples above), I argue that it is worthy of separation (from authoritateness because of its particular role in delivery of information that can easily and quickly be understood – whereas, authoritateness creates the desire or necessity for understanding, clarity provides the means. The ease and efficiency with which information is disseminated is one of the imperative modes greatest strengths.

Another version of clarity can be found in the imperative visual narrator’s mediation of official road signage. (figure 67) This is perhaps this visual narrator’s most common and most measured response. In a document on road signage it is stated that signs “should contain only essential information and their significance should be clear at a glance so that the driver’s attention is not distracted from the task of driving.” (cited in baines, 1999: 36) Clarity of this type of information (used to navigate, inform and caution) is crucial as it is often read at high speeds, and from varying distances;
and has a role in maintaining road safety. And whilst clarity is paramount, it would be fair to say that a degree of authoritativeness is also necessary to ensure driver compliance. A sign made from corrugated cardboard and a black pen stating 'No parking' would look unofficial and therefore possibly out of the jurisdiction of the law.

Although clarity can be considered to be an aspect of visual perception (how visually legible are the signs - scale, choice of typeface, level of contrast, etc. - as in the case above), it can also be used to describe the ease of cognitive understanding. For example, clarity can refer to the ability of a diverse range of viewers to comprehend the message/information, taking into account cultural, educational, age and language differences. I would argue that another strength of the imperative visual narrator is their ability to transcend many of these communication barriers by offering a dialect (visual and verbal) that does make sense to a wide audience. Therefore, it is the most democratic of the modes.

The most obvious example of a signage system that is required to communicate to a diverse population is the one found at international airports. Here, a series of symbols direct users towards the baggage claim, toilets, refreshments, and customs - to name a few. (Figure 68) And even though the Modernist agenda of a truly international language has been dismissed by Post Modernism, this is still a system that is largely successful in achieving its communicative intentions. As the airport signage is extreme in its range of audience it is useful to compare a visual outcome that is aimed at a similar age group, but of different cultures.

In Colors magazine the intention to communicate to a culturally diverse audience is claimed by Kalmann, who states “since it was a magazine aimed at young people all over the world, it had to be as relevant to a teenager in Manila as to one in Berlin or Cape Town.” (Farrelly, 1998: 54) This statement acknowledges the need to create a language that, while specific to an age group, does not trade on subcultural and local references, and visual codes that could obfuscate communication and therefore alienate its audience.
Figure 69
22. "Five different versions of the first issue were printed, with English as the common language and French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish as the second." (Kalman, 1998: 246)

23. While Kalman aims for a global market he is not naïve (or arrogant) enough to believe it could transcend socio-economic boundaries. He writes "I figured a kid like that in Malaysia would not be that different from a kid like that in Bombay, or Philadelphia, or Caracas, assuming that the kid was from an upper-middle class background. I wasn't pretending that the magazine would cut across class lines." (Kalman, 1998: 276)

Even though this approach was hedged by the decision to print the written text in five languages, by the use of photographic subjects of varied ethnicity and environments (or generic studio shots that defy specific locations); and, through themes that are globally relevant (shopping, sport, religion etc.), my research demonstrates that it is the fact that the messages are mediated through an imperative visual narrator that makes this publication readable for a wider audience. As the audience for an outcome visually narrated in the imperative mode becomes wider, the characteristics of detachment and presence become more exaggerated. (Figure 69)

THE WEAKNESSES OF THE IMPERATIVE VISUAL NARRATOR

Authoritativeness and clarity may have their rewards in a visual outcome, but what happens when these approaches offered by the imperative visual narrator make the viewer feel inferior or patronised, or the work seem sterile or unengaging? How likely is it for a mediator to be perceived as controlled and confident by one viewer, yet controlling and intrusive to another? What about the viewer who has a general distrust of authority? And finally, how ethical is it to present only half the facts whilst claiming neutrality, and to present information as a 'truth' in the context of many truths. These questions highlight some of the potential problems of using the imperative mode.

It is worth mentioning that some of what I consider to be a potential weakness in a design context may not be the case in literature. For example, I would not hesitate to suggest that it is a rare occasion upon which a designer might be asked to create an outcome to cause an audience to feel annoyed, belittled and ineffectual. Yet the following quote suggests such a case in literature - "to achieve that typical Huxleyan effect of smallness and futility and indignity – then Neutral Omniscience is the logical choice." (Friedman, 1967: 133) The reader of fiction is more likely to subject themself to this experience under the mantle of personal choice, than the viewer of design, whose engagement with this material may not involve choice.
It would also be unwise to assume that all viewers respond to authoritativeness with compliance. It being possible that viewers distrust information delivered in this mode, or find the tone domineering. Research into the effectiveness of different points of view in radio advertising support this scenario, claiming that “audiences who become conscious of the teller’s persuasive intent may...interpret ‘lectures’ as ‘ideas that other people are trying to impose on me,’” (WELLS CITED IN STERN, 1991: 14) and as a result they are more likely to “counterargue because it is being force-fed imperious claims.” (STERN: 14) Therefore, the intrusiveness and all-knowingness of the IMPERATIVE visual narrator can be as much a weakness as it is a strength.

While mistakes, inconsistencies, irregularities and fallibility can make the IDIOSYNCRATIC visual narrator seem authentic and therefore trustworthy, such frailties in the IMPERATIVE visual narrator may not be greeted with such magnanimity. Should the visual narrator’s conviction and exactitude waver at any point, should they present themselves as anything but an expert or faultless, then there is the potential to lose the audience for the duration of the content – for them to question the accuracy of all information. Since the viewer often turns to the IMPERATIVE visual narrator for advice, directions and facts there is no room for human error.

