

# Defining Visual Rhetorics



Edited by

Charles A. Hill  
Marguerite Helmers

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*University of Wisconsin Oshkosh*



2004

LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, PUBLISHERS  
Mahwah, New Jersey London

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to [www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk](http://www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk).”

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Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers  
10 Industrial Avenue  
Mahwah, New Jersey 07430

Cover photograph by Richard LeFande; design by Anna Hill
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### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Defining visual rhetorics / edited by Charles A. Hill, Marguerite Helmers.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8058-4402-3 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN 0-8058-4403-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Visual communication. 2. Rhetoric. I. Hill, Charles A. II. Helmers, Marguerite H., 1961– .

P93.5.D44 2003

302.23—dc21

2003049448

CIP

ISBN 1-4106-0997-9 Master e-book ISBN

To Anna,  
who inspires me every day.  
—C. A. H.

To Emily and Caitlin,  
whose artistic perspective inspires and instructs.  
—M. H. H.



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# Preface

A few years ago, we noticed a major shift in the field of rhetoric, one in which an increasing amount of the discipline's attention was becoming focused on visual objects and on the visual nature of the rhetorical process. The phrase *visual rhetoric* was being used more frequently in journal articles, in textbooks, and especially in conference presentations. However, it seemed equally obvious that the phrase was being used in many different ways by different scholars. There seemed little agreement on what exactly scholars intended when they used the term, and no reliable way to distinguish the work being done under the rubric of "visual rhetoric" as a coherent category of study.

Some scholars seemed to consider visual elements only in relation to expressing quantitative relationships in charts and graphs. Others concentrated solely on the ubiquity of visual elements on the Internet, which might give the impression that visual elements are important only in online communication. Much of the more culturally oriented work was based in art history and art theory, sometimes using the terms *visual rhetoric* and *visual culture* to refer to artistic images exclusively. In still other cases, the use of the word *visual* included *visualizing*, the mental construction of internal images, while other scholars seemed to use it to refer solely to conventional two-dimensional images. Add those scholarly pursuits to the study of print and film advertising, television, and cinema, and suddenly a new field of inquiry emerged, rich with possibility, but sometimes puzzling in its breadth.

The larger problem was not that rhetoricians were analyzing a wide variety of visuals—we saw this diversity of efforts as exciting and productive. The problem was that there seemed to be very little agreement on the basic nature of the two terms *visual* and *rhetoric*. To some, studying the "visual" seemed to consist solely of analyzing representational images, while to others, it could include the study of the visual aspect of pretty much anything created by human hands—a building, a toaster, a written document, an article of clothing—

making the study of “visual rhetoric” overlap greatly with the study of design. To still others, the study of visual rhetoric seemed to necessarily involve a study of the process of looking, of “the gaze,” with all of the psychological and cultural implications that have become wrapped within that term.

Scholars engaged in visual analysis have also (with notable exceptions) largely neglected to discuss the ways in which their work is truly rhetorical, as opposed to an example of cultural studies or semiotics. What seems clear is that the turn to the visual has problematized any attempts to distinguish between these methodologies, blurring further what were already quite fuzzy and often shifting boundaries between them. But while it would make little sense to try to draw any rigid boundaries between these methodologies, we think it is still useful to ask of any scholar what aspects of his or her work make it legitimate or useful to label such work “rhetorical.”

As we thought about the definitional problems surrounding the study of visual rhetoric, it became immediately clear that the appropriate response was *not* to try to “nail down” the term, to stipulate a set of definitions that all rhetoricians would agree to abide by (a naïve notion, to say the least). Rather, we thought that it would be more interesting and productive to have scholars working with visuals discuss the definitional assumptions behind their own work, and to exemplify these assumptions by sharing their own rhetorical analyses of visual phenomena. Our own assumptions behind this approach are two-fold. First, any discussion of definitions from which one is operating is necessarily post-hoc; that is, one discovers such definitional assumptions through the work, rather than explicating them (even to oneself) before approaching a scholarly project. Second, at this very early stage in the contemporary study of visual rhetoric, we assume that people are more interested in writing about and in reading about specific scholarly projects than in lengthy arguments about definitions.

We asked each contributor to this book to explain how his or her work fits under the heading of, and helps define, the term *visual rhetoric*. Using this approach, we hoped to capture the diversity of the work being done in this area while providing—for readers and, by extension, for the rhetoric community—some explanation of how this wide variety of work can be seen as complementary and part of a coherent whole. Our goal is not to promote any particular claims about what terms such as *visual* and *rhetoric* and *visual rhetoric* should or must mean. Rather, we want to prompt readers to think about, and to talk to each other about, what these terms mean to them and what they *could* mean—about how they can be productively used in creative ways to explore a broad range of phenomena, but without being diffused to the point where they lose their explanatory power.

We intend this book for anyone who is involved in or interested in such conversations. This includes not just those who are working explicitly on projects in visual rhetoric, but anyone interested in the rhetorical nature of visuals or in

the disciplinary issues surrounding the increasing overlap between methodologies (rhetoric, semiotics, cultural studies) and disciplines (rhetoric, communication, art theory, etc.) by which and in which visual phenomena are studied. It is, perhaps, this refusal to be restricted by disciplinary and methodological boundaries that many of us working in this area find so exciting about visual rhetoric, and we hope that the chapters in this volume exemplify that inherent breadth and diversity, and that they express some of that excitement.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All books are collaborative efforts, and thanks are due to many individuals who assisted in the preparation of this one. First and foremost is Linda Bathgate at Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, whose belief that visual rhetoric was a developing area of rhetorical study led directly to the production of this volume. Debbie Ruel at Erlbaum provided us with valuable editorial assistance in the production of the manuscript. Robie Grant created the indexes. Richard LeFande was enthusiastic when we contacted him about the use of his photo as a cover piece. Peggy O'Gara at Corbis helped us secure the use of Thomas P. Franklin's September 11, 2001 photograph for the Introduction. Anna Hill developed several striking cover designs, and conversations with Anna about art history and graphic design played no small part in the original inspiration for this collection.

The Faculty Development Board at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh funded research that led to the development of parts of this work. In addition, the authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Alberta Kimball Endowment at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Large sections of the Introduction to this work were completed during a summer seminar on literature and the visual arts, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and held at the Boston Athenaeum in 2002. The seminar group, led by Director Richard Wendorff, included Anna Arnar, Laura Bass, Megan Benton, Ellen Garvey, Michelle Glaros, Christine Henseler, Margot Kelley, Jim Knapp, Lori Landay, Vincent Lankewish, Jennifer Michael, Peter Pawlowicz, Laura Saltz, and Thaine Stearns. All of these colleagues deserve praise for their insightful observations, without which this work would not have taken the shape that it did.

We thank our colleagues in the English Department for their friendship, encouragement and support, as well as for stimulating conversations about the use of images in rhetoric and literature pedagogy, and our students, who traveled with us as we explored some of the initial ideas behind this volume.



