

Gabriella NÉMETH

Paradoxical Representation of Tropes in Visual Rhetoric

Visual communication scholars defined several directions for the visual analysis of pictures: aesthetic theory, perception theory, representation theory, visual rhetoric, cognition theory, semiotics, reception theory, narrative theory, media aesthetics, ethics, visual literacy, cultural studies. The different approaches open different dimensions to the analysis of pictures. This presentation strives to build on my former research presented in 2011 at the Visual Learning Conference. At that time I focused only on a rhetorical categorical matrix based upon operations of meaning and rhetorical (figural) structuring. My earlier attempt was merely based on a visual rhetorical approach. In this presentation I try to widen the horizon. I apply representation theory to give a common platform to the semiotic and rhetorical approaches. Representation theory is rooted in the rhetorical and semiotic approaches in a way that it claims both visual rhetoric and visual semiotics is dealing with the mediation of signs between the internal and external world. Rhetoricians investigate the creation and manipulation of symbols and signs for a persuasion, while semioticians are interested in the interpretation of signs and symbols. The theoretical part of my presentation focuses on the different orientations of representation theory (causal relation theories, resemblance theories, convention theories, mental construction theories), figural images, while the empirical part shows the different structures and meaning operations of pictures and pictorial elements. I try to achieve two goals:

1. Through the rhetorical manipulation of pictorial elements (manipulation of visual structure or the rhetorical tropes) of the images I create new pictures and locate them in the typology created in 2011.
2. I want to find answer for the question: How do these manipulated images change the interpretation of symbols and signs? How can a symbol be paradoxical? To what extent can an image be changed so that its meaning will still remain the same? And what is that logical/structural/figural element which cannot be eliminated and substituted so that the message does not change? Or how does the logical/structural/figural element modify the meaning?

This presentation aims to provide an experiment which will serve as a background of my thesis.



Gabriella NÉMETH is a first-year PhD student at Budapest Corvinus University, Hungary. Her main focus is on visual rhetoric and communication. In 2009 she won the third place at the Scientific Student Conference of Hungary with the theme “Communicative Competences of Feminine and Masculine Online Communities”. She has published a paper on visual rhetorical figures in the first volume of the VISUAL LEARNING series, 2011. E-mail: kusz5@freemail.hu.