If visual communication’s primary concern was clarity, economy and efficiency, and if audiences did not need to be coaxed, seduced and intrigued, (or need to feel identification or empathy for the mediator), there would be little evidence of work from modes other than the IMPERATIVE. But it seems that pure information is rarely enough motivation for an audience to engage with a design outcome, except when the impetus is personally derived (person x needs outcome y to achieve z), but even then the worth of z dictates the level of energy afforded to the task. But what happens in an educational scenario, for instance, when primary students are required to engage with information that is delivered in the IMPERATIVE mode, which is sympathetic to the material but not to the students – perhaps being too sterile, ‘dry’ and ‘boring’? Whilst
24. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) make the following distinction between a ‘demand’ image and an ‘offer’ image: “A ‘demand’ image: the participants gaze (and the gesture, if present) demands something of the viewer; demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her,” (p. 122) whereas, an ‘offer’ image “offers the represented participants to the viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation, impersonally, as though they were specimens in a display case.” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 124)

25. “School textbooks, for instance, may construct a progression from ‘demand’ to ‘offer’ pictures (illustrations that serve to involve students emotively in the subject matter gradually drop out as higher levels of education are reached).” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 126-7)

much of the curriculum would be regarded as ‘objective knowledge’. Kress and van Leeuwen, argue an educational flaw in presenting information as such. They claim that although a ‘demand’ image is rare in information design it is ‘indispensable’ in earlier education as a stepping-stone towards more sophisticated and complex images. This approach, probably more in keeping with the idiosyncratic mode, “plays an indispensable role in educational strategy: objective knowledge must, apparently, be built upon a foundation of emotive involvement, of identification with celebratory mythologies, for instance.” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 127)

To pitch the imperative visual narrator at all didactic information is therefore problematic. And although this is a case of mismanagement rather than a weakness of the mode it does signal the potential for work that displays such economy and exactitude to leave an audience ‘cold’ - alienated or disinterested.

Lastly, there is a concern that in the imperative visual narrator’s quest for ‘absoluteness’ a tendency to become simplistic, myopic, dictatorial and arrogant, can occur. Although not her exact descriptors, Ann Tyler makes similar criticisms of Colors magazine in her article, “It’s a nice world after all: the vision of ‘difference’ in Colors.” (1996) Tyler’s main concerns are with the surface or stylistic approaches to representing difference (which in turn create sameness); the partiality of the information; and, lastly the way in which the visual treatment both separates the audience and the authors from the ‘subjects’, and at the same time implicates or assumes that the audience and author/s share editorial opinion. These criticisms, I have shown, are a result of using the imperative mode to control the content – a strategy employed by Kalman in Colors magazine.

Tyler cites the double-page spread representing the Gay Officers Action League (GOAL) (Colors No.1) (figure 70) as evidence of how audience and authors are unwittingly defined. Firstly, she connects the style of photography to this process:

_The observer (the audience) occupies a distant, distinct,
and different frame. The audience views the subjects from the same position as the camera, which is the eye of the author. Authorial position and audience inhabit the same space, effectively providing the audience and author with the same point of view. By joining the author and the audience, the argument assumes that the audience takes on not only the spatial perspective of the author, but the ideological perspective as well. This strategy of argument is effective in attempting to persuade the audience of an editorial position. At the same time, a serious problematic occurs precisely because of the audience’s separation from the subject and its unification with the author. (1996: 66-7)

And, secondly the tone of voice:

the impression of anonymity and absence within the authorial voice both reinforces the distance between author and subject (established through the voyeuristic relationship) and defines the author as someone other than the subject (i.e. not a gay or lesbian police officer). If the authorial voice was actually absent within the text, Sam Ciccone could speak for himself without an intermediary presenter. Or, if the author were within the subject group, the language would be more connected and inclusive. ...

Through the authorial voice, the identity of the author is denied. (1996: 67)

Tyler, has in fact targeted key visual and verbal markers – as defined by my research - of the imperative visual narrator: the documentary style photography supported by an ‘omniscient’ (objective, factual) tone of voice.

It is difficult to know whether the concerns highlighted by Ann Tyler are weaknesses of the imperative mode, or more the dangers associated with its misuse. It was no doubt the editors’ intent to demobilise those with homophobic, racist, and sexist ideologies, as it was to draw attention to the similarities between what may otherwise be perceived as disparate peoples. I would therefore argue
that the imperative visual narrator fulfilled its purpose in delivering a specific viewpoint – clear and confident. But, it is unlikely that a new category of difference was a strategy of this magazine. As Tyler points out, in the process of breaking down the ‘us’ and ‘them’ on one level 6 a new category of ‘us’ and ‘them’ is produced – the audience/authors and the subjects. And, she also points out, what is supposed to be a celebration of difference turns into a process of ‘normalisation’, where the ‘positives’ are emphasised and the ‘negatives’ are erased, often ignoring “the context and belief system of the subjects.” (1996: 62)

It is this supposed acknowledgement and celebration of difference that is the greatest irony of this publication, an irony bought about by the inability of the imperative visual narrator to be truly bipartisan. While difference of the safe kind is celebrated (eg. what people around the world eat for breakfast: ‘espresso on the run’ [Italy] or ‘yams and eggs with ground chillies and salt’ [Cote d’Ivoire] Colors 1), the more contentious and complex differences are presented in a less convivial manner. For example, in the issue on ‘Race’ (no. 4) the beliefs of the white-supremacist group, Aryan Nation, are obviously condemned – Tyler points to the deprecatory question “Who listens to this stuff?” (1996: 71)

The problem with the obvious bias presented by the imperative narrator is best summed up by a quote from Herbert Marcuse, “…all contesting opinions must be submitted to ‘the people’ for its deliberation and choice.” (cited in Tyler, 1996: 75) Although writing on the “repressive nature of tolerance in the 1950s,” (p.75) Marcuse’s statement highlights the weakness of a singular, dominant opinion – the true indicator of an imperative visual narrator. But again, it must be worth considering whether this weakness is one of misapplication rather than one intrinsic to the mode. This further supports the need for designers to have a greater understanding and control of these modes, which my research provides.
figure 71
5.4 THE ESOTERIC VISUAL NARRATOR

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ESOTERIC VISUAL NARRATOR

The fourth and final visual narrator defined by the model of visual narration operates in the esoteric mode. Left until last because of its scarcity within the commissioned design world, this position is determined by the values of ‘engagement’ and ‘absence’. (Figure 21)

It can be best understood as an amplification of one of the two primary modes – in this instance, the idiosyncratic mode.