# Introduction

*Marguerite Helmers*

*Charles A. Hill*

In this book, we study the relationship of visual images to persuasion. But where do we begin? Which images do we select to tell our story or to prove our case? Which authors do we cite as pioneers in the field of visual rhetoric? We could extend ourselves as far back in time and place as ancient Egypt and cite the role of hieroglyphs in conveying meaning and recording memory. Or we could call up the painted caves at Lascaux. We could invoke the famous example of Xeuxes' painted grapes that tricked the birds into pecking at them. Or we could fast forward to the stained glass windows of medieval churches and the role they played in educating the peasantry about Biblical texts. We could name the exuberant paintings of the Hudson River School of American painters, whose images helped to broaden people's imaginations and pushed them westward across the country, or survey images from *Life* magazine or *National Geographic* and discuss how they shaped a national consciousness of America's place in the world. Any of these visual artifacts could shed light on the primary question that drives the essays in this volume: How do images act rhetorically upon viewers?

This inability to begin comfortably, much less securely, at a point in time with a particular class of images was a cue to begin the work of defining visual rhetorics. Images surround us in the home, at work, on the subway, in restaurants, and along the highway. Historically, images have played an important role in developing consciousness and the relationship of the self to its surroundings. We learn who we are as private individuals and public citizens by seeing ourselves reflected in images, and we learn who we can become by transporting ourselves into images. We refer to our sense of our own personality as a *self-image*, and we critique celebrities and politicians when they tarnish their images with poor judgment. Yet images are treated with distrust; in Western culture, images have often been placed in a secondary and subordinate relationship to written and verbal texts and the potential dialogic between

images and words has been especially neglected. "One of the crucial mediations that occurs in the history of cultural forms is the interaction between verbal and pictorial modes of representation," writes W. J. T. Mitchell. "We rarely train scholars, however, to be sensitive to this crucial point of conflict, influence, and mediation and insist on separating the study of texts and images from one another by rigid disciplinary boundaries" ("Diagrammatology" 627). Mitchell's caution, about which we will have more to say later, provides us with a rationale for undertaking this type of interdisciplinary work. For this book, we invited contributions from authors who situate themselves at the crossroads of more than one discipline, and we have chosen to survey a wide range of sites of image production, from architecture to paintings in museums and from film to needlepoint, in order to understand how images and texts, both symbolic forms of representation, work upon readers.

Rhetoricians working from a variety of disciplinary perspectives are beginning to pay a substantial amount of attention to issues of visual rhetoric. Through analysis of photographs and drawings, graphs and tables, and motion pictures, scholars are exploring the many ways in which visual elements are used to influence people's attitudes, opinions, and beliefs. There is a diversity in these efforts that is exciting and productive, but which can also be confusing for those who are trying to understand the role of visual elements in rhetorical theory and practice. Some people seem to think of visual elements only in relation to expressing quantitative relationships in charts and graphs. Other scholars concentrate solely on the ubiquity of visual elements on the Internet. Much of the more culturally oriented work is based in art history and art theory, giving the impression that, when speaking of "visuals" and "images," we mean artistic artifacts exclusively. In English studies, there is no vocabulary for discussing images, or perhaps we might say that there are so many disciplinary-specific vocabularies that we in English have to borrow extensively. In fact, despite his assertion that "transferences from one art form to another" are "inescapable" ("Spatial Form" 281), Mitchell encourages cross-disciplinary rhetoricians and cultural critics to develop a "systematic" method for investigating the relationship between arts and words in order to avoid charges of "impressionism" ("Spatial Form" 291). This systematic approach would demand a theoretical basis and a set of terms common to the field of visual rhetoric. One of the most important lessons from the Sister Arts Tradition in literary studies from the late 1950s is that "A student of the sister arts must learn to work twice as hard" (Lipking 4), training as a scholar in two disciplines—linguistic and visual—in both primary and secondary materials. Mitchell's warning draws attention to the institutional fact that, just as earnestly as we seek to join the study of verbal rhetoric with the study of visual material, so also others earnestly seek to separate the disciplines from "contamination," a perception that the study of images is soft or non-rigorous because images are commonly construed to be illustrative and decorative. In order to counter what has been called a *paragonal* relationship between word and im-

age—a struggle for dominance over meaning between verbal and visual discourse—we suggest that readers and scholars working with visual rhetoric attend to the notion that word and image are used by writers and illustrators to accomplish different aims. Printed verbal material is conveyed to us in visual forms, whether electronically or through traditional paperform methods. Thus rhetoric encompasses a notion of visibility at the very level of text; it is mediated by visibility, typography, even the somatic experience of holding the book or touching the paper.

Art historian Barbara Stafford draws attention to the ways that images are often considered to be subordinate to written text, logical argument, and truthful exposition: “In spite of their quantity and globalized presence, for many educated people pictures have become synonymous with ignorance, illiteracy, and deceit. Why?” (110). In “Material Literacy and Visual Design,” Lester Faigley explores a similar point, citing an 1846 poem by William Wordsworth that, with characteristic Romantic era angst, bemoans the initial publication of the *Illustrated London News* in 1842. Wordsworth’s concern is with progress: It was the word that raised the English from their earliest beginnings to an “intellectual Land.” The image, because it is mute, or “dumb,” cannot express either truth or love, but rather has a profound national and psychological effect of reverting the country “back to childhood.” He concludes his poem with the exclamation, “Heaven keep us from a lower stage!” Faigley’s essay recaptures the notion of progress, however, and records the irrepressible movement of images into our society through various technologies from the printing press to the World Wide Web.

Where, then, should the rhetorician who is interested in analyzing visual images begin? What bodies of scholarship are essential to master? What terms should rhetoricians adopt? Are some images more suitable than others for the study of images in rhetorical theory?

As we worked together to identify a suitable cover image for this volume, these questions surfaced. The image we chose to represent a volume of work on vision and representation had to be multilayered and complex, but not so detailed as to be inscrutable or to require excessive verbal explanation. On the other hand, the image had to foster verbal discourse, debate, argument, and thoughtful reflection while in itself having a visual impact. Furthermore, we believed the image could not be tied too strongly to one event because its own rhetorical work was to represent the themes that the authors in this book address: vision, revision, representation, media, memory, presence and absence. Richard LeFande’s (cover) image of a photograph held against the Manhattan skyline spoke to these themes, while drawing attention to the strongest visual event of this new century: the devastation of the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001.

