

1. Introduction

Synopsis

This module introduces communication, outlines theoretical ideas and aspects of Visual Communication with selected examples.

Lectures

- 1.1 An Introduction to Communication
- 1.2 On Languages and Grammar
- 1.3 Visual Communication



Fig. 1.3.00

1.3 Visual Communication



Fig. 1.3.01

Fig. 1.3.02 (above) and Fig. 1.3.03 (below) Works of visual art such as sculptures and painting communicate visually. A relief sculpture from the Sanchi Stupa depicting the Sakya prince who came to be known as the Buddha, being taken for a ride outside the palace walls.

A contemporary sculpture of a person who fired the imagination of many Indians.



Fig. 1.3.02



Fig. 1.3.03

Architecture both in their monumental form and as living habitats and interiors, communicate visually. It has been observed that first we shape our buildings and then they shape us.



Fig. 1.3.04



Fig. 1.3.05

Paintings communicate visually. Interestingly visual art that is evocative, is often difficult to describe with words.



Fig. 1.3.06

Visual Communication can have very many interpretations that could include subjects as diverse as architectural spaces, works of visual art, to the way one dresses, the way sweets are displayed in a shop counter, to the 'aura' of anything that is visible.

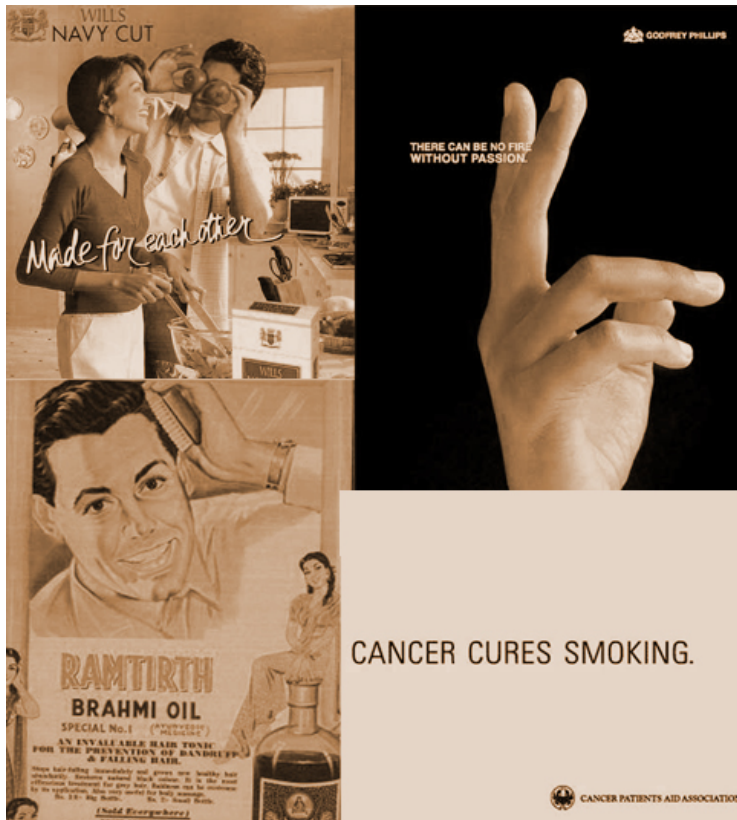


Fig. 1.3.07

Advertisements are examples of how effective visual communication can be. Some examples of early Indian advertisements for cigarettes, hair oil and the dangers of smoking. Texts often supplement images to ensure that the intended communication is achieved.

Advertisements deliberately and often, play upon human desire to achieve sales of products and services.

As a subject of study in schools of modern design in India, visual communication has had diverse goals. Certain schools sought to include the requirements of the advertising industry and focussed on graphic design, photography and illustrations with the objective of training graduates for creating advertisements for products. With the growth of digital media, understanding new technology for computer based graphics, digital photography, video and animation came to occupy a central place in the curriculum.