Its oppositional values make it difficult to describe in relation to mediation – there is evidence of personal engagement and yet an absence of an organising force. The work of this mediator, like the idiosyncratic visual narrator, is distinctive, evocative, atmospheric, intimate and lively, displaying many of the mannerisms associated with individual expression. Yet unlike the idiosyncratic mode, it is not as self-conscious or mannered: the disorder remains disordered, rarely explained or contextualised; and, the confusion and chaos is not neatly packaged nor pointed towards a definable end, its purpose or ‘attitude’ is never made clear. This is where it differs most from the idiosyncratic mode. The viewers of work in idiosyncratic mode are presented with a visual narrator whose preferences, politics and persona are made clear (in the case of Ray Gun - subversive, anti-establishment, and confident), whereas the viewers of the esoteric mode are left to stumble through the work unguided - unsure of the mediatory intention. It is this aspect that aligns it closer to the implicit mode, with the viewer encountering vague, suggestive and ambiguous work. But, while the implicit visual narrator is aware of offering of questions and ambiguities, using irony and allusion, this visual narrator is not. This esoteric mediator is unique in its lack of awareness of its role as a mediatory existence, presenting work seemingly as it happened/happens – in its raw and unedited form.

Similar to the previous positions, the founding characteristics of this visual narrator are derived from a literary equivalent, in this instance, the ‘non-narrator’. A lesser used and lesser known form, it is referred
point of view
NON-NARRATED

design mode
ESOTERIC

unpredictable
random
experiential
spontaneous
surreal
irrational
nonsensical
unstable
unreliable
unedited
unfinished

figure 72
to as ‘direct mental transition’ and ‘interior monologue’, but most frequently as, ‘stream-of-consciousness’, which is described as:

...a discourse without an auditor and unspoken, by which a character expresses his most intimate thoughts, those closest to the unconscious, prior to all logical organisation, or, simply, thought in its dawning state - expresses it by means of direct phrases reduced to their syntactical minimum, in such a way as to give the impression of a hodgepodge. (Guiraud cited in Genette, 1980: 174)

Following is an example of Washington Irving's use stream-of-consciousness in Salmagundi (1807):

N.B. - Southern gentlemen. - Churchyard - apostrophe to grim death - way a cow feeding on a grave - metempsychosis - who knows but the cow may have been eating up the soul of one of my ancestors - made me melancholy and pensive for fifteen minutes; - man planting cabbages - wondered how he could plant them so straight - method of mole-catching. (Cited in Martin, 1986: 134)

I have chosen ‘non-narrated’, a term coined by Seymour Chapman (1996), because it refers most directly to the idea of distance; ‘non-narration’ implying as little mediatory involvement as possible, and therefore the least distance from the designer/author. Chapman writes that “the transmitting source, is best accounted for...as a spectrum of possibilities, going from narrators who are the least audible to those who are most so,” (1996: 247) (Chapman does note that the term ‘minimally narrated’ may be preferred to ‘non-narration’, because ‘audibility’ no matter how slight, demands a narrator. Similarly, I argue that evidence of communication, demands a visual narrator.)

On reading the list of descriptions commonly shared by non-narrated or esoteric communication, (figure 7a) it becomes apparent that this strategy is unlikely to be sustained for long periods in outcomes where a communicative goal of specified intention is required.
This visual narrators avoidance of coherence makes the esoteric mode an unlikely choice for most designers needing to satisfy a clients needs. On the other hand it is a position that has found favour among the self-publishing avant-garde designers of the mid to late 1990s, who claim filmmakers and artists, not designers, as their greatest influences. In particular, the work of UK design group Tomato. Through their work, I will define more specifically, the visual mannerisms that constitute work in this mode, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of this position. And, I will also introduce the book *S,M,L,XL* as a singular, sustained example of the esoteric visual narrator that has been commissioned by someone other than the designers themselves.

I have already stated that by comparison this position is less frequent in client-oriented visual communication outcomes, for this reason this section will be less exhaustive.

5.4.1 TOMATO

Tomato\textsuperscript{27} prefers the moniker ‘media and arts collective’ (O’LEARY, 1999: 94) to ‘design group’, although their client list tells of an existence made viable by traditional graphic design clients – Coca Cola, Levi’s, IBM, Nike, Pepsi and Sony. The work for these clients would be placed in the idiosyncratic mode, having an attraction similar to Carson’s advertising work, providing “a look that appeals to Generation X: fast cuts, layered imagery and distinctive blurred, flickering and dancing typography.” (HALL, 1996: 79) The parallels to Carson’s work, in particular the delivery of an ‘attitude’, are restated by an advertising creative who worked with the Tomato’s, claiming, “You don’t go to them for idea-based communication. Where they make a connection is through emotion, themes and attitude.” (DELANEY CITED IN O’LEARY, 1999: 100)

But it is their designer-coveted,\textsuperscript{28} self-initiated, non-client driven publications - ‘Mmm... skyscraper i love you’ (1994), ‘Process; a tomato project’ (1996) and ‘Bareback; a tomato project’ (1999) - that articulate most clearly the position of the esoteric visual narrator. In fact, Rick Poynor draws a parallel between one of the foundational elements of this position – stream-

---


\textsuperscript{28} Process; a tomato project, "sold more than 300 000 copies and was Britains top-selling design book last year." (SUSKIND, 1998: 30)
of-consciousness — and their work. He writes:

Tomato's work is not so much about ideas, though it is
richly informed by them, as about emotion and expression,
an attempt to snatch and log the fleeting multiple details
and momentary atmospheric sensations of daily experience.
In literature this tradition has stretched from Joyce and
Woolf's stream-of-consciousness to the transcribed-as-they-
came-to-me typewriter confessions of Kerouac and the
Beats. (1994: 30)

Poynor's description can be matched perfectly to the spreads taken
from Tomato's 300 page typographic journey through New York —
"Mmm...skyscraper i love you". (figure 73) Printed with no introduction
and in black only, letterforms - made up of overheard conversations
and other surrounding visual noise - appear at abstracted levels,
creating possible aerial views of the city below. Diagonal lines
read as shafts of light squeezing between buildings; grids refer
simultaneously to the printed page and urban planning. Stuttering
forms reiterated through the pages create movement, a unique
response (and momentary relief) from the ubiquitous blurs of 1990s
typographic design. It feels chaotic, dirty and noisy, fleeting and
momentary. Again, Poynor concurs,

Tomato's exultation of the moment leads to imagery whose
natural state seems to be one of digital transition - next
time you see it it might look entirely different - or that it
is 'finished', in the sense that no more work will be done
on it, without being definitively resolved or complete.
(1994: 30)

Skyscraper has no real beginning or end, other than the one
automatically dictated by the format of a book, and likewise,
sequence seems only a consequence of binding. To borrow from
the definition of stream-of-consciousness used in the introduction,
it seems 'prior to all logical organisation', and even, 'thought in its
dawning state'. As for communicative intention, one of the author's
responds, “That's for the viewer to decide.” (CITED IN POYNOR, 1994: 33)
The literary-ness of Tomato’s work is perhaps a consequence of their claim to be influenced by the Situationists, the Symbolic poets, Surrealists, Wittgenstein and Mallarme. (Hall, 1996a: 82) Their book *Process: a tomato project*, is rich with quotes from artists, poets, philosophers. But, like much of their work there is never any direct explication as to the inclusion of these extracts, so the depth or breadth of the influences remains unknowable.