Points of crisis in American culture since the Vietnam War have been visually recorded and widely disseminated to the public. The use of television cameras



and the evening news to broadcast the battles of Vietnam gave it the name “the living room war.” The Gulf War two decades later was a visual event of a slightly different sort. Anchormen broadcasting with bombs falling over their shoulders became symbolic of the real presence of the media in our lives. The use of infrared and computerized piloting devices by the military became symbolic of the depersonalized gamesmanship of an advanced technological war. In both cases, though, just as with September 11, 2001, the spectator was able to experience the exceptional power of visual media to create “simultaneity,” a national consciousness of being together as a community (Anderson 132; Baty). Writing about September 11 in “Images, Imaging, Imagination,” Annick T. R. Wibben expresses the conundrum of televised access:

We all have images stored in our eyes (how does this differ for those who saw the events on TV and those that were in NYC or DC?). We are bombarded by ever more images by the media (how does the replay and information overload numb us to the effects of particular images?).... We were all there, but yet we weren't. We saw it, but saw nothing. We kept uttering this isn't real, while knowing that it was. We witnessed death, yet we saw no bodies, no blood. (Wibben)

One of Benjamin Barber's main points in his influential book *Jihad vs. McWorld* is that information technologies (audio, visual, film, print, and electronic) “inevitably impact culture and politics and the attitudes that constitute them” (74). The “infotainment telesector”—the connection of technologies, news, and entertainment (60), comprised of “those who create and control the world of signs and symbols” (79)—is something like a universal country without borders. As Wibben indicates, significant facts about images and their interpretation and important questions about the relations of all images to human mediation emerged from the September 11 attacks. Strong national symbols such as the eagle and the flag are liberally in use in the popular and mass media as a means of gathering together the imagined national community, and to these patriotic and sentimental images the twin towers of the World Trade Center have been added in the way that the red poppy came to symbolize the First World War. Together, these symbols form an expressive syntax for what Barber calls American “monoculture,” a “template,” a “style” that exemplifies a certain lifestyle—but in turn begins to demand “certain products” (82). Symbols resist individualistic interpretation because they are overdetermined by customary usage, embedded so frequently in conventional discourse that they rarely take on a reflective, individual meaning. As Edwards, Strachan and Kendall point out in their contributions to this book, national symbols are employed as a visual shorthand to represent shared ideals and to launch an immediate appeal to the audience's sense of a national community.

At the same time, though, a strong populist movement to remember individuals and their unique testimony resists the immediate temptation to impose a Master Narrative on the 9/11 tragedy. In his commemorative poem, "The Names," U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins stressed that the memory of September 11 is a memory of proper names, "spelled out on storefront windows" and "printed on the ceiling of the night." Maureen Daly Goggin demonstrates that the need to individualize by inscribing one's presence is not unique to this time or place in history; women in the 17th century used their needles to illustrate their histories. While the media may hark the "attacks on America," the families and friends of those killed or wounded in the attacks remember names, faces, and their own stories of where they were on the morning of 9/11.

Thomas Franklin's photograph (Fig. I-1) of three New York City firefighters raising a flag over the rubble of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, illustrates the possible modes of interpretation and the resistance to interpretation that a single image may have in our interpretive lives.

One of the ways that we understand this photograph is through its reference to other images. Thus, one of the ways that images may communicate to us is through intertextuality, the recognition and referencing of images from one scene to another. The reader is active in this process of constructing a reference. If the reader is unaware of the precursors, the image will have a different meaning, or no meaning at all. We first saw the photo by Thomas E. Franklin now known as *Ground Zero Spirit* on September 12, 2001, the day after the World Trade Center collapse. Immediately, we were struck by its obvious resemblance to the famous photo of U.S. Marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima. Thomas Franklin himself notes that he saw the three men raise the flag and thought "Iwo Jima." Our students even make this association, knowing no more about the battle in the Pacific than the name "Iwo Jima." The immediate distribution through newspapers and magazines gave the image an instant power and authority over the interpretation of the day's events. Institutions such as news media and magazines implant "modes of knowledge in each individual, family, and institution" (De Lauretis 15), and the knowledge that was imparted to the American public about 9/11 was not that of sorrow or loss, but of resilience and triumph.

Acknowledging that the title *Ground Zero Spirit* affects the interpretation of the image, we refer to Franklin's photograph by this name in this essay. As a documentary photograph, the image is untitled. Because we address the image as a slice of time, a moment frozen from a historical sequence, and because we also discuss the three firefighters as actors, we have chosen to distinguish the photograph as an object and icon by referring to it by its commodified designation. Having said this, we should also acknowledge that the image itself is more easily recognizable than either its name or the facts of its production. Our students are unsure if the firefighters raised the flag on 9/11 or some later date, and it's clear that the exact date doesn't matter to the effect



FIG. 1.1. *Firefighters at Ground Zero*. Photograph by Thomas E. Franklin, 2001. Copyright © 2001, *The Record* (Bergen County, N.J.). Reprinted by permission of Corbis.

of the photograph. It is the act captured on film that matters. The three men raising the flag do have proper names, of course—George Johnson, Dan McWilliams, Bill Eisengrein—and due to the popularity of the photograph, their individual names are now protected by copyright and licensing agreements; however, in viewing the photograph, their names are less important than their symbolic value as “firefighters.” They intended to use the American flag as a sign to rally the spirits of those working amidst the rubble of the Trade Center. McWilliams had been working at Ground Zero since late in the morning on September 11, when he was called to evacuate. He saw the flag on the yacht the *Star of America* docked at one of the piers on the Hudson River, to

the west of the Trade Center site. It was an immediate symbol. He was, in the words of the Bergen County *Record*, where the photograph was originally published, “inspired.” “Everybody just needed a shot in the arm,” McWilliams later noted (Clegg). The flag was raised on a flagpole emerging from the rubble at the site at 5:01pm in the afternoon of September 11. Photographer Franklin was at Ground Zero all day, despite threats to arrest him. He commented later that the photo “just happened,” although he immediately recognized the pose of the firefighters as being similar to the pose of the Marines in Joe Rosenthal’s Iwo Jima photograph. “It was an important shot,” Franklin explained. “It told of more than just death and destruction. It said something to me about the strength of the American people and of these firemen having to battle the unimaginable. It had drama, spirit, and courage in the face of disaster” (Franklin, “Photo of a Lifetime”).

When the photograph was published the next day, its impact was powerful and immediate, seized at once as a symbol by millions. *Newsweek* cemented the photograph’s popularity and significance by running the Ground Zero photo as the cover image for the September 24, 2001 issue. “I have just received my Sept. 24 issue, ‘After the Terror,’ wrote Jodi Williams to *Newsweek*:

I haven’t even had time to read it yet, but I wanted to say thank you for the cover picture. I have wondered what the icon of this event would be and am pleased with your choice. In showing the flag being raised out of the rubble, you have chosen a positive image—the strength and resilience of Americans, and the specific bravery of those members of the NYPD and FDNY who risked and sometimes lost their lives in the hope of saving others.

