Németh Gabriella

The Visual Rhetorical Figures of the Giant Billboard „ARC" (Face) Exhibition

Abstract

Contemporary channels, forms and styles of human communication result in the increasing efficacy of the persuasive power of pictures. (Leiss et al., 1986; Phillips and McQuarry, 2003; Pollay, 1985) Some researchers claim that advertisers apply a set stock of pictorial elements for persuasion and they suggest a methodology that is appropriate for the prediction and evaluation of the possible consumer responses to these elements. (e. g. Mick 2003a, Scott, 1994b) Metaphors and schemes in the rhetorical tradition hold particular significance in expressing new perspectives and knowledge. Even though the rhetorical is constantly referred to as a means of verbal communication in contemporary theories, it opens new horizons onto the visual as well. My presentation strives to outline a categorial matrix based upon operations of meaning and rhetorical (figural) structuring. The envisaged analysis is going to be worked out on empirical material provided by the Giant Billboard of „ARC" Exhibition. The regular Budapest Giant Billboard „ARC" (Hungarian for "face") Exhibition officially organizes public exhibitions where civil applicants and organizations have the possibility to reflect on a given social or cultural issue by the creation of visual-verbal billboards. The exhibition was introduced in 1999 and since then it is organized annually.

1. Visual Rhetorics

Owing the to pictorial turn, the study of rhetoric cannot eliminate the analysis of visual artefacts anymore. Researchers claim that the majority of rhetorical environments nowadays is constituted of pictorial elements. A wide range of human experiences is not part of verbal discourse but they are embedded in the visual dimension of communication, which means, that an analysis of discourse is not certainly able to avail all kinds of human experiences, power relations and cultural artefacts anymore. Consequently, visual rhetoric manifests a special area of rhetorical theory that gives us several explanations, questions, methods and theories of how pictures function in the process of persuasion as well in the process of information providing. Rhetoric is "a mode of inquiry, defined as a critical and theoretical orientation that makes issues of visuality relevant to rhetorical theory" (Finnegan 197 cited in Foss 2004: 306).

In Jean Y. Audigier's view, "human experiences that are spatially oriented, non-linear, multidimensional, and dynamic often can be communicated only through visual imagery or other nondiscursive symbols." (see Foss 2004: 303). Foss exlpains (2004) that visual rhetorics has two basic

meanings in the discipline of rhetorics. It means both the visual artefact and a special perspective on the study of the visual.

In the first sense, visual rhetoric is a product individuals create as they use visual symbols for the purpose of communicating. In the second, it is a perspective scholars apply that focuses on the symbolic processes by which visual artifacts perform communication (Foss 2004:304).

Defined as artefact, visual rhetoric is therefore "the purposive production or arrangement of colors, forms, and other elements to communicate with an audience." On the other hand, it is regarded as a "product that names a category of rhetorical discourse that relies on something other than words or text for the construction of its meaning" (Cara A. Finnegan cited in Foss 2004: 304). Foss (2004) claims that "a rhetorical perspective on visual artifacts constitutes a particular way of viewing images— a set of conceptual lenses through which visual symbols become knowable as communicative or rhetorical phenomena." (306)

Hill argues that by selecting certain image elements results in the fact that these elements gain a certain presence. This presence is implicitly presented to the audience and can be regarded as a powerful rhetorical tool to increase the efficiency and goal of persuasion. "Presence, as the term is used by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, refers to the extent to which an object or concept is foremost in the consciousness of the audience members."(Hill 2004: 28-29). Hill adds that those pictorial elements that own presence are able to channel inferences and to influence the attitudes and thinking of the viewers, no matter whether there is a logical force presented or not. The presence of pictorial elements produces vividness, importance and relevance connected to the message.