In *Process: a tomato project*, (Figures 74) there are uncredited lists that start as word association and emerge as poetry – “urges, instinct, preservation, survival, evolution, movement, flux, the unruly tangle of base elements, that somehow, equates with purity, the nervous system of the world.” (p.20) These inclusions of verbal streams-of-consciousness hint at a methodology that dictates more than just the written language, providing an approach to the visual as well: screen grabs, video stills, drawings, photographs, and photocopies (on three different types of paper stock) provide the essentially abstract imagery, save a few recognisable elements that remain unexplained; the text is predominately lower case in a refusal to provide order or hierarchy; and, punctuation is at times scare, denying the readers a rhythm that is not of their own making.

After looking at their work it becomes apparent that the name is descriptive of more than just who they are, and rather the type of work they do - the name Tomato apparently deriving from “a family of sub(beta) hormones – T/0.m/TO. This hormone is found within the cerebral cortex of people who are susceptible to visions, waking dreams, sensations and feelings of weightlessness.” (back page of Process) But for a group so uncomfortable with overt causal relationships, this rationale seems a little too neat, (and way too ‘cute’). So, it comes of no surprise to hear Warwicker claim, that in fact the name is meaningless, “The word just came out of thin air,” he says. “You can put lots of meanings into it but there are none. A bit like our work really.” (Cited in Hall, 1996b: 78-9) Definitely provocative, and perhaps ironic, this statement reflects Tomato's
preference for outcomes that are unreliable and doggedly refuse to be resolved. But it also makes sense of their preference for a visual narrator who operates in the esoteric mode.

5.4.2 $S, M, L, XL$

Defined as ‘a novel about architecture’, $S, M, L, XL$ is ostensibly a book (of nearly 1400 pages) about the work of OMA, an architectural practice headed by Rem Koolhaas, (who is a credited co-author, along side the designer Bruce Mau). Some of the spreads are precise, clearly articulated, informative; (figure 75) others are snatched straight from the pages of a sketchbook, - personal script, sketches, and crossings-out intact. (figure 76) There are pages with ambiguous images made even more so by single words - suggestion but never resolution. (figure 77) It could therefore be easily assumed, upon random exposure to individual spreads, that the visual narrator is on occasion idiosyncratic, implicit or imperative. But, if the reader/viewer were to engage with this book for longer than a few pages $S, M, L, XL$ would reveal itself to be consistently none of these modes. Although there are definitely sequences that maintain the visual mannerisms of each of these distances, they stand only as fleeting moments in the context of this exhaustive account. And yet, the visual narrator of this mode is esoteric for reasons other than default. The pages that masquerade as other distances becoming fuel for the randomness of this mode.

It is the meshing of words - chronologies, essays, personal musings, a comic strip, (figure 78) dialogues between clients, an extract from a play, the appendix of Koolhaas’s first book, Delirious New York spread over 20 pages (figure 79) and an eccentric ‘dictionary’ that vanishes and reappears (offering, trivia, philosophies, musings, oddities but rarely definitions); (figure 80) and images – collages, Renaissance paintings, underwear catalogues, architectural renderings, plans, maps, disintegrating photocopies, photographs (colour and black-and-white, blurry and focused), that make this publication identifiably esoteric. (figure 81-86) As a whole it is chaotic and unpredictable. Both its scale and lack of systemisation
It seems incredible that the size of a building alone embodies an ideological program, independent of the will of its architects. Of all possible categories, Bigness does not seem to deserve a manifesto: discredited as an intellectual problem, it is apparently on its way to extinction—like the dinosaur—through clumsiness, slowness, inflexibility, difficulty. But in fact, only Bigness instigates the regime of complexities that mobilizes the full intelligence of architecture and its related fields. One hundred years ago, a generation of conceptual breakthroughs.

figures 81 – 86

figure 87

figure 88
suggests that it is unedited. It is unreliable, black text dissolving into plans, rendering reading impossible, (figure 87) and organisational structures appearing, only to vanish a few pages later, stealing hope of any guiding principles. Aerial shots of the built environment look like models, and conversely, the models (shot close-up), fill the frame removing any references that reveal actual scale. (figure 88) They become existent and imposing. The figures that inhabit these spaces cast shadows that promise real flesh and blood. The boundaries between what has happened and what could happen, the actual and the fictional blur.

It becomes for the reader an experience that is convoluted and intricate, at times tortuous and obscure. It is as if the viewer is granted direct access to the subconscious of the visual narrator – who is watched unknowingly, caught unawares, mid-thought, and perhaps even mid-preparation for a role as one of the other mediators defined by this model. It has also been often referred to as cinematographic.30 But as Rick Poynor points out the best description of S,M,L,XL’s ‘editorial and design methodology’ is the definition of ‘surrealism’ offered in the margin of the book which is, “a rational method which does not pretend to be objective, through which analysis becomes identical to creation.” (Poynor, 1996a: 33) This unlikely paring of ‘rational’ with the ‘non-objective’ supports my inclusion of a category that maintains the possibility of absence and engagement. I argue that the information offered by this visual narrator is deeply subjective or objective as the mediator is not consciously involved in its presentation. This idea of opposing types of form and content is further supported by Poynor’s statement, that “while the book’s restrained typography conforms to the convention of rigorous elegance in contemporary academic publishing … it is subverted at almost every turn in S,M,L,XL by the subjective uses to which it is put.” (Poynor, 1996a: 33) This perhaps best argues for absence in the term ‘restraint’ and engagement in the term ‘subjective uses’.

