Visualization and Cognitive Semiotics: Drawing Things Together

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Abstract. Visual Culture in India envisages a trajectory of creations that include visual styles, concepts and practices involving both the makers as well as the receivers. In this context, this paper presents the applications of a collection of cognitive semiotic theories at the stages of visualizations done by graphic design students in the course of 'Documentation of Visual Culture' (context: India) at the National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad. The baseline approach to conduct the course has been to impart the essential theories and models, primarily from the fields of visualization and cognition, history, social space and visual imagery. In addition, the course also involved formulation of a conceptual framework of 5-Pillars of Cognition: 1) What and How to Observe ?, 2) How to See ? and, 3) How to Read ?, 4) How to Plan a Theme ? and 5) How to Create a Visual Language for a Visual Space/Culture ? These five pillars along with selective theories of cognitive semiotics were applied as hands-on applications to form, reform as well as transform the final publication designs to document a unique Visual Culture from India by each student. The designed publications and presentations in the final course review brought forth new insights and significance of preserving form-content associations and significance as hard publications in context of the Visual Culture themes in Indian context. In addition, the research methodologies tap the latest styles and trends in publication design from the perspectives of the readers' preferences with respect to changing social milieu, likes, dislikes as well as the simultaneous technological scenarios of consuming and preserving form-content themes.

Keywords: Documentation Techniques, Visualization, Cognitive Semiotics, Social Space, Visual Culture, Visual Imagery, Context of India