Fig. 1.3.08

Shadow puppets made from leather being put out to dry. Storytelling using puppets was one popular medium for visual communication before the advent of television. Enthusiasts, still seek to communicate ideas through shadow puppetry performances.



Fig. 1.3.09



Fig. 1.3.10

In places where text cannot be read, election symbols use visual means to ensure that the correct candidate gets the vote.



Fig. 1.3.11

Illustrated picture books for children on display. Visual communication of such nature is slowly getting to be accepted and enjoyed in India. As societies move from an agrarian base to an industrial one, there is a tendency for the written word over the spoken one. Does this shift have to do with a certain loss of trust? Urban cultures in the 21st century are characterised by an overwhelming presence of the visual. The poster below is an advertisement for the animated film 'Jajantaram Mamantaram'.



Fig. 1.3.12

Certain schools, in keeping with the socialist approaches adopted by the newly independent nation, sought to orient their visual communication programme to address the unmet communication needs of the country. This included the design of textbooks for schools, educational videos, design of fonts for Indian languages, illustrated storybooks for children, signage for spaces, graphic identities for branding, educational video, television and animated films.



Fig. 1.3.13

Digital technologies have had a considerable impact on the tools used by visual communicators. Animators use sophisticated digital softwares to create short and feature length animation; graphic user-interfaces are widely used for interactive multi-media communication that integrate human interaction with visual, audio and touch-based input-output devices such as cellular phones, game consoles, digital tablets and a host of new devices. A familiarity and ease with this digital environment is empowering, a grounding in more conventional approaches can be a great asset for a student of visual communication.



Fig. 1.3.14



Fig. 1.3.15

Typography, graphic design, visual design, photography, film and video are traditional subjects in visual communication.

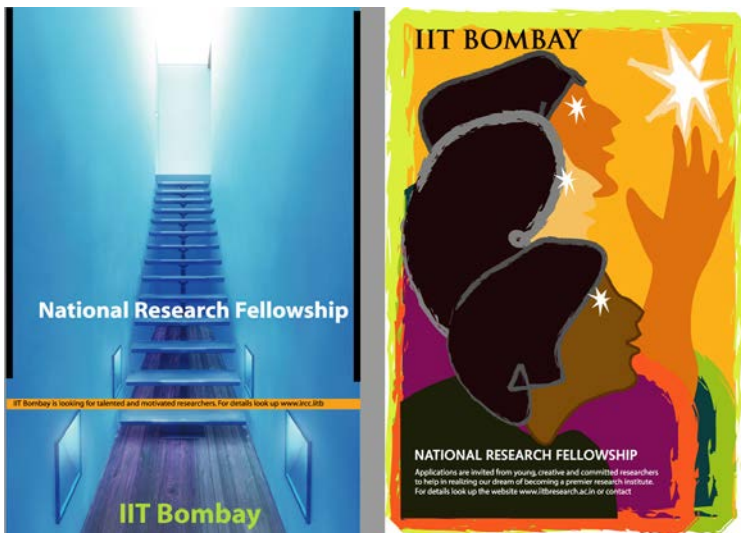


Fig. 1.3.16



Fig. 1.3.17

An image from a digital video of a conversation with a student of visual arts.

In the early nineties when India chose to open its doors to companies from outside, it triggered off changes that continue to shape the country in the 21st century. This economic and political shift was echoed by changes to how visual communication was perceived, and this was reflected in the aspirations of students and changes in the methods of instruction. The rapid growth of information technologies and the IT sector, also affected the texture of earlier programmes. New areas like graphic user interfaces for web-based content and other digital devices were included in course curriculum.

While new media has greatly expanded the domains of visual communication, more traditional media continue to be used effectively. A student of visual communication would benefit greatly from an engagement with the diverse visual environments that are in use today - from architectural spaces and interiors to signage and environmental graphics; from sculpture and painting to posters, illustrated books and animated films; from web-based interfaces to control panels of sophisticated instrumentation.