Where previously I have discussed the major strategies of each visual narrator and the audience’s subsequent experiences and
responses - the implicit mediator uses ‘anonymity’ to create an ‘autonomous’ audience who responds with ‘criticality’, and, the idiosyncratic mediator uses ‘subversion’ to create an ‘identifying’ audience who responds with ‘empathy’. With the esoteric mode it is tempting to refer to the working approach as arbitrary rather than strategic, the latter assuming a more defined result. But just as labyrinths are designed, so to are the key strategies of this visual narrator, whose ‘randomness’ and ‘fallibility’ (unreliability, disorganisation, irrationality), are reoccurring conditions purposeful in their creation.

While the impossibility of rhetoric-free communication makes it viable to identify strategic approaches in this mode, this work’s lack of context does little to assist in the identification of the function of these strategies, that is, the desired audience response to this work. For instance, the particular nature of a first-aid book enables the assumption that ‘comprehension’ is a required audience response. On the other hand, with work such as Tomato’s, it is less straightforward. Other than for self-promotion the function of the given examples is oblique. Poynor rightly suggests that ‘Process; a tomato project’, “makes most sense...as a tool for enhancing Tomato’s fast-growing mystique.” (Poynor, 1996a: 36) But even though the context of this work offers few clues as to its rhetorical direction, certain audience experiences and responses can still be claimed.

The visual mannerisms that manifest as mediatory irrationality, disorganisation, unreliability and instability are all part of a strategy to render a fallible visual narrator – a narrator whose flaws and vulnerabilities are exposed. And just as the audience accepted fallibility in the idiosyncratic mode, so it does in the esoteric mode, except that this visual narrator is given even greater reprieve because of the extent of their exposure.31 Looking at this work the audience may experience a sense of privilege, because they have been party to private thoughts and transgressions. The result of feeling privileged is an audience who rewards the mediator with a sympathetic response. The reason for this response was discussed.

31 In the context of literature it is stated that “the deeper our plunge, into a character's mind, the more unreliability we will except without loss of sympathy.” (Booth, 1996: 132)
in the idiosyncratic mode: mistakes were seen as an indication of ‘humanness’, which in turn garnered empathy. This is also true for the esoteric visual narrator, although ‘mistake-ism’ is replaced by ‘fallibility’, and ‘empathy’ replaced by ‘sympathy’.

Even though ‘empathy’ and ‘sympathy’ are often interchanged, for the point of this argument I make the distinction that ‘empathy’ is a more conscious identification and understanding of, or with, a situation, whereas ‘sympathy’ is an emotion or sensation that is a reaction to a situation. In this mode, a sympathetic response is more likely because of both the difficulty of actually locating any enduring personal traits of the esoteric visual narrator with which to identify, as well as, the predilection for this visual narrator to deliver work that provokes an instinctive response.

The second key visual strategy employed by the esoteric mediator is randomness, that results in a different sequence of audience experiences and responses. By presenting material that can be described at best as unsystematic, perhaps more accurately as chaotic, (and temptingly as accidental) the viewer experiences a sense of disorientation. Not only are they unsure as to the way in which to negotiate the material of a single page – suggested in more conventional design outcomes by text blocks, headings, evidence of a grids, visual hierarchy etc., but they are unsure about the way in which to navigate the entire book – particularly in the case of S,M,L,XL, whose size deters chronological reading. This experience of disorientation encourages the reader to abandon the usual methods of viewing, and its expectations, ‘surrendering’ instead to a text that rewards a response that is more visceral than cerebral, more emotive than rational, more intuitive than analytical: one that requires the audience to abandon the search for a specific dictum and instead indulge in the makings/process - or to paraphrase Barthes, to ‘savour the signifiers over signification’. Ultimately it leaves this visual narrator with a viewer who responds with greater receptiveness than perhaps the viewer in the other modes.
THE FUNCTION OF THE ESOTERIC VISUAL NARRATOR

The esoteric visual narrator is the least accountable meditator within my model, and within the field of conventional designed communication. Yet it has found a place in the avant-garde design of the 1990s. Its unusual combination of both designer-ly absence and engagement offers a perspective denied by the other modes. But, this perspective, which is made unique by its further decrease in distance (perceived reduction in mediatory involvement), functions in ways that can be viewed as both advantageous and disadvantageous to visual communication outcomes.

THE STRENGTHS OF THE ESOTERIC VISUAL NARRATOR

To a designer one of the greatest advantages of claiming ‘randomness’ and ‘fallibility’ as working methodologies is that you can get away with just about anything – except of course order and consistency. Although this may be regarded as a strength to the creator who finds the visual articulation of ideas difficult, or certain (favoured) aesthetic responses inexplicable, it cannot be seen as a strength of this position, (if strength were to be measured in terms of the facilitation of particular communicative intentions). Yet, there is the potential for ‘randomness’ and ‘fallibility’ to be advantageous when attempting to deliver ‘experiential’ work, which is easier when the viewer is receptive and sympathetic.

Arguably all engagement with visual material offers an experience in kind, but what I refer to is an experience not as commonly offered by standard visual communication; work that challenges the doctrine of the ‘big idea’, the linear narrative, the rationalised outcome; work that extends even further the role of the emotive, visceral and intuitive in design; and, work that is perhaps more commonly aligned with the visual arts and avant-garde film.

ARGUENDLYAll engagement with visual material offers an experience in kind, but what I refer to is an experience not as commonly offered by standard visual communication; work that challenges the doctrine of the ‘big idea’, the linear narrative, the rationalised outcome; work that extends even further the role of the emotive, visceral and intuitive in design; and, work that is perhaps more commonly aligned with the visual arts and avant-garde film.

The word ‘experience’, although vague and all-encompassing in design discourse, is a favourite of Tomato’s – and it seems to be fast developing into a new mantra for visual communications, perhaps a consequence of new media’s ability to add temporal and audio

34. A reviewer notes its proliferation, when writing about the typographic conference Fuse 98, stating “If there was any answer - however implicit - given to the question of the what and the why, it was: experience.” (Bruinsma, 1998: 10)
experiences' to the traditional print experience. John Warwicker, of Tomato, is partial to its usage, "all your work is just experience. What you are drawing is maps of your experience and Tomato is the place where we go to compare experiences through these maps."

(Poynor, 1994: 28) It would seem, after looking at their work, that this term 'experience' refers to a particular experience – one that is sensory, ethereal, elusive, intangible, and abstract - an experience that Tomato successfully creates through the use of an esoteric visual narrator.