Within the framework of visual rhetoric, Foss (2004) defines three fundamental dimensions: nature, function and evaluation. In her view, "nature deals with the components, qualities, and characteristics of visual artifacts; function concerns the communicative effects of visual rhetoric on audiences; and evaluation is the process of assessing visual artifacts." (307)

2. A Typology of Visual Rhetorical Figures

Phillips and McQuarrie in 2003 offered a typology that concerns visual rhetorical figures and that gives us the ability to analyse pictures on the basis of their construction. In their work 'Beyond Visual

Metaphor' they claim that rhetorical figure is regarded as „an artful deviation that adheres to an identifiable template." (Phillips and McQuarrie 2003: 114). They argue that rhetorical figures can help the consumers the develop a response to these figures and can channel the inferences of the audience. Moreover, according to their analysis, visual rhetorical figures are responsible for the persuasive effects the picture may provide.

Talking about visual rhetorical figures, Phillips and McQuarrie differentiated two basic dimensions (see table 1). In their cathegorial table they define visual structure as the way the two elements that comprise the visual rhetorical figure are physically pictured in the ad. *Visual structure* in this sense can be regarded as the matter of physical arrangement of images. We are offered three possibilities within the domain of visual structure: *Juxtaposition, Fusion and Replacement*. Juxtaposition means that the advertiser just put two elements side by side. Fusion means that the advertiser fuses or mixes the two image elements together within the same picture. And finally replacement refers to the visual structure of a picture in which one element replaces another in such a way that the present image calls to mind the absent one.

The other dimension of visual rhetorical figures in the typology of Philips and McQuarrie is *Meaning operation.* „Meaning operation is the target of forms of the cognitive processing required to comprehend the picture." (Phillips and McQuarrie 2003: 116). Meaning operation can give certain instruction to consumers that direct their inferences from the arranged elements. The dimension of meaning operation consists of two subcathegories: Connection and comparison. Connection shows how the depicted elements can be associated to create a link between them. Comparison on the other hand is based upon similarity or opposition. Similarity can be physical or structural similarity and it leads us to the theory of analogous thinking.

C O M P L E X I T Y ↓		RICHNESS →		
		Meaning operation		
		Connection ('A is associated with B')	**Comparison**	
	Visual Structure		**Similarity** ('A is like B)	**Opposition** ('A is *not* like B')
	Juxtaposition (Two side-by-side images)			
	Fusion (Two combined images)			
	Replacement (Image present points to an absent image)			

Table 1[1]

'No sooner is a form seen than it must resemble something: humanity seems doomed to analogy' (Barthes cited in Chandler 1994). Analogy is defined as a 'core process of cognition.' (Forbus 2001). Forbus (2001) lists four basic steps of analogous thinking: in the process the viewer fisrtly recalls the relevant terms from long-term memory. Secondly, the source is mapped to the target, which means that the audience develops correspondences between the elements. Thirdly, analogical inferences are developed and consequently new knowledge is created. Finally, the audience creates new links in the memory, which means that they learn. (Forbus 2001 see Phillips and McQuarrie 2003).

---

[1] Source: Phillips and McQuarrie (2003: 116)

Opposition suggests that the two image elements are different in some ways. It is up to the reader/viewer to generate one or more inferences regarding the difference. As Williamson puts it, differentiation has a certain role in image creation in the case of a certain product. The arbitrary determination of the boundaries leads to the definition of the ad sas metasystems. Williamson speaks about referential systems, that means that the products gain their images from certain sign systems. (Williamson 1978).

However, Phillips and McQuarrie's typology does not concern itself with classical rhetorical figures nor general strategies of rhetoric. In the second half of this presentation I am going to complete their typology and theory rhetorically and semiotically. The basis of this supplement are going to be the works of Peirce, Barthes and Chandler. I am going to multiply the possibilities of configurations in pictorial analysis.

3. Steps Towards a New Typology (Peirce, Barthes, Chandler)

While speaking about the rhetoric of the picture, Barthes differentiates verbal, coded iconic and uncoded iconic message types. He writes that the viewer simultaneously percieves the denoted and connoteted messages that are the percieved and cultural messages of the picture. As far as we regard the physical efforts of seeing, the rhetoric of the picture is specific. But if we concern the formal connections of the elements, the rhetoric of the picture becomes general.

