

# Semiotics & Gestalt

## Semiotics

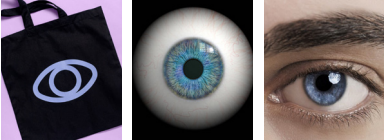
Semiotics is the study of signs and their use or interpretation

The Studio of Chad Kouri

### Artist Statement

As a working artist, my broad studio practice is an investigation of visual literacy and semiotics—specifically how we think about, see, read, and remember the world around us. I believe Art is meant to be a conversation—a call and response between viewer and image—and not just depict a rigid thought or concept. Co-opting strategies and theories from marketing, advertising and color theory, my works act as cerebral playscapes, subconsciously prompting introspection while helping the viewer learn more about themselves and their surroundings. Using simple geometry and the psychology of color, I build ambiguous environments that align neural-pathways, allowing for self-exploration through memory and imagination. Over time I have come to appreciate the power of ambiguity in art, especially when juxtaposed against the overstimulated information-age we are currently living. I welcome the referential properties of abstraction as a means of creating a more harmonious relationship between the artwork and the viewer's past experiences. By doing so, I hope to promote self-love, optimism, awareness, and acceptance in order to reveal shared experiences and empathy that transcends the social constructs of age, gender, and race.

Why do certain images convey particular ideas? How do we **make meaning** from pictures?




Sign      Object—The literal thing the sign refers to      Concept—What the sign makes you think of or picture in your mind

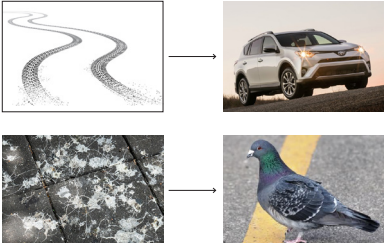
Signs can take the form of:  
Icons, Indexes, and Symbols

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graph TD; Signs --> Icons; Signs --> Indexes; Signs --> Symbols;
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**Icons** create meaning through resemblance



**Indexes** produce meaning through a direct physical or causal connection



## Semiotics & Gestalt

### Gestalt

Gestalt theory examines how our brains perceive and organize visual information, *or* how they organize separate parts into unified, coherent wholes

We want to find order in disorder i.e. our brains try to perceive patterns and organize visual information to make sense of the world

A few gestalt principles:

- \*Similarity: In form
- \*Proximity: Location / distance
- \*Closure: Filling in the blanks
- \*Continuance: Alignment

Work by Dante Carlos

Dave Peterson  
Discover Signs

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(612) 382-6861  
discoversigns.com



Very important in contexts such as planes!



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G-E-S-T-A-L-T

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And a new type of perception of the visual environment was equally important. Images and visual communications were to be decoded and assembled by the viewer in the moment. Kepes called this the "plastic formation" of images and described the process like this:

To perceive a visual image implies the beholder's participation in a process of organization. The experience of an image is thus a creative act of integration. It's essential characteristic is that by plastic power an experience is formed into an organic whole.

Anyway, it is easy enough to pick out the ethical undertones of what Kepes is suggesting—reading the visual world is a synthetic act, and it requires individual participation rather than merely passive consumption.

In 1965, Kepes began to edit a series of design anthologies based on the ideas he wrote about in *Language of Vision*. These books are collected under the series name *Vision + Value* and they work like a series of textbooks, or perhaps better, a multi-volume art and design almanac. Kepes was well-connected to many people writing about art and design at the time and he collected essays from these thinkers in the books. Rudolph Arnheim, for example, was one of the contributors. Each is populated with extensive illustrations.

Kepes didn't use the word "gestalt" prominently, but he drew upon its ideas and its imagery. And by the late 1960s, he was interested in the same issues of dynamic interrelationships within a form and how those cause it to snap together into one coherent whole. He emphasized the viewer's role in the process and the ethics of this engagement. He also addressed how internal relationships can be left unresolved, provoke anxiety, and can create a specific tension just by the position of one thing within another thing. It's as if Kepes might say, "This feels different. This means something essentially different because of where this meets that, where it's touching the edge." And, if you are drawn toward graphic design, I think you know this intuitively. That is to say, you feel what I'm describing.

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Design an

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Week 1: Explore  
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Week 2: Select t  
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Week 3: Produc

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