Although the ability to deliver an experience is undoubtedly a strength (because it facilitates the delivery of particular communicative intentions), it would be possible to argue that this strength becomes an advantage when it is able to provide a communicative outcome that is required by a client, rather than a work that is commissioned by the designers themselves. In order to do this I will turn to $S,M,L,XL$, whose pages are claimed to articulate "the 'incoherence, or more precisely, randomness that is the underlying structure of all architects careers.'" (Novosedlik, 1996: 92) Therefore, by using an esoteric mediator the designer is able to offer to the viewer a first-hand (albeit limited) experience of architecture, which according to Koolhaas is a 'chaotic adventure'.

(Koolhaas, 1995: xix) In this instance, the esoteric visual narrator has potentially delivered an experience that both mimics and refers to the larger experience of architecture, rather than just creating a site for experiential viewing.

THE WEAKNESSES OF THE ESOTERIC VISUAL NARRATOR
The general absence of the esoteric visual narrator in commissioned design work may well suggest an inherent weakness in its form, but its role as the preferred position by the off-duty designer - those undertaking self-initiated, non-client driven projects – and, by those that buy design books, suggests otherwise. These conflicting preferences instead imply a weakness that is brought about by the context to which this mediator is applied, rather than any fundamental flaw within the position. It is therefore important when assessing weaknesses to measure the intention against the
result, so as to avoid comparing apples and oranges. As such, labels of ‘incoherence’ and ‘self-indulgence’ are redundant as forms of (respective) criticism for books such as *S,M,L,XL* and *Process; a tomato project*, even though they would be justifiably pejorative for the majority of visual communication outcomes.

Although it seems that the esoteric visual narrator creates a legitimate opportunity for unaccountable graphic antics, criticism can still be levelled at its employment, because any outcome that claims visual communication as its medium is still, by current standards, expected to balance the chaotic with glimpses of clarity, and, to offer a level of communication that is not contingent upon formal mannerisms. It is perhaps these expectations that attracted the architectural critic and historian Charles Jencks to write, as a criticism, that *S,M,L,XL*, “is meant to dazzle and massage rather than argue rationally.” He states further that, “It doesn't show how they (the issues) interact or give value to them because Koolhaas skates over the difficulties.” (Cited in Novosedlik, 1996: 237) ‘Skating’ I would suggest is a speciality of the esoteric visual narrator. In fact, as a response to Jencks, Will Novosedlik, a design critic, writes “In a way, Mau’s design skills sometimes provide the ice that Koolhaas skates on, glossing over his lack of interest in arguing a point, entertaining rather than informing the reader.” (1996: 237) Novosedlik also states, “their book may be fascinating, loquacious, clever and visually exciting, but it is not terribly informative,” and finally, that it is “a rambling hypertext without a navigational device.” (1996: 237) But is this misguided or unfair criticism when considering that *S,M,L,XL*'s introduction states:

> Coherence imposed on an architect’s work is either cosmetic or the result of self-censorship.... Writings are embedded between projects not as cement but as autonomous episodes. Contradictions are not avoided. This book can be read in any way. (Koolhaas, 1995: xix)

But on the other hand, the concerns may be warranted in light of the books stated ambition to “restore a kind of honesty and clarity to the relationship between architect and public.” (Koolhaas, 1995: xix)
It seems that the creators of this book are as reluctant to relinquish specific communication intent, as are the viewers, to perceive this intention. The mixed reviews are perhaps a result of the attempt to communicate the disparate orders of ‘randomness’, ‘chaos’, ‘incoherence’ alongside ‘honesty’ and ‘clarity’, or perhaps a by-product of the esoteric mode. Regardless of stated claims, the form of a book still carries with it the promise of information or the act of informing in a particular way.

While it could be said that a weakness of the esoteric mode is that it is provides the ideal site for ambiguity, contradiction and confusion, not certainty, agreement and order, the latter terms are still the perceived role of visual communication by those commissioning design for commercial application.

These case studies show how knowledge of the control of visual narrative positions can give the designer a variety of devices to satisfy client needs in a complex visual environment.

5.5 TESTING THE MODEL: CONCLUSION

Through the application of existing design outcomes to my model, I have shown that varying levels of mediatory involvement are apparent. Although not always explicitly described as such, notions of absence and presence, and engagement and detachment have been used by design commentators to makes sense of visual texts.36 This is evidence that designed outcomes can be understood in terms of degrees of distance and kinds of distance, and further that distance itself is valuable way to understand the relationship between the designer and their outcome. It is valuable because the variations in distance (mediatory involvement) have been proven to affect viewer experience, which provides designers with greater means to manage their communicative intentions.

36. For example, in reference to Ed Fella’s work (idiosyncratic mode) it is written, “the presence of the designer is noted more aggressively than custom allows.” (Wilo, 1991: 3) And at the other end of the scale, in reference to Tibor Kalman’s work (implicit mode), “the disappearance of the designer” (Lupton and Miller, 1996: 161) is noted.
FLAWS

Since introducing the notion of distance I have discussed it in terms of more or less (more distance = less mediatory involvement, and less distance = more mediatory involvement), arguing that designer’s manipulate these levels of distance in order to affect viewer experience. I then argued that that these varying levels of distance were the product of both degrees and kinds of distance, which when combined produced four modes of visual narration: idiosyncratic, implicit, imperative, and esoteric. These modes, I argued, are representative of four levels of distance. The idiosyncratic visual narrator exhibiting presence and engagement and therefore a low level of distance, and conversely the implicit visual narrator exhibiting absence and detachment and therefore a high level of distance. I then introduced the esoteric and imperative visual narrators, arguing that they were in fact exaggerations of the primary positions, and, therefore would exaggerate or extend the level of distance produced by the idiosyncratic and implicit modes, respectively. Consequently, the esoteric visual narrator would display the least amount of distance, and the imperative visual narrator, the most amount of distance. (figure 22, p.137)

This is the models greatest flaw: its attempt to describe each one of the modes as either increasing or decreasing the level of distance. (figure 89) Whilst true for the idiosyncratic and implicit modes, it is not so for the esoteric and imperative mode, which as I will discuss, can do either. (figure 90)

On the surface, the esoteric (eg. figures 91) and idiosyncratic (eg. figure 92) modes look similar. The esoteric mode displays many of the mannerisms associated with individual expression, it is distinctive, evocative, atmospheric, intimate and lively. For these reasons alone, a high level of mediatory involvement is assumed, and therefore, a decrease in the level of distance between the narrator and the outcome. And yet, coupled with these mannerisms, are the characteristics of absence: a predilection for showing not telling, ambiguity not certainty, and implication rather than explication, all of which suggests a lack of a guiding force, and therefore a distanced
visual narrator. Whether the level of distance is increasing or decreasing is dependent upon the vector of absence or engagement. If absence is the stronger factor in the work then it will be perceived as having more distance. Whereas, if engagement were stronger, the level of distance would decrease. Previously, I had described the distance of the esoteric mode as increasing.