The three dimensions of visual semiosis:

1. Representational dimension
2. Interaction between the viewer and the picture
3. Organisation or composition

Peirce when writing about visual signs, differentiates three main cathegories: iconic,

indexical and symbolic signs. In his theory he claims that „**Icon/iconic is** a mode in which the signifier is percieved as resembling or imitating the signified." **Index/indexical:** a mode in which the signifier is

directly connected in some way to the signified. **Symbol/symbolic:** a mode in which the signifier is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional. (Chandler 1994: 27, Peirce).

> When we try to find out how the representing and represented facts are related to each other, it is assumed that we know which is a representing fact and which a represented fact. In the case of an icon, unlike with a symbol or an index, certain aspects of the icon—which constitute a representing fact—resemble the represented fact. The resemblance between representing and represented facts makes sense only when there is no confusion between representing and represented facts. (Sun-Joo Shin 2002: 25)

As Hill puts it, indexical signs differ from icons and symbols in such a way that "indexical signs would not exist if their objects did not exist, so the very existence of the sign proves that its object also existed." (Hill 2004: 29).

> In the case of iconic representation, the relation between representing and represented facts is based on a similarity or resemblance that we may observe at an intuitive level. This is a clear advantage an icon has over a symbol. It can increase the efficiency of a representation system. (Sun-Joo Shin 2002: 30) (see Lindsay 1988; Larkin and Simon 1987; Shimojima 1996; and Gurr, Lee, and Stenning 1998)

Combining Peirce's Trichtonomy of visual signs with the typology of McQuarrie and Philips we can conclude that in the domain of meaning operation, connection can be linked to index and comparison to icon and symbol. (see table 2)

	Meaning Operation	
	Connection	**Comparison**
Icon	-	+
Index	+	-
Symbol	-/+	+

Table 2

4. Strategies of Classical Rhetoric

The following step towards a new typology is going to be built upon the general strategies of classical rhetoric. Adjection, detraction, immutation and transmutation are four basic strategies in the manipulation of discourse for rhetorical purposes. (az az oldal).

- ■ General Strategies of Classical Rhetoric

  - ■ Adjectio (adjection): strategy working with the addition of a subthought to the main one. Relationship: causal or opposition.

  - ■ Detractio (subtraction): a strategy that works with the subtraction of an element.

  - ■ Immutatio (substitution): a strategy that substitute one element with another.

  - ■ Transmutatio (transposition): Changing the normal order or arrangement.

    (Adamik 2010).

5. Rhetorical Tropes

Chandler claims that a concern with certain key tropes (or figures of speech) cannot be eliminated in semiotic explorations as it is a pominent and widely-researched area in contemporary studies of semiosis. "Rhetoric is not simply a matter of how thoughts are presented but is itself an influence on ways of thinking" (Chandler 1994: 96), which according to Chandler deserves serious attention.

Rhetorical tropes are considered artful deviations from the ordinary or principal signification of a word. Trope signifies when one turns a word or phrase (or in the case of this presentation a pictorial element) from its conventional use to a novel one for rhetorical effects. 'Figurative language is language which does not mean what it says' (Hawkes, 1972, 1 cited in Chandler 1994: 96). Referring back to Barthes, figures result in the creation of connotative meaning over the literal one. (Barthes). Figurative language thus constitutes a rhetorical code which exists in the domains of culture.

The ubiquity of tropes in visual as well as verbal forms can be seen as reflecting our fundamentally relational understanding of reality. Reality is framed within systems of analogy. Figures of speech enable us to see one thing in terms of another. As with paradigm and syntagm, tropes 'orchestrate the interactions of signifiers and signifieds' in discourse (Silverman 1983, 87).