The simple composition of the image is both essential and non-essential to the meaning. The fact that there are three figures involved in the flag raising, rather than two or five, invokes the Christian Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Inscripting the Trinity over the rubble of the Trade Center offers a corrective to the “Islamic fundamentalism” of the ad hoc pilots of the aircraft that blasted into the buildings in the morning. The immediate symbolic value of the American flag encodes “appropriate” and conditioned responses of patriotism, loyalty, and invincibility. Whenever an image of the flag appears, the American public associates it with such abstract ideas—even if individuals do not respond to it emotionally. The colors of the flag have symbolic meaning: red for valor, white for innocence, and blue for justice. When the American flag was created, it was designed to represent ideas rather than a monarchy or a particular religion. By the early decades of the 20th century, the flag was recognized as denoting freedom and democracy. In being designated a national symbol, the flag is synecdochic. To defend one’s country and people, and possessions, is synecdochically known as “defending the flag.” It is the embodiment of national spirit, a shorthand for the words of the Pledge of Allegiance

(to the flag): “liberty and justice for all.” Furthermore, like any icon, the flag becomes meaningful to the public through repeated imaging and storytelling. “[I]t is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism”—poetry, painting, song—“show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles” (Anderson 120). In Franklin’s image, the flag’s importance is emphasized because it occupies the central axis of the photograph. The diagonal placement of the flagpole across the ground of the rubble physically cuts across the devastation with something whole, purposeful, strong, and integrated. It marks the connection to an imagined community called “America” that, in turn, recognizes the photograph as symbolic.

New York firefighters were the first on the scene and were inside the towers when they collapsed, leaving 343 firefighters dead. The rubble—the background to this photograph—provides meaning to the image, for it is this “ground” of rubble, which encompasses half of the scene but does not intrude on the activities of the men, that gives meaning to the figures’ resilient action. They are not rescuing or digging out here, but taking time to reflect on the spirit that gives meaning and purpose to the activities at Ground Zero. It is because the men stand in the foreground that the photograph achieves its power. Imagine a different photograph, one taken through the rubble, framing the men, dwarfed by the gothic arcs of the burning, decaying steel, or, as seen through the charred cruciform windows of buildings adjoining Ground Zero. Decreasing the physical relationship between men and rubble would decrease the importance of the working man, the New Yorker, in overcoming disaster. It would place disaster in the foreground and as the protagonist of the photograph. In fact, photographers such as James Nachtway, Anthony Suau, Susan Meiselas, and Gilles Peress made images such as these; yet these images failed to become icons.

When Joe Rosenthal’s image of the Marines raising the American flag on Mount Suribachi appeared in 1945, the photograph immediately symbolized the triumph over adversity and death that the Marines had encountered in taking the island. Karal Ann Marling and John Wetenhall write that the “act of planting a flagstaff meant: enemy terrain captured, the highest point seized—triumph” (73). Thus, the meaning of the American flag in this context depends on a notion of an enemy, the adversary who held the ground initially. “Rosenthal’s picture spoke of group effort, the common man—working in concert with his neighbors—triumphant. The very facelessness of the heroes sanctified a common cause” (73). Similar meanings are associated with *Ground Zero Spirit* as well. Franklin’s photograph of the three firefighters shifts the emphasis from military might to the exemplary actions of common men. The three are self-assured and attentive to duty. Hands on hips, focused on the stars and stripes of the rising flag, they don’t cry over the disaster behind them, but stoically resolve to raise the symbol for their lost and living comrades as an indication that

there is courage in the collective will of the nation. Like its precursor in the Pacific a half-century earlier, this flag in New York City “calls the audience to the task of building their society in the same manner as the men in the picture, through sacrifice and coordinated labor” (Hariman and Lucaites 372).

As Marling and Wetenhall point out, “[T]he Stars and Stripes took on a new symbolic weight during World War II .... Beginning with the Memorial Day parade in Washington in 1942 ... flags appeared everywhere and, thanks to [President FDR’s] example, the display of Old Glory on private homes, businesses, and commercial products became common practice” (76). The ability of the flag to grace a private home meant that everyone could partake of its meaning, share its association, mark the national community. The 1946 Congressional Flag code made the flag a religious object, with rules for devotion. The flag unified a country that was based on diversity; without allegiance to a common religious goal, the country could focus on patriotism, on protecting the country that allowed individual and collective freedom to flourish. The flag aspires, pushes upward, and lifts the spirit, as Marling and Wetenhall comment (204). Furthermore, it is itself an intertextual symbol, “a field of multiple projections,” as Robert Hariman and John Lucaites describe:

Such projections include direct assertions of territorial conquest and possession, totemic evocations of blood sacrifice, demands for political loyalty to suppress dissent, representations of consensus, tokens of political participation, articulations of civil religion, ornamental signs of civic bonding amid a summer festival, and affirmations of political identity and rights while dissenting. Given the rich intertextuality of the iconic photo, it is unlikely that only one of these registers is in play, and probable that any of them could be activated by particular audiences. (Hariman and Lucaites 371)

At a simple denotational level, however, there are questions about Franklin’s *Ground Zero Spirit* that cannot be answered without association to Rosenthal’s photograph from Iwo Jima. For example, abstracting ourselves from immediate history, how do we know, on the basis of the photograph alone, that the three firefighters are *raising* the flag? Is it not possible that they are lowering a flag left standing amidst the ruins of the Trade Center? Secondly, without the context of the photograph and the immediate, collective memory of the events of September 11, there are no indications that the photograph takes place in New York City, amidst the rubble of the former World Trade Center, or in September 2001. The necessary historical detail that contextualizes the photograph also gives the photograph its profound meaning. Furthermore, the *Ground Zero Spirit* photograph is significant because it is like and unlike Iwo Jima. Rosenthal’s Marines gaze at the ground, struggling enmasse to plant the flag on inhospitable, rocky, and unwelcoming ground. *Ground Zero*’s men gaze at the



flag, adjusting its folds and presentation, very much aware of its meaning for the workers at the site. It is this attentiveness that provides interpretive clues. McWilliam's and Eisengrein's hands are on the flag; they look up at its folds. Iconographically, to look downward is to lower, and lower the spirits of the spectator. Looking up, as in the Renaissance images of the Madonna and the saints, represents hope. The attention of Johnson, McWilliams, and Eisengrein attests to the need to raise the flag as a symbol on this day.

Rosenthal's photograph was compared to other works of American patriotic art: Archibald M. Willard's *The Spirit of '76* (1876; 1891) and Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851), both of which employ, like Franklin and Rosenthal's images, triangular formats. In both *Spirit of '76* and *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, the American flag occupies the central axis of the painting and is the highest physical point of the image. In a now-famous editorial from February 1945, the Rochester *Times-Union* compared Rosenthal's photograph to DaVinci's *Last Supper* and drew attention to the structural gesture in which "the outstretched arms and the foremost man's left leg leads the eye directly to the flag." The writer continues:

Oddly, though, the eye does not rest there. A slight breeze is stirring, not enough to unfurl the folds of the flag, but enough to enlist the forces of nature on the side of the Marines who are hurrying to raise the staff. So the eye, turning back to a line parallel to the outstretched arms, follows the blood-red stripes to the entirely empty space in the upper right where the flag, in just a moment, will be. Few artists would be bold enough to make empty space the center of their picture. And yet this bit of art from life has done just that. In that space is a vision of what is to be. (qtd. in Marling and Wetenhall 204)

There are, however, three versions of Franklin's photograph, which complicates the analysis. In the first, the original, the tip of the flag pole is visible. The men occupy the lower one third of the image. The flag is directly centered over the rubble. The second version is cropped; the top of the flag pole is not visible, the flag moves slightly closer to the top of the image space, and the men occupy half of the picture. The United States postage stamp commemorating "heroes" further crops the image, so the men occupy more than half of the image space. Trimming the visible picture space thus alters the meaning of the image, moving from a struggle of the individual in the face of adversity to a new hero that is not superhuman, but a common man.