Likewise, the imperative mode (eg. figure 93) and implicit mode (eg. figure 94) share common visual mannerisms. They lack the distinctiveness of the previous visual narrators, preferring discreet typefaces, un-manipulated images and conventional compositional decisions. As a result there is no well-defined personality, mediating involvement seems low, and, the distance between the imperative visual narrator and the outcome is great. But, as I argued, this visual narrator, unlike the implicit narrator leaves nothing to chance. There is no vagueness, no open-ended-ness, no suggestion. And, because it is authoritative and clear, mediation is assumed, therefore decreasing the level of distance. Therefore, the level of distance in this mode, whether it is increasing or decreasing, is dependant of the vector effects of presence or detachment. Greater presence reveals a decrease in distance, and greater detachment reveals an increase in distance. Again, I had described the distance in the imperative mode as decreasing.

When absence and engagement or presence and detachment, are equal in their influence, as was the case in the examples I showed, how is the level of distance measured or understood? Firstly, absence and engagement do not negate each other: the level of distance does not become neutral. The level of distance is therefore at a kind of impasse. At this point the model becomes difficult to explain in terms of levels of distance. Throughout this thesis I have argued that designer's manipulate levels of distance. An increase or decrease in distance is the key rhetorical device. But as a rhetorical device distance should be understood in terms of the kinds and degrees rather than levels. And the degree of distance and kind of distance create four modes of meditation: idiosyncratic, implicit, imperative, and esoteric.
The consequence of this new understanding does not negate
the significance of distance, instead it reaffirms the problem of
understanding it purely in quantitative terms – more or less.
Although this thesis has always implicitly understood the necessity
of both degree and kind, (evidenced by the two axes), it has
perceived levels to be the significant outcome, the aspect about
which designers should be most aware of. It is now apparent that
the degree and kind of distance are rhetorical devices in their own
right, and must be understood as such.

Distance therefore becomes a more subtle and complex tool, having
wider implications than more or less, and thus providing designers
not with two options (to increase or decrease distance), but instead
four, which ultimately makes in a more useful device.

To conclude my models reveals that:

1. mediatory involvement is inherent in all designed
   outcomes
2. the perceived level of mediatory involvement is variable
   from outcome to outcome
3. the shift in levels of mediatory involvement is a result
   of distance
4. distance is understood in terms of kind (qualitative)
   and degree (quantitative)
5. variations in kind of distance and degree of distance
   produce four types of mediators (visual narrators):
   IDIOSYNCRATIC, IMPLICIT, IMPERATIVE, AND ESOTERIC.

What started as a model of distance is now a model of mediatory
involvement. And, by understanding that mediatory involvement is
rhetorical device, designers have a new tool in which to control the
intended viewer experience.
6. conclusion
When introducing this research I claimed that the means available for the designer to understand and control their visual outcome were inadequate. Semiotics had provided ways to decode messages, but had not offered an understanding of how the designer's relationship with their outcome affects viewer experience. It is this lack of understanding that my research has redressed.

By developing a model that examines the relationship between the designer and their outcome I have demonstrated that a designer can affect the viewer experience by controlling varying types of mediatary involvement. The case studies revealed that distance as a rhetorical device is already in existence, although it had not yet been identified. In naming distance, and identifying four mediatary strategies I have made explicit a means of affect available to the designer, resulting in a new set of choices for the designer in addition to known formalist and semiotic means. Therefore, my research has provided both a model of a theory of practice and a new way to critique the designed outcome.

In concluding I will reiterate the significance of this additional methodology, describing its contribution to design practice in terms of effectiveness, diversity and sustainability.

MOR E EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

To be more effective demands an ability to match intentions with result. Designers, with a more precise understanding of how mediatary involvement affects the viewer's experience, are now able come closer in achieving their aims. Were a designer attempting to engage a viewer's criticality and independence of thought, as was the case in Dan Friedman's Post Human, they would now be aware of the necessity to create a type of mediatary involvement that was detached and absent. Their choice would therefore be an implicit visual narrator. On the other hand, if a viewer's criticality needed to be replaced by their acceptance and confidence, if questioning were detrimental, as in the case of much information design, the imperative mode would be the narratorial choice.
Another aspect of effective practice is the ability of designer to be able to rationalise to clients (and colleagues) particular visual approaches. Up until now the ways in which to articulate certain strategies have been limited. As I have demonstrated in my case studies, these designers already control distance with great success, it is therefore unlikely that these findings will significantly change their approach to making, but it does provide a means to justifying what until now has been an intuitive response. For example, the approaches of an idiosyncratic visual narrator may have been difficult to justify, appearing to be nothing more than visual solipsism, but now this highly personalised approach can be explained in terms of strategy. This visual narrator is in fact creating a viewer experience that is both trusting and empathetic, a useful response, for example, when advertising in the highly saturated youth market. Further ways to discuss a visual outcome are a necessary addition to the limited vocabulary currently available to the designer.

And finally, practice will become more effective as a result of this research because it provides design educators with a new way to teach and critique the visual. Not only will educators will be able to provide students with a set of design decisions, which are additional to the existing semantic and syntactic choices, but they will also have a new way to critique the designed outcome. Through understanding the affect of mediating involvement on a viewer’s experience, my research offers a way for both students and educators to evaluate work that was previously unavailable.