A trope such as metaphor can be regarded as new sign formed from the signifier of one sign and the signified of another. The signifier thus stands for a different signified; the new signified replaces the usual one. As I will illustrate, the tropes differ in the nature of these substitutions.(Chandler 1994: 97)

I am going to deal with four basic classical rhetorical tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synechdoche and irony. All these tropes show difference when speaking about the difference between signifier and signified. According to Hayden's statement, "these relationships consist of: resemblance (metaphor), adjacency (metonymy), essentiality (synecdoche) and 'doubling' (irony)." (White 1979, 97 cited in Chandler 1994: 106).

5.1. Metaphor

'The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.' (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 5). In semiotic terms Chandler speaks about metaphor in such a way that 'one signified acting as a signifier referring to a different signified' (Chandler 1994; Richards 1932). "The basis in resemblance suggests that metaphor involves the iconic mode. However, to the extent that such a resemblance is oblique, we may think of metaphor as symbolic." (Chandler 1994: 99). Therefore, metaphor is associated with iconic and symbolic mode of Peirce's Trichtonomy of signs (Chandler 1994: 99). "Lakoff and Johnson note that metaphors may vary from culture to culture but argue that they are not arbitrary, being derived initially from our physical, social and cultural experience." (Chandler 1994: 99). Some researchers claim that effective metaphor is created only if it offends norms and create a certain incongruency. Simultaneously developing similarity and irrelevance results in the outcome that the viewer becomes motivated to think (Phillips 1997; Brown 1976). Many pictorial ads use personification in order to gain rhetorical effects. These ads refer to abstractions or inanimate objects as though they had human qualities or abilities. The outcome is that the viewer becomes much more motivated to elaborate the message. As a conclusion, metaphor has a generative nature (Schon 1979). On the other hand, it can also functionas a transfer (Williamson 1978).

5.2. Metonymy

Metonymy is defined as a function which involves using one signified to stand for another which is directly associated with it in some way. (Chandler 1994) It is based on indexical relationships. Chandler

(1994) cites Wilden when defining metonymy: 'metonymy is the evocation of the whole by a connection' (Wilden, 1987, 198 see Chandler 1994: 101). Metonymy includes the substitution of:

- effect for cause

- object for user (or associated institution)

- substance for form

- place for event

- place for person

- place for institution

- institution for people (Chandler 1994: 101).

5.3. Synechdoche

It is a highly debated question whether synecdoche can be treated as an independent trope or not. (e. g. Eco 1984). Some researchers claim that it is a special form of metonymy, som others say that it can function within the frames of metonymy. As Lanham explains synechdoche is defined as 'The substitution of part for whole, genus for species or vica versa' (Lanham 1969, 97). It is merely based on external relationship between the part and the whole. In the case of synechdoche a whole is represented by naming one of its parts.

Roman Jakobson argues that whilst both metonymy and synecdoche involve a part standing for a whole, in metonymy the relation is internal (sail for ship) whereas in synecdoche the relation is external (pen for writer) (see Lechte 1994, 63) Even if synecdoche is given a separate status, general usage would suggest that metonymy would remain an umbrella term for indexical links as well as having a narrower meaning of its own (as distinct from synecdoche). (Chandler 1994: 104).

5.4. Irony

Irony means using language in such a way as to convey a meaning opposite of what the terms used denote (often by exaggeration). 'The signifier of the ironic sign seems to signify one thing but we

know from another signifier that it actually signifies something very different.' (Chandler 1994: 104) Irony is linked to binary opposition, dissimilarity and disjunction. (Chandler 1994: 104)

However, irony is much more difficult to define than metaphor, metonymy or synechdoche. Chandler explains that all these tropes are similar to each other in such a way that they are double-coded. We have to make mental effort to distiguish between "what is said and what is meant". However, Chandler sees a gap between irony and the other three tropes. He clames that "whereas the other tropes involve shifts in what is being referred to, irony involves a shift in modality". (Chandler 1994: 104)

