

**Rico Frederick**

Adjunct Professor  
Graphic Design II  
201:085:232

Office hours:  
By appointment

Department of Arts,  
Culture & Media

Chair: Ned Drew

Course pre-requisites:  
As specified by major sequence

\*This course is a BFA in  
Graphic Design Requirement.

**PROJECT 2**

# IMAGE MATRIX

The human mind often works by association. In visual communication, associations are the basis for creating unique messages. Unique links among images gives the viewer new understanding, appreciation, and comprehension while deciphering messages.

In design, Semiotics is the study of "signs" and how they relate to each other. The study of Semiotics permits us to compare and make associations between images. This realization allows us to make stronger and more effective connections.

Students will develop an image "matrix" for this exercise consisting of several "cells" that relate to one another based on semiotic theory. This matrix will be used as a means for comparison. It will help us organize and visualize based on the "connections" amongst the "signs" of every cell and to understand how images are classified from the rudimentary to the complex in order to learn how to depict ideas to meet our communication goals.

The intent of this exercise is to make as many "connections" as possible. Start with finding a "Master" image. This image should be a visual interpretation of an abstract thought or feeling. You will then try to fill each adjacent cell with a sign that formally or conceptually relates.

Choose a concept from the following list:

| Sight / Smell / Touch / Listen / Fear / Peace / Chaos / Love / Anger / Urban /  
Hate / Nature / Silence / Rage / Joy / Technology / Future / Past / Identity

To create connections, we will focus on formal elaborations vs reduction, as well as the personal to universal understanding of signs.

**Readings**

*Graphic Design Solutions*  
by Robin Landa  
Chapter 6: Visualization  
& Color

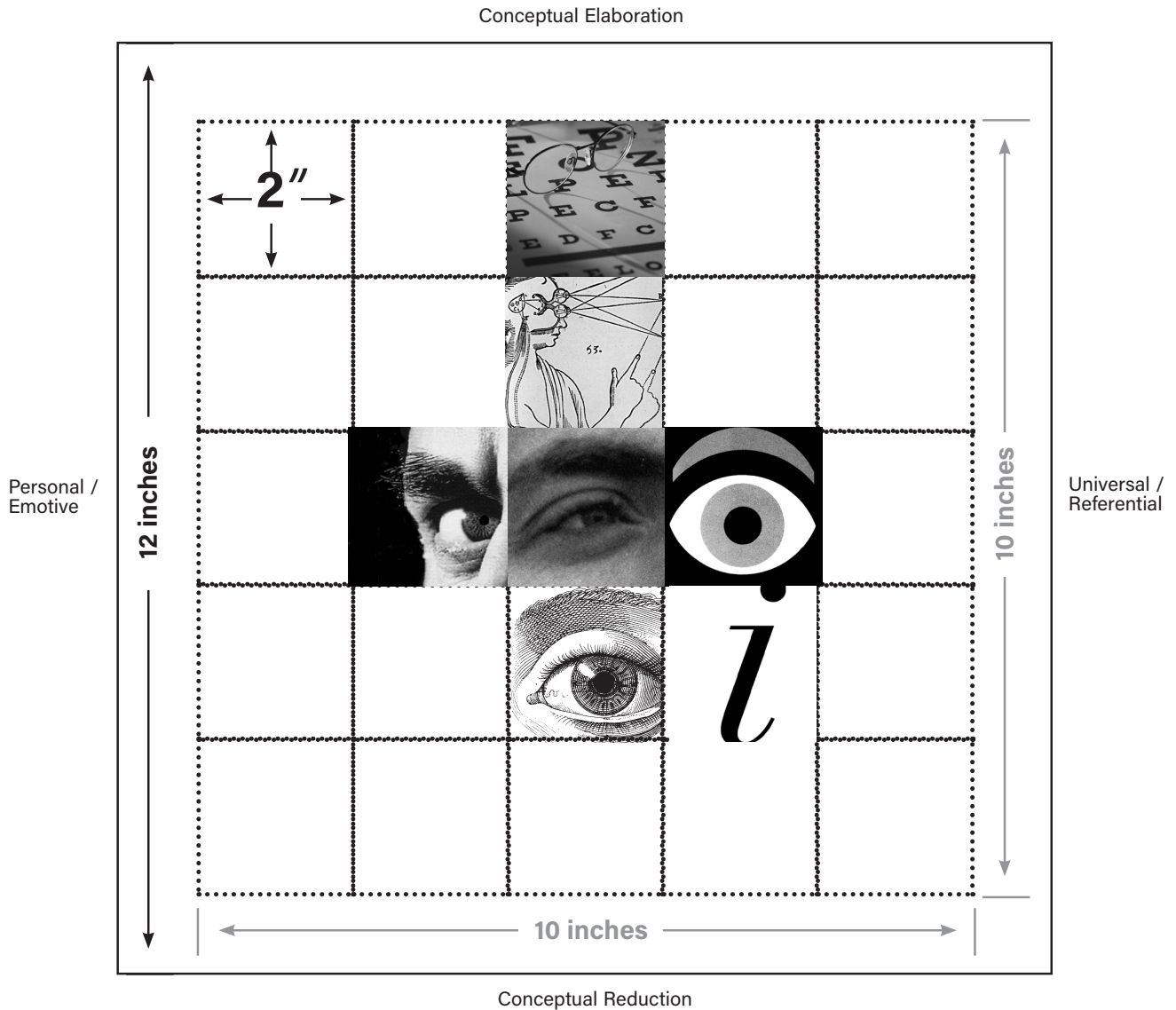
*Visible Signs* by David Crow  
Intro & Chapter 1

**Specs**

Size: 12" x 12" — each "cell" will be 2" x 2"  
Images: Drawings, Digital Illustrations, Scans, Tracings, Photographs & Collages  
DO NOT USE DIGITAL FOUND IMAGES  
DO NOT DESTROY ANY BOOKS OR MAGAZINES

**Final Presentation**

Full Color Print  
Mounted on White Hot Press Illustration Board sized 12 x 12, full bleed



To create connections, we will focus on the following Semiotic components only:

VERTICAL CONFIGURATIONS will consist of Semantic associations (images that deal with the meaning between signs).

/ From Middle-Upward > Build conceptual elaboration & meaning

/ From Middle-Downward > Reduce/simplify the concept & meaning

HORIZONTAL CONFIGURATIONS will consist of Syntactic associations (images that deal with the formal qualities between signs).

/ From Middle-to-Left > Build upon personal/emotive visual qualities

/ From Middle-to-Right > Universal visual references/re-interpretations

In this example, horizontal configurations consist of Syntactic associations: images that deal with the formal qualities between signs.

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