MORE DIVERSE PRACTICE

In my introduction I stated that a purely semiotic approach to communication encouraged an obsession with signification, as if meaning were the only consideration in the construction of a visual outcome. This, I argued, creates at times a narrow exploration of the potential of design to deliver more diverse alternatives. Yet if designers were to explore affective factors, specifically the consequence of varying mediatory involvement discussed by this thesis, they would have available to them a new set of approaches. At this point it would be difficult to go past the esoteric visual
narrator, as an example of a type of mediatory involvement that places signification low on their list of communicative priorities. These narrators do all they can to escape meaning, preferring instead the intangible, elusive and abstract. But this example does not do justice to my argument that affective factors sit alongside, not in place of signification in the communication process, which was demonstrated by the other mediatory modes. The outcomes narrated in the idiosyncratic, implicit and imperative modes could all be decoded, meaning could be extracted, and yet there was also evidence of viewers experiencing, for example, empathy, collusion and compliance, respectively. Therefore, in realising that designers have at their disposal the methods to create not only varying meaning, but also varying viewer experiences, a richness in communication strategies can evolve.

MORE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

Tied closely with the ability of designers to better articulate their methodologies and the potential for more diversity in visual outcomes is the possibility of a more sustainable practice of design, offered by this research.

Another implication of semiotics (and other cultural theories) is the negation of the significance of the designer through the privileging of social conditions as the site of encoding images. These theories place the viewer as the primary controller of message production, but do not account for how the designer affects the type of engagement the viewer has with the material, an equally significant aspect of the communication process. Without this additional understanding the value of the designer in the production of messages is compromised. My research redresses this imbalance of power, making the role of the designer, as it is currently conceived, more viable and therefore more sustainable.

The more control that the designer has over their methodology, and the more able they are to articulate the process of design thinking, the more likely it is that design will transcend its traditional conception as a service provider and be recognised and valued for
ways of knowing and doing, that are exclusive to designers. It is only then that design will be a sustainable practice.

A POETICS OF DESIGN?
The model of a theory of practice and a means to critique the designed outcome offered by this thesis is an accompaniment to future and existing theories, not a definitive approach. As with all research it is hoped that these ideas are modified and expanded upon, that it is the beginning of an examination of not only the affective factors available to designers, but any aspect that illuminates the creative process, and the relationship of the designer to their outcome.

As I have mentioned in the introduction, my approach mimics that of a much larger study undertaken by literary theorists – the development of a poetics – which attempts to “make explicit the systems of figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do.” (Culler, 1980: 8) As distance is but one of the conventions recovered in literature, it is worth considering what other devices, apart from distance, may affect mediatory involvement or impact on any other aspect of the viewer’s experience.
references


Kastely, J. (1997) Rethinking the Rhetorical Tradition: From Plato to
Postmodernism, New Haven: Yale University Press.


268


Salingar, J. D. (1951) _The Catcher in the Rye_, London: Hamish Hamilton


Sontag, S. (1966) _Against Interpretation, and Other Essays_, New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux


Tomato (1994) _Mmm...skyscraper I love you_, London: Booth-Clibborn Editions


figure references

figure 24 Emigre # 17, Berkeley: Emigre Graphics. p11
figure 56 Sydney Buses Timetable, (2002) State Transit Authority, N.S.W
figure 73 Tomato (1994) Mmm...skyscraper I love you, London: Booth-Clibborn Editions

272
figure 91  Tomato (1994) Mmm... skyscraper I love you, London: Booth-Clibborn Editions
the rhetoric of distance

A MODEL OF THE VISUAL NARRATOR IN DESIGN

Kate Sweetapple
Doctor of Philosophy - Design
University of Western Sydney
2003
CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP AND ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of this thesis has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signed

Katie Sweetman
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
acknowledgements

Special thanks goes to my supervisor, Professor Craig Bremner, whose unwavering support and astute guidance made this research possible.

I would like to thank the University of Western Sydney and the University of Technology, Sydney for their financial support. Also I would like to thank the staff at UWS - Kaye Shumack and Katherine Moline in particular.

My colleagues and friends in the Visual Communication Program, University of Technology, Sydney, have continued to support and inspire me during this process. Particular thanks to Helen Box, Jacqueline Gothe, Jacquie Kasunic, Louise McWhinnie, Mark Roxburgh and Jenny Wilson.

Finally, I would like to thank my family who have been with me all the way – Mum, Simon, Malcolm and Eleanor, and especially, Jacq and Damian. Thank you.
contents

Certificate of authorship
Acknowledgements
Table of contents
Abstract

1. Introduction 9

2. Background 23
2.1 semiotics and design 24
2.2 design as rhetoric 34

3. Development of the model 47
3.1 design as fiction 48
3.2 authorship 54
3.3 the visual narrator 63
3.4 distance 72
3.5 point of view 84

4. The model 112
4.1 degree of distance 118
4.2 kind of distance 124

5. Testing the model 139
5.1 the idiosyncratic visual narrator 141
5.2 the implicit visual narrator 169
5.3 the imperative visual narrator 202
5.4 the esoteric visual narrator 235
5.5 testing the model: conclusion 252

6. Conclusion 258

References 263
Figure references 271
abstract

This thesis describes the development of a model of the relationship between the designer and their visual outcome that is intended to assist the designer's understanding and management of the viewer experience.

To date the focus of design discourse has been towards theories of interpretation that offer methods to decode messages, one of the more significant being semiotics. Although the application of semiotic theory to the field of design has enabled a greater understanding of how meaning is produced in visual communication it does not account for how the designer affects the type of engagement the viewer has with the material, which is a significant aspect of the communication process. The absence of such an understanding results in designers having limited control over the viewer response to their messages, which in turn compromises the intended viewer experience. Therefore, the aim of this research is to develop a model of the designer/visual outcome relationship that will assist designer's management of viewer experience.

To develop this model I examined literary theory as it is a discourse that has analysed its own creative process extensively. While there are many useful parallels that can be drawn between the design and literary discourses, it is the notion of ‘distance’ that is the most useful for this research. Through modifying the textual devices used by an author to create these varying distances, I have developed a model that identifies four types of visual narrators, which are referred to in my research as IDIOSYNCRATIC, IMPLICIT, IMPERATIVE, and ESOTERIC. Each of these modes of design practice are described through existing contemporary graphic design outcomes, and, their strengths and weaknesses are examined in order to understand the consequences and effectiveness of the manipulation of distance.
Via an understanding of how author’s use distance, the results of this research have been a new understanding of the relationship between the designer and their visual outcome. My research demonstrates the effectiveness of the design concept of distance as a method of analysis for design. This thesis also proposes how the designers might adopt distance as a method for considering the viewer experience during the design process, as opposed to leaving it to semioticians to critique post-publication. This research provides equally, a theorised model of practice, and a method of visual analysis.