Trope	Basis	Visual example
Metaphor	Similarity despite difference (explicit in the case of simile)	p1 p7 p10
Metonymy	Relatedness through direct association	p3 p14
Synechdoche	Relatedness through categorical hierarchy	p2 p10 p16
Irony	Inexplicit direct opposite (more explicit in sarcasm)	p15 p18 p13

table 3[2]

	Metaphor			Metonymy			Synechdoche			Irony		
	Conn	Comp		Conn	Comp		Conn	Comp		Conn	Comp	
		Sim	Opp		Sim	Opp		Sim	Opp		Sim	Opp
Juxtaposition (Adjection)	P3, P18	P1 P18	p18	P3			P2			P15 p18	P4, P5, P15, p18	P4, P5, p18
Replacement (Immutation)	P3 P7 P10 p18	p18	P6 P7 p18	P3 P14			P10, P16 P17		P16	P11, P13, P15, P17, p18	P15 p18	P6 P12 p18
Fusion	P7 P10		P6	P7 P14			P10 P16		P16	P11 P15	P15	P6
Detraction							P17			P17		
Transmutation	p18	p18	p18							p18	P5 p18	P5 p18

table 4[3]

Conclusion

---

[3] In Table 4 I combined rhetorical strategies, tropes with the table of Phillips and McQuarrie. The pictorial proof is provided by the images and posters of the Giant Billboard of ARC (Face) Exhibition of Hungary. The source of the pictures: http://www.arcmagazin.hu/

In this study I offered a typology by combining former theoretical frameworks and typologies. I analysed the pictures of the Hungarian *Giant Billboard of ARC Exhibition.* Collecting pictorial proof to the cathegories of the typology, my main aim was not to bring example to every single cathegory, but to show, what the most frequently used visual techniques and meaning operations are.

As Table 4 shows, the most frequent image techniques regarding visual structure are juxtaposition, replacement, fusion and trasmutation. Iconical, indexical and symbolic connections are not explicitly shown in table 4. However, they are presented implicitly. I argued that iconical relatonships are mainly connected to comparison, indexical relations are associated with connection and symbolic ones regard both connection and comparison within the framework of meaning operation. Further research is necessary to create a typology in which these links are explicitly shown.

Several pictures manage to illustrate more than one cathegories. The complexity of image and meaning elements of these pictures increase their persuasive effect. The viewer has several possibilities for the operations of the mind to find out what the messages of the pictures are. The most effective pictures can be defined several ways concerning their visual structure as well as the operations of meaning (like p3, p10, p18). These pictures are consequently more difficult and hard to analyse. As the Giant Billboard Exhibition is a critical social activity, it frequently use irony to highlight the problems of society as well as metaphor to symbolize a certain issue or phenomenon (like p5, p1). Metonymy and synechdoche are also effective to show indexical relationsips (like p14, p16).

Consequently, rhetorical strategies, meaning operations, tropes and signs contribute to the channeling of the inferences of the audience. Physical structure of the picture and meaning operation together (first offered by Phillips and McQuarrie) combined with the theories of Barthes, Peirce and Chandler results in the creation of a more complex, difficult and manifold typology that is able to show the effective rhetorical and semiotic tools for increasing the persuasive power of the pictures.