Following the original appearance of Franklin's photograph in the Bergen County *Record*, it began to appear in other locations, in both borrowed and direct representations. *Newsweek* chose one of the cropped versions for its cover on September 24, 2001, thus establishing the picture's popularity. Franklin won several awards as a photojournalist. By the 1-year anniversary of 9/11,

the *Record* established a special website to accommodate requests for use of the photograph. Its reprint could include buttons, pins, mugs, cups, cards, CD covers, clothing, stationery, needlework, jewelry, mousepads, posters, rubber stamps, sculptures, and computer wallpaper. Franklin reports that he began collecting authorized and unauthorized uses, “carved pumpkins, Christmas ornaments, miniature statues, key chains, paintings, tattoos, humidors, clocks, watches, light switches, snow globes, and leather jackets” (Franklin, “Sept. 11”). The photograph “has been spotted in places like prisons, barns, front lawns, fake dollar bills, tree ornaments, chocolate bars, bumper stickers, light switches, billboards” (Szentmiklosy). The U.S. Post Office released its Heroes 2001 postage stamp on June 7, 2002, affixing a seven-cent surcharge to benefit the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

A proposal for a life-sized memorial of the three men created for the FDNY Brooklyn headquarters caused controversy, when the men were physically altered to represent the multicultural “spirit” of New York rather than the individuality of Johnson, McWilliams, and Eisengrein. This is a battle of specificity and symbolism. Johnson, McWilliams, and Eisengrein view their act as a specific contribution to history. It was their choice to intervene at this moment and they would like to be remembered as the men who took the initiative. John Bradley, Rene Gagnon, and Ira Hayes, the surviving members of the Marines who raised the flag at Iwo Jima, became celebrities after the Rosenthal photo achieved popularity. They recreated the flag raising in cities across the United States for the war bond fund-raising tours. Gagnon was offered a contract from Hollywood. Although Johnson, McWilliams, and Eisengrein eschew publicity, they consented to allow Madame Tussaud’s to recreate their flag raising into wax for the New York museum because it was the action and spirit that was represented and not their own selves. Yet their fight to retain control over the image as an act of historical particularity is partially in vain, because their act was symbolic and strong symbols like the flag immediately transcend their historical context. As the letter to the editors at *Newsweek* attests, Americans were waiting for a symbol, and this was it.

As with any work of art (or photojournalism) in the age of mechanical reproduction, the question of what the photograph means depends on its dissemination and reception. *Ground Zero Spirit* is in such demand that a strict licensing agreement is employed to control its appearance on commercial—and academic—projects. In the world of image studies, the paragonal contest between word and image is here exemplified, with word winning. Legal discourse restricts how the image is received by the public, placing the image into certain contexts where it can be viewed. Some artist/interpreters have avoided the licensing fee by creating an image that echoes but does not reproduce Franklin’s photograph. Is this plagiarism? Or intertextuality?

A potent critique of the photograph, for its absence, its denotation and connotation, has come from the Women firefighters of New York City. While the



temporal fact that three men raised an American flag at Ground Zero exists ontologically, the *idea* that three White men (and not women, gays, or Blacks) could represent work at Ground Zero, but also the community of “America” and its spirit, seemed to test the capacity of imaging to be inclusive. The photograph functions, with the absence of women, as a powerful persuasive device that women did *not* exist at Ground Zero. Lt. Brenda Berkman of the New York Fire Department, in remarks made at the National Women’s Law Center’s 2001 Awards Dinner in Washington, DC, listed the roles that women played in the immediate rescue at Ground Zero: firefighter, EMT, police officer, ambulance driver, nurse, doctor, construction worker, chaplain, Red Cross worker, and military personnel:

The reality is that women have contributed to the aftermath of the World Trade Center attack in every imaginable way. But the face the media has put on the rescue and recovery efforts in New York City is almost exclusively that of men. Where are the pictures or stories of Captain Kathy Mazza shooting out the glass in the lobby of one of the towers to allow hundreds of people to flee the building more quickly?

In becoming the iconic image of 9/11, *Ground Zero Spirit* imprints an idea of heroism on the collective consciousness of Americans, and that idea is entirely male. Ultimately, it must be read for what is absent as much as for what is present. As the women firefighters in New York—the 25 out of 11,500—attest, the representation of the males in the photograph is fact, evidence of the discriminatory policies of the FDNY against hiring women. That the losses at the Trade Center were male “reflects the way the FDNY has tested and hired over the past two decades,” writes Terese Floren, editor of WFS Publications, but it does not attest to “the merits or failures of women firefighters.” Berkman returns to the issue of representation: “When we were growing up, we did not see any women role models in firefighting and the trades” (qtd. in Willing). That *Ground Zero Spirit* exemplifies the male ideal is disturbing in the long run because it represents rescue work as the domain of men. Berkman’s point is important, yet even she, like the three men themselves, does not realize the full measure of the photo’s significance: The image relies on the interpretant, the mental representation that is individuated for each viewer. The photo *means*, not because Johnson, McWilliams, and Eisengrein were there physically, but because they represented the millions who were there only “in spirit”—or perhaps more accurately, and to echo Wibben’s thoughts, those who were there due to electronic and print media.

One of the important concepts for any discussion of the role of the viewer in images is the relationship between viewing and time. Images work on us synchronically and diachronically. Synchronically, we view the image that represents the present. Diachronic viewings are slightly more complicated, for we

view an image that represents the past and was created in the past, but we also view contemporaneous images with a knowledge of their precursors and their previous meanings. “As American attitudes and values changed, so the public estimate of the Iwo Jima motif shifted from near adoration to neglect and back again to a patriotic pride mingled with nostalgia for the lost age of unambiguous heroes” (Marling and Wetenhall 196). Intervening in the history of the image was the suspicion over the military fostered by Vietnam and, even earlier, post-war films that were critical of the violence of war. The nostalgia for the masculine American hero is evident again in the Ground Zero photograph, in which the flag raisers are common men, focused on their duty and, symbolically, on their country. Some of the commentary following the attacks of 9/11 praised the return to the “unambiguous hero” of the 21st century. However, just as the fiction was in place in 1945, it is again in place. Heroes are manifestations of national desire.