In this course we shall seek to engage with the traditional and the contemporary tools for visual communications. This includes an understanding of drawing, photography, graphic design, animation, film and video, graphic-user-interfaces and new-media.



Fig. 1.3.18

Examples of diverse visual environments encountered today are visual displays in science museums (above) and shop windows (below).



Fig. 1.3.19

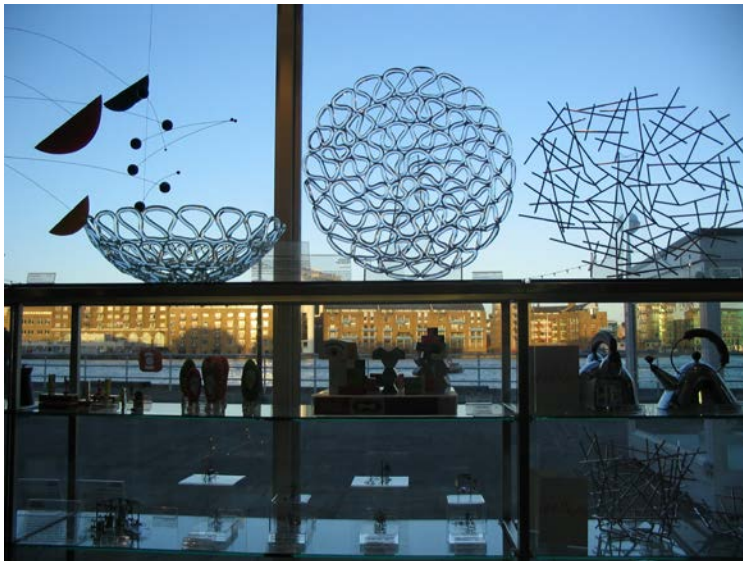


Fig. 1.3.20

Examples of a few other visual environments - displays at a design museum (above) and signage at a shopping mall.



Fig. 1.3.21

References

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Exercises

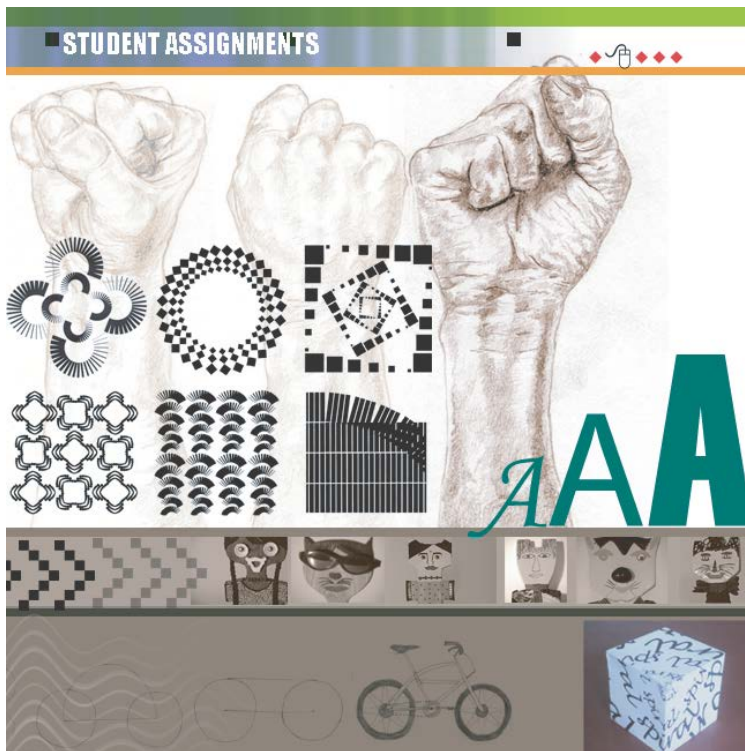


Fig. 1.3.99

Create a scrapbook of images that capture many different aspects of visual communication.