Pictures

wellness

P1

P2

P3

P4



P5

P6
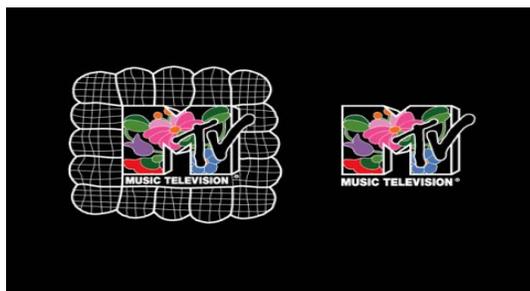
P7

P8

P9
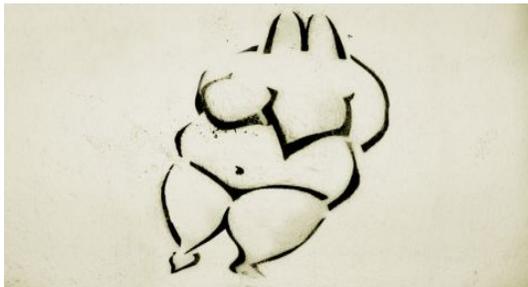
P10

P11

P12

P13

P14
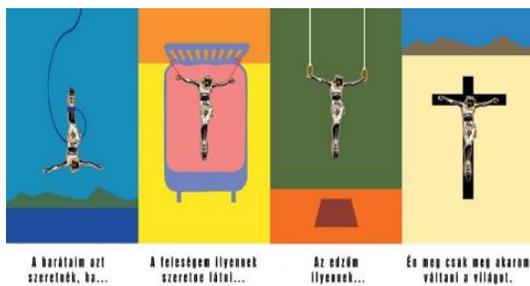
P15

P16

P17
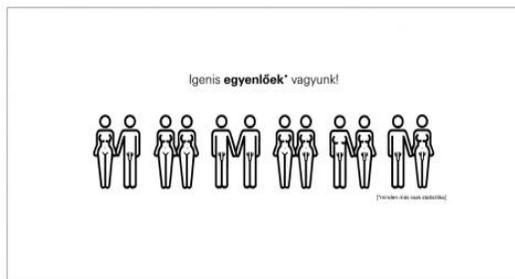
P18

Bibliography:

Aczél, P.; Adamik, T; Balázs G; Bencze, L; Benczik V; Boronkai D.; Hangay Z.; A. Jászó A.; Jenei T.; Krupp J.; Nemesi A.; Pethő J.; Polgár A.; Simon L. Z.; Szitás B. (2010): *Retorikai lexikon.* Pozsony: Kalligram

Barthes, R. (1967): *Elements of Semiology.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Barthes, R. A kép retorikája. In. Blaskó, Á.- Margitházi, B. (szerk). (2010): *Vizuális kommunikáció*. Szöveggyűjtemény. Budapest: Typotex (109-125)

Blaskó, Á.- Margitházi, B. (szerk). (2010): Vizuális kommunikáció. Szöveggyűjtemény. Budapest: Typotex

Brown, R. H. Social Theory As Metaphor. On The Logic of Discovery for The Sciences of Conduct. Theory and Society 3. (1976) 169-197. In: *Vizuális retorika.* ENIGMA XVII. Évf.2010/64. sz.

Chandler, D. (1994): *Semiotics for Beginners.* (www Document) URL http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html

Forbus, K. (2001) Exploring Analogy in the Large In. Phillips, B. J. & McQuarrie, E. (2003): *Beyond Visual Metaphor: A New Tipology in Visual Rhetoric in Advertising.* SAGE publications

Foss, S. K. : Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric: Toward a Transformation of Rhetorical Theory. In.: Hill, C. A. & Helmers, M. (eds) 2004. Defining Visual Rhetorics. LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, PUBLISHERS. Mahwah, New Jersey London 303-315

Hawkes, T. (1972): Metaphor. London: Methuen. (1)

Hill, C. A. (2004): The Psychology of Rhetorical Images. In.: Hill, C. A. & Helmers, M. (eds) 2004. Defining Visual Rhetorics. LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, PUBLISHERS. Mahwah, New Jersey London. 25-41

Kaplan, S.: „Vizuális metafórák a divatcikkek nyomtatott reklámképein." In. Vizuális retorika. ENIGMA XVII. Évf.2010/64. sz.

Kanengieter, Marla R. "Message Formation from Architecture: A Rhetorical Analysis." Diss. U

of Oregon, 1990.)

Sun-Joo Shin (2002): The Iconic Logic of Peirce's Graphs. Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Source of pictures: http://www.arcmagazin.hu/