In the introduction of this visual text, we have drawn upon a text that is popular, widely imitated, photojournalistic, and symbolic in order to introduce key ideas about the problems of vision and representation and in order to introduce key terms—*paragonal*, *intertextual*, *interpretant*—which we explain further a bit later. We have also, after much debate, decided to reproduce the newly famous photograph by Thomas E. Franklin, despite it being readily available to readers’ consciousness due to its reproduction and extensive distribution. In addition, there is evidence from psychologists and historians who have studied memory and “flashbulb” memories that “the *distortion* of memory traces” occurs at the level of the interpretant, at the moment that the visual image or event is encoded (Winter and Sivan). In other words, our memory of the photograph may habitually encode distortions. According to Winter and Sivan, this is a frequent predicament with visual memory:

[I]nterference operates either by manipulating major so-called “facts” and/or by introducing key interpretive terms which have clear-cut resonances for the *semantic memory* of the individual and are, of course, culture-dependent. The result is a new script which integrates pieces of information brought to bear upon the interpretation of the event. As we all know, such new scripts may vary dramatically from the original memory, let alone the event itself. (13–14)

As David Campbell commented in the online edition of *INFOinterventions*, “what we saw on television on September 11 wasn’t what the event was like. The event was much more horrific than the impression conveyed by the television pictures” (in other words, if you were *there*, physically present). The caution is well placed in the context of a discussion of visual rhetoric: As readers of image texts, we must always be aware that the photograph does not reveal the truth. And while intertextuality can be a positive means of enabling inter-

pretation through comparison of the image at hand to a previous image, it can also be a means of negating the veracity of memory by introducing image texts that have very little to do with the events of a particular time and place. This aspect of what Henry Louis Gates calls *signifying*—texts talking to one another, repetition, revision—is introduced below.

## I. INTERTEXTUALITY

Although there is not space here to do justice to Gerard Genette's fascinating study of intertextuality titled *Palimpsests*, an overview must suffice to gather interest in his work for visual rhetoricians. Genette prefers the term *trans-textuality* to *intertextuality* and he defines this quality of a text as "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (1). By "concealed," Genette intends to invoke the subtle allusion, or the palimpsest, that which is hidden behind the writing rather than directly articulated within it. The palimpsest, a paper on which one written text has been effaced and covered by another, represents writing again, written upon twice. Intertextuality is "a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts," writes Genette (1), but it is only one of five modes of allusion that can bring an occluded precursor to the fore. Readers of this text may find it useful to see these acts of copresence delineated as "forms of transtextuality." In Genette's categorization, intertextuality alone refers to quoting (with or without quotation marks), plagiarism, allusion, and the perception by the reader of the relationship of one work to another. *Paratextuality* indicates the presence of material around the primary text, but in which the text is embedded: the framing acts of title, subtitle, preface, illustration, book covers, dust jackets, and the setting of the book that is dependent on external conditions, which the readers cannot ignore. (See Philippe Lejeune, Calinescu for excellent readings of paratextuality.) *Metatextuality* moves outward to consider the effects of commentary and critical relationships posed between one text and another. *Hypertextuality* indicates a level of dependence between texts: Text B is unable to exist without Text A. At this point, Genette's work borrows from that of Peirce's concept of the *index*, and further, as we note later, echoes Jacques Derrida's description of the *trace* as a mark that points to the past and the future. Finally, in a play on words, Genette's concept of *architextuality* indicates a generic classification of the text or object that must result from paratextuality. In other words, the library classification of a text with call letters as a PR or an HQ depends on the degree to which the text is like other texts. Similarly, the description of a photograph as a family snapshot or a work of photojournalism such as *Ground Zero Spirit* indicates the existence of outside factors in classifying the object. The categories, it is evident, are interrelated and fluid. One object may move, over time, from one architextual category to another.

## II. PEIRCE ON SEMIOTICS

In the late 19th century, the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce articulated several theories of signs and representation that have continued to influence rhetoricians. Peirce's theory derived from John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in which Locke proposed that the study of "semeiotic" (now commonly referred to as "semiotics") would afford a theory of knowledge. Peirce's conviction was phenomenological: Things exist in a reality outside of what we perceive or think about them. His background in the natural sciences caused him to search for a logical, scientific method that would not be confused by what he termed "beliefs." Three theories of signs emerge in his philosophy of logic as semiotic, and each of these theories is parsed in detail, but the one that is used most frequently by rhetoricians to discuss both language and images is the triadic theory of icon, index, and symbol. Peirce's distinctions are useful to rhetoricians because they establish a formal terminology for considering different types of imagistic sign systems, from representational, through diagrammatical, to allegorical.

Two levels of terminology establish the relationship of sign to referent. At the first level, Peirce contended that a sign stands in for an Object; it "tells about" its Object (100). He gave this sign the name *representamen*. The *representamen* is rhetorical; it "addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign" and this equivalent sign is called the "*interpretant*" (Peirce 99). The interpretant represents an idea that Peirce called "the ground of the representation" (qtd. in De Lauretis, *Alice* 19). The *interpretant* is thus a mental representation; it is not a person. Thus, both *representamen* and *interpretant* relate to the same Object. In using the work of Peirce to establish a semiology of art, Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson contend that the interpretant is associative and connotative. "The interpretant is constantly shifting; no viewer will stop at the first association" (189). Nonetheless, this does not mean that interpretants are unique; interpretants are shot through with "culturally shared codes" (De Lauretis 167). "Interpretants are new meanings resulting from the signs on the basis of one's habit. And habits, precisely, are formed in social life" (Bal and Bryson 202). At this point, ideological constructions of gender enter into the creation of the interpretant.

Once these terms are understood, they facilitate understanding Peirce's distinction between icon, index, and symbol. This trio of signs is not graded or hierarchical; rather, each term describes ways that different types of images may be understood. The icon may be abstract or representational; it possesses a character that makes it significant. A vacation photograph and Charles Schultz's Snoopy are icons, but so is a pencil streak indicating a geometric line. The Object does not have to exist, for it is easy enough to visually represent an alien from "outer space" or a solar system even though we have not seen either. Peirce refers to the icon as an image.

The index, on the other hand, depends on the existence of the Object to have left what Jacques Derrida, in *Dissemination*, would later call a “trace.” Therefore, the indexical image holds an existential relationship to its Object and often raises in the viewer a memory of a similar Object. The classical example of an indexical sign is a bullet hole. The interpretant indicates, “here is a hole in the front door” and relates the hole to other holes, but not to the Object (a bullet making the hole) because the Object—the bullet and the gun—are missing. In Roland Barthes’ words, the index “points but does not tell” (62). Peirce describes the index as a diagram.

The symbol is the most abstract of the three sign types. It depends on the *interpretant*, that is, the mental representation in the mind’s eye. Therefore, the symbolic image holds a conventional relationship to its Object that is not contingent on resemblance. “The act of interpretation ... brings [the symbolic sign] to life,” write Bal and Bryson (192). Peirce calls the symbol a metaphor.

