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Show/Tell: Relationships between Text, Narrative and Image – An Introduction

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In 2005 the theorising Visual Art and Design (tVAD) Research Group at the University of Hertfordshire hosted an international conference, *Show/Tell: Relationships between Text, Narrative and Image* <<http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes1/research/tvad/event160905.html>> to engage scholars from around the world in thinking and talking about this rich topic. The conference was a success – it identified a large number of researchers working on related themes, it brought many of those scholars together in Hertfordshire for the presentation of current research and discussion, it collected a body of excellent work and informed subsequent scholarship in the field. For example, 'Oral Histories and Design', a special issue of *The Journal of Design History* (vol. 19, no. 4, 2006) developed out of the strand 'Telling Stories: Oral History And Material Culture'. See <http://jdh.oxfordjournals.org/content/vol19/issue4/index.dtl> Another example is this volume of *Working Papers on Design*. The articles selected for inclusion have been subjected to double-blind peer review (with the editorial board of reviewers only revealed upon publication).

Knowledge and understanding of how text, narrative and image converge to produce meaning is central to scholarship of the book (see, for example, *The International Journal of the Book*, <http://ijb.cgpublisher.com/>) and to various specialist academic journals such as *Image and Narrative* <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.htm> and *Word & Image*, <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/02666286.html> Notwithstanding the fact that the interconnectedness of text, narrative and image underlies the majority of our cultural experience, understanding of how these three phenomena work together is in its infancy. Students pursuing courses in 'Literature' or 'Art History' are too seldom invited to see their chosen fields as part of a hybridised, remediated, mixed economy of culture and



recent work in visual and material culture goes only so far in overcoming the assumptions of conventionally discrete modes of understanding cultural practice and artefacts. The articles in this volume each show, in different ways, the enhanced understanding of cultural artefacts gained through attentiveness to the relationships between text, narrative and image. They demonstrate how images juxtapose with text to create a third level of meaning not encompassed by image or text alone and the ways in which image and text work together for narrative purpose.

While many thematic connections may be made between the papers presented here, above and beyond their common concern for exploring relationships between text, narrative and image, an editorial decision has been made to group the papers into three trios by chronology, with thematic implications. The first group of papers concerns the period up to 'about [...] 1910' (with apologies to Virginia Woolf), beginning with Amy Galpin's 'Re-Thinking Retórica Cristiana through Space and Performance: A Sixteenth-Century Case of Image and Text' and jumping ahead to Dominic Hardy's 'Historical ironies of Henri Julien (1852-1908): researching identity and graphic satire across languages in Québec' and Nancy Strow Sheley's 'The "Language of Flowers" as Coded Subtext: Conflicted Messages of Domesticity in Mary Wilkins Freeman's Short Fiction'. These latter two papers address distinct aspects of later nineteenth-century popular culture, treating the masculine domain of political caricature and the feminine realm of the meanings attributed to flowers in fiction respectively. Together, the three papers demonstrate how text, narrative and image are coded in ways not readily understood today, without the benefit of the historical understanding offered here.

The second group of papers concerns the legacy of the period between the wars and during and after World War II, when modernism flourished in the literary and visual arts. Each of these papers examines the issue of memory in a different way. Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes reflects on an exhibition project in her paper 'Re-inventing the Literary Exhibition: Exhibiting (Dialogical and Subversive) Art on (James Joyce's) Literature' with work shown extending from Joyce's own life right up to the present. Fiona Hackney's article "'They Opened up a Whole New World': narrative, text and image in British women's magazines in the 1930s' similarly concerns not only the interwar period but also



its legacy in terms of the accretion of memory and the significance of retrospective reflection in an oral history project on women's reading of magazines during the 1930s. The final paper in this group, Deborah Schultz's 'Pictorial Narrative, History and Memory in the Work of Arnold Daghani', explores the way in which the activity of image-making can be an extremely significant, loaded practice, just as its results can help us to connect with a past all too real for some, and so foreign to others.

The third group of papers is united by a common concern for the postmodern practice of remediation. Eilish O'Donohoe's 'Between Image and Text: Tensions in the art of Hans Haacke and Jenny Holzer' examines the way in which Haacke ventriloquises the language and imagery of advertising in order to critique capitalist practices and shows how examples of Holzer's work cannot be understood without due concern for the tensions raised by juxtaposition with the space in which they are necessarily installed. Holzer she used the design and technology of commerce and public address within the hallowed space of an elite art museum. Øyvind Vågnes's article 'Inside the Zapruder Museum' addresses another 'museum' by examining an event captured on film, which has become iconic within, not only American, but also global culture and how author Don DeLillo has used the film and by extension the event, as a recurring motif in his literature. Finally, Linda Sandino's article 'Speaking about Things: Oral History as Context' presents a methodological discussion of what is to be gained by speaking to designers about their work using the case study of recent discussions with a number of designers as part of her work for the Life Story Collection at the British Library's National Sound Archive and for the VIVA project at the University of the Arts, London. This last paper raises issues about how we talk about design as a practice and how we articulate its resultant images and objects.

The articles presented contribute to understanding of relationships between text, narrative and image in diverse ways. This selection of articles aims to go beyond the discrete analysis of art and literature, so that the studies of books by Amy Galpin, Nancy Strow Sheley, and Øyvind Vågnes and the examinations of popular press by Dominic Hardy and Fiona Hackney and the visual analyses by Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, Deborah Schultz, Eilish O'Donohoe and the design historical concern of Linda



Sandino's article are combined to present a new set of connections beyond genre and medium.

Many alternative arrangements are invited by the richly interconnected nature of the articles in this selection. The concern for space and performance in Amy Galpin's article, is shared in, for example, both Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes's analysis of an exhibition including her decisions about installation and impact, and Eilish O'Donohoe's analysis of Jenny Holzer's installations at New York's Guggenheim Museum, in which the contrast between art work and exhibition space is shown to be extremely revealing. The sensitivity to oral history methodology present in Linda Sandino's article is reflected in Fiona Hackney's oral history project, discussed in her article for this volume. Readers are invited to explore these and further connections.

As host of the Show/Tell conference from which these papers are drawn, and as editor of the selection you see here, as well as Coordinator of the tVAD Research Group, I would like to thank to the Design History Society for its support of the conference and earlier tVAD events. Very many thanks go to the editorial board - listed at <http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes1/research/papers/wpdesign/index.html> - on behalf of tVAD and the authors in this volume, for their work in reading the submissions and responding so generously with their evaluations. I would also like to thank the original referees for the conference upon which this volume is based, listed at <http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes1/research/tvad/referees120905.html> all of whom played a crucial early role in selecting the work presented here.

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