**Visual Literacy: Elements of Design**

Are you trying to “read” a picture or “write” a web-site? Have you been asked to evaluate or reflect on a symbol or visual image? Hopefully, this handout and the others in this series will give you a place to think about how the elements of communication and persuasion are embedded in texts you don‟t just read but see. Images, not just words, provide us with information and change the ways we think, reason, and act. They can *speak* to us in powerful ways.

**Questions to ask about an assignment then might be:**

· As a creator or evaluator of a visual text (whatever medium or form it takes) do you see a visual metaphor at work?

· How might the arrangement, content, symbolism of the visual text provide the basis for a metaphor that grants access to a larger meaning, or to a cognitive model/concept/way of looking at the world?

· What experiences from your own life are evoked by the image?

· What emotions are provoked in you by the image?

***What can you SEE the author might be SAYING through the elements of design in this image?***

From: http://uwp.duke.edu/uploads/assets/overview.pdf

**General Elements of Design Include:**

**Composition**

Placement of Elements – where are they on the page

Is there a main focal point?

Is it crowded?

**Perspective**

Scale – Sizes, exaggeration…

Perspective – Power & the Gaze – who

**Motif & Symbolism**

Recurring Symbols

**Text**

Size & amount (long or short)

Placement on the page

**Font**

Visual Aspects of Written Language

Bold vs. Timid

Modern vs. Classic

Playful vs. Serious

**Line**

Vertical Lines: indicates stability, height, separates elements in image

Horizontal Lines: bring elements together, calming

Diagonal lines: suggest motion and movement

Thin Lines: suggest frailty, an elegant quality

Thick Lines: suggest strength or provide emphasis

**Shape / Pattern**

Repeated shapes are patterns Shapes can be open or closed, angular or round Basic shapes: Circle - comfort, protection, endlessness Square - stability, honesty, conformity Triangle - dynamic tension, action, conflict

**Colour**

How are colours used to convey meaning?

Red: power, warmth, anger, energy or passion, active

Green: associated with nature, calming, cool

Blue: restful, calm, sense of detachment, serenity or melancholy, passive

Yellow: happiness or caution, warmth

Orange: associated with fall, seasonal

Black: dark moods, scary, depressing

**Hue**

The shade of the colour(s) used

**Saturation**

**T**he intensity/strength of the colour(s) used

**Deconstructing Advertisements**

***Questions to Ask an Ad:***

What catches your eye first?

Are the actors looking at you (gaze)?

Where are components located in the advertisement (top/bottom)?

Who is portrayed, not portrayed?

How are text and images connected?

Who is the intended (target) audience?

What is the “catch or hook”?

**Main Elements of Design in Advertisements:**

**IMAGE** - interesting, eye-catching, stirs up emotions.

**SLOGAN** - a short, catchy phrase to represent the brand. Ex: Just do it.

**LOGO** - a small visual representation of a company or product. Ex:

**TEXT** - The words on an ad. Chosen and placed carefully.

**COLOUR** - Chosen carefully to suggest mood and stir up emotions.

**SPACE** - All of the area on an ad is carefully planned -- even empty space is there for a reason!

**(Some) Persuasive Techniques**

**Appeal to the head**

Making the reader feel intelligent: “smart moms choose ------“, etc.

**Appeal to the heart**

Appealing to emotions.

Making the reader feel sad, happy, or guilty with words or images. Ex: using pictures of puppies or babies

**Appeal to the senses**

Bringing the 5 senses in to create vivid imagery (sight, small, taste, touch, sound)

**Exaggeration**

Using over-the-top language or sizing or images to emphasize a point.

**Assertion**

Making something sound like a fact to sound authoritative and trustworthy.

Ex: Undeniably the best toothpaste out there.

**Facts & Figures**

Using statistics and numbers to make something seem more reliable and great.

**Direct Address**

Talking directly to the audience to engage him/her and make him/her feel special.

Ex: You and your family deserve this.