*Ground Zero Spirit* operates on all of these levels. As an image/icon, at the literal level, the three men who raise the American flag are performing a common action in American civil society. Thus, denotationally, their action is recognizable to that group that Benedict Anderson called “the imagined community.” Memory of similar flag raising ceremonies, of the soaring existence and the dreadful collapse of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, of the deaths of hundreds of firefighters and rescue workers moves the image into the realm of indexical and diagrammatic sign, for the index points to the prior existence of these Objects, even though they are not directly visible within the frame of the photograph. Metaphorically, the idea of the firefighter in American culture carries symbolic weight; their triangulated pose evokes the memory of the Marines at Iwo Jima, of courage under fire, of American ideals of toughness, grit, and masculinity. Again, while Peirce does not propose his levels of signs as a hierarchy, *Ground Zero Spirit* fulfills all aspects of his taxonomy, making the photograph appealing, disturbing, popular, contentious, and powerful.

### III. BARTHES ON SIGNS

A third linguistic approach to the study of images derives from the work of the French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, whose published lectures titled *A Course in General Linguistics* provided the foundation for the study of signs in French thought of the late 20th century. It is neither practical nor theoretically sound to reduce Saussure’s ideas to a single thesis, but we will focus here on his system of linguistic differences between words, or signs, which was adopted and further explicated by Roland Barthes. According to Saussure, understanding is established by difference; practically speaking, we understand *cat* because *cat* is different from *dog*. The names are merely arbitrary, established by social and linguistic convention, rather than having any existential link to the

object itself. Barthes extended this refusal to name to the differences between literature and painting. "Why not wipe out the difference between literature and painting," he asked, "in order to affirm more powerfully the plurality of 'texts'?" (55). The question is not as polemical as it may seem. Barthes raised it in the context of his analysis of Balzac's short story *Sarrasine*, *S/Z*, a treatise that set out to exhaustively identify the codes that comprise written work and the experience of reading it. Rather than seeking to overthrow two disciplines, textual studies and art history, he wanted to parse vision and experience as semiological.

Thus, both paint and word refer not to an external reality, but "from one code to another" (55). Reality is always framed by codes that determine what the writer or painter looks at—what they believe is worthy of vision and representation—and what mode of representation they select to describe that reality (such as the selection of word or image, but also of poetry, Cubistic canvas, film, etc., what Barthes terms a "code of the arts" [55]). As Hariman and Lucaites acknowledge in their discussion of Rosenthal's Iwo Jima image, the frame created by the boundaries of the photograph "marks the work as a special selection of reality that acquires greater intensity than the flow of experience before and after it" (366). As Andrea Kaston Tange demonstrates in this book, 19th-century middle-class homemakers selected socially coded home design items to represent their position in society. Quite literally, these objects conveyed the meaning of their lives. Rather than depict reality accurately, or event impressionistically, the creator assembles and arranges "blocks of meaning" so that the description becomes yet another meaning. Rather than reveal truth or provide understanding, the poem or the image offers yet another meaning. The import of Barthes' insights for the study of visual rhetoric is that the assembling of these "blocks of meaning" is a rhetorical act. Furthermore, Barthes reminds us to avoid seeking the transparent, definitional relationship between image and referent. While an image may index something exterior (that which is "real"), "it points but does not tell" (62).

For the rhetorician studying visual material, Barthes' work is significant in instructing us to continue following the chain of signifiers and connotations. *S/Z* alone is rife with words that reference fluidity, movement, and instability, words such as "layering," "agglomeration," "sequentiality," "dynamic," and "infinite thematics." Just as Peirce allowed for an infinite series of connotations in his concept of the interpretant, so also does Barthes' thesis allow for an infinite series of meanings built from blocks of text. "Visual *representation* gives way to visual *rhetoric* through subjectivity, voice, and contingency," comments Barbie Zelizer. With photojournalism, or with other representational media, we are able to project "altered ends" for the representations we see. This insertion of the spectator's desires for the future is like the tense in verbal discourse, as tense can locate a moment into the past (that which has already happened and cannot be changed; visual *representation*), the present (what

Zelizer terms the “as is”), or the future (the moment of possibility that Zelizer calls the “as if”). Rhetorically, “as if” has the greatest power because it directly involves the spectator and depends on the spectator’s ability to forecast and manipulate contingencies in order to create a meaning.

This sophisticated reading between disciplines—between linguistics, rhetoric, and photojournalism—offers the next step to the Sister Arts Tradition as a bridge between disciplines. We must offer a caution, nonetheless. Certainly, the idea that verbal and visual modes of representation could be understood as symbolic practices, each with a signifying grammar, is a powerful argument for the founding of a visual rhetoric. Yet it denies the fact that verbal and visual representation work with particular media that also, in themselves, signify. A daub of paint is existentially different from a stitch with silk thread, and each has its own mode of conveying meaning. One of our projects as visual rhetoricians is to differentiate ourselves from semiology by studying material as rhetoric. What does the character of and texture of pencil on paper or a smooth and reflective wall with names etched into its face impart to the meaning that the spectator takes from the object?

## VISUAL RHETORIC, AN INDISCIPLINE

In a commentary published in *Art Bulletin*, Mitchell explores the problems of a discipline that could be termed “visual culture studies.” Primarily, Mitchell’s concern is that visual culture is by its very nature interdisciplinary. In explicating the image through verbal media, scholars occupy two spaces of inquiry. “On the one hand,” he writes, “visual culture looks like an ‘outside’ to art history, opening out of the larger field of vernacular images, media, and everyday visual practices in which a ‘visual art’ tradition is situated, and raising the question of the difference between high and low culture, visual art versus visual culture” (“Interdisciplinarity” 542). On the other hand, Mitchell continues, art history has always engaged issues of spectatorship, pleasure, and social relations, the interests of theorists of cultural studies. The positive outcome of this interdisciplinarity is that “visual culture is ... a site of convergence and conversation across disciplinary lines” (540). The more negative aspects are that more conventional disciplines argue to claim the new work, to institutionalize it as a concept or field of study, or argue for its insubstantiality, the very pluralism that gives it meaning diluting its impact.

Thus, Mitchell proposes a term that we feel describes the cross-disciplinary work of visual rhetoric, the mingling of verbal and visual emphases, and the exciting possibilities for inquiry. That term is *indiscipline*. Mitchell locates the “indiscipline” “at the inner and outer boundaries of disciplines,” sites of inquiry characterized by “turbulence or incoherence”: “If a discipline is a way of insuring the continuity of a set of collective practices (technical, social, professional, etc.), ‘indiscipline’ is a moment of breakage or rupture, when the conti-



nuity is broken and the practice comes into question” (“Interdisciplinarity” 541). The breakage in this sense occurs within the interdiscipline, when “the way of doing things” is restated so many times, in so many new ways, that there is no coherence—nor is there a way to return to a pre-critical moment prior to when two or more disciplines merged.

The type of paradigm shift that Mitchell captures with the term “indiscipline” is occurring at this very moment across the humanities. The previously unquestioned hegemony of verbal text is being challenged by what Mitchell labels the “pictorial turn” (*Picture Theory*)—a growing recognition of the ubiquity of images and of their importance in the dissemination and reception of information, ideas, and opinions—processes that lie at the heart of all rhetorical practices, social movements, and cultural institutions. In the past decade, many scholars have called for a collaborative venture, in essence for the *disciplining* of the study of visual phenomena into a new field, variously labeled visual rhetoric, visual culture studies, or “image studies” (Roy Fox). This proposed new field would bring together the work currently being accomplished by scholars in a wide variety of disciplines, including art theory, anthropology, rhetoric, cultural studies, psychology, and media studies. Barbara Stafford argues that the current situation, in which researchers and scholars in varied disciplines study the production, dissemination, and reception of images independently, is counterproductive, at best, and ultimately unsustainable:

It seems infeasible, either intellectually or financially, to sustain multiple, linear specializations in art, craft, graphic, industrial, film, video, or media production and their separate histories. Instead, we need to forge an imaging field focused on transdisciplinary *problems* to which we bring a distinctive, irreducible, and highly visual expertise. (10)

Disciplines provide structures and conventional practices for supporting, disseminating, and responding to projects based on a common area of inquiry, and these structures and conventions can be highly productive by increasing efficiency, sharing ideas among scholars, and enhancing the credibility of individual studies as well as of the discipline as a whole. An important part of the work of any discipline is to develop common terminology, with fairly settled definitions of the terms that the discipline recognizes as important for doing its work. But disciplinary conventions also filter and constrain, and disciplines are defined by their boundaries—as much by what topics, questions, and practices are *not* accepted as part of the disciplinary discourse as by those that are. At this early point in the history of image studies, it may be too soon to settle on accepted practices, disciplinary conventions, and perhaps even on terminological definitions.

When we solicited contributions for this volume, we asked all of the contributors to think about and to express in their chapters their own definitions of



the term *visual rhetoric*. We deliberately did *not* set out to develop a single definition of visual rhetoric that we would try to persuade others to accept; rather, we wanted to collect definitions from which individual scholars were working. We felt, here at the beginning of what may prove to be a renaissance of image studies, that collecting some of these definitions and allowing individuals to demonstrate how their own ideas and assumptions about the term influence their work would provide more heuristic value than trying to settle on a single definition.

Some of the contributors have answered our call very explicitly; others have implied more than expressed their notions of the term *visual rhetoric*. But all of them attempt to explicate and demonstrate methodologies for analyzing various types of visual texts. It is important, at this point in the history of visual studies, to collect a wide range of such methods, examining the explicit and implicit theoretical stances behind them, before disciplinary conventions begin to restrict the kinds of work that disciplinary structures will reward.

In some ways, the contributors' responses indicate a surprising level of agreement. At one level or another, every contributor rejects the notion that a clear demarcation can be drawn between "visual" and "verbal" texts. In almost every chapter, the reader will find some discussion of the ways in which the visual and the verbal bleed over into each other's territory. In popular film (Blakesley), political cartoons (Edwards), captioned photographs (Finnegan), needlepoint samplers (Goggin), advertisements (Hope), political campaign films (Kendall & Strachan), statistical graphs (Kostelnick), and in some of Blair's examples of "visual arguments," we see visual and verbal expression working together in an effort to prompt a desired response from the audience. Stroupe discusses this blending of the visual and the verbal explicitly in his discussion of "hybrid" literacies.

The chapters by Kaston Tange and by Dickinson and Maugh push the definition of visual rhetoric to include the study of constructed spaces, but even here we see the importance of verbal text for a rhetorical process that seems, at first glance, dominated by the visual. Dickinson and Maugh discuss the verbal text on a Wild Oats store's display signs, text that explicitly points out the global nature of the commercial enterprise, even while the visual and spatial design of the store works to emphasize a sense of "locality." And Kaston Tange examines the ways in which home design and images of home life in Victorian culture reflected dominant ideologies, assumptions about which were disseminated largely through written texts. Finally, Helmers' analysis of the rhetorical nature of visual art points out the necessity of verbal discourse—in particular, the ways in which narrative discourse is used—to comprehend, to interpret, and to respond to works of an entirely visual medium.

Of course, others have argued before us that words and images most often, perhaps inevitably, work together in persuasive discourse, and that a "visual turn" in scholarly work in the humanities should not ignore the insights into

the primary influence of language on all human enterprise, including the dissemination of, interpretation of, and response to visual texts. James Elkins argues perhaps most explicitly and forcefully against any sharp demarcation between words and images, insisting that “the word–image opposition is ... demonstrably untrue” and persists largely because it “correspond(s) to institutional habits and needs” (84). In this volume, though, the contributors do not stop at arguing that visual and verbal modes of communication work together in complex ways; rather, they offer analyses of the workings of these interrelated modes in a wide variety of rhetorical situations.

A glance at the table of contents will demonstrate that the contributors to this volume analyze a wide variety of visual modes of communication. One of our aims, of course, was to demonstrate some of the many kinds of texts that could be considered instances of visual rhetoric. However, it is also important to note the wide variety of rhetorical situations in which these texts are operative, with their attendant variety of rhetorical methods, motives, and cultural assumptions. A hint at this variety can be gleaned merely by noting the different physical sites in which these texts are located—for example, political conventions, editorial pages, movie theatres, art museums, suburban food stores, government documents, as well as the Victorian drawing room and, as in Goggin’s examination of needlepoint, orphanage schools in the 19th century. This wide range of texts, rhetorical situations, and sites of praxis supports our point that it may be premature to begin constructing the boundaries that would define a “discipline” of visual studies in the formal sense. Perhaps, at least for awhile, it would be more productive to continue pushing against existing disciplinary boundaries and to maintain the “indiscipline” status, continuing to question all current practices while developing new ones. This may be a romantic idea, and it may be impractical, as Stafford argues, to maintain this undisciplined stance for long, but it is, we believe, both necessary and desirable to maintain the current unsettled state of visual studies for at least the near future.

Perhaps the most useful possible outcome of a volume such as this—one that attempts to capture a small part of the wide range of work that is possible when a field begins to take seriously the study of images as important cultural and rhetorical forces—is that it makes explicit the seemingly infinite range of possibilities for those who are interested in studying rhetorical transactions of all kinds. It is this openness, this resistance to closure, that drew us to the field of rhetoric in the first place. And, as we hope the chapters in this volume demonstrate, every new turn in the study of rhetorical practices reveals yet more possibilities for study, for discussion, for wonder. The visual turn is just the latest of these, but it has revealed a seemingly inexhaustible supply of new questions, problems, and objects of study—so many that any one volume can contain only a tiny fraction of the possibilities. Knowing that one has barely touched on the range of possibilities in a vast new area of inquiry is humbling, but tremendously exciting. It is, perhaps, the best of all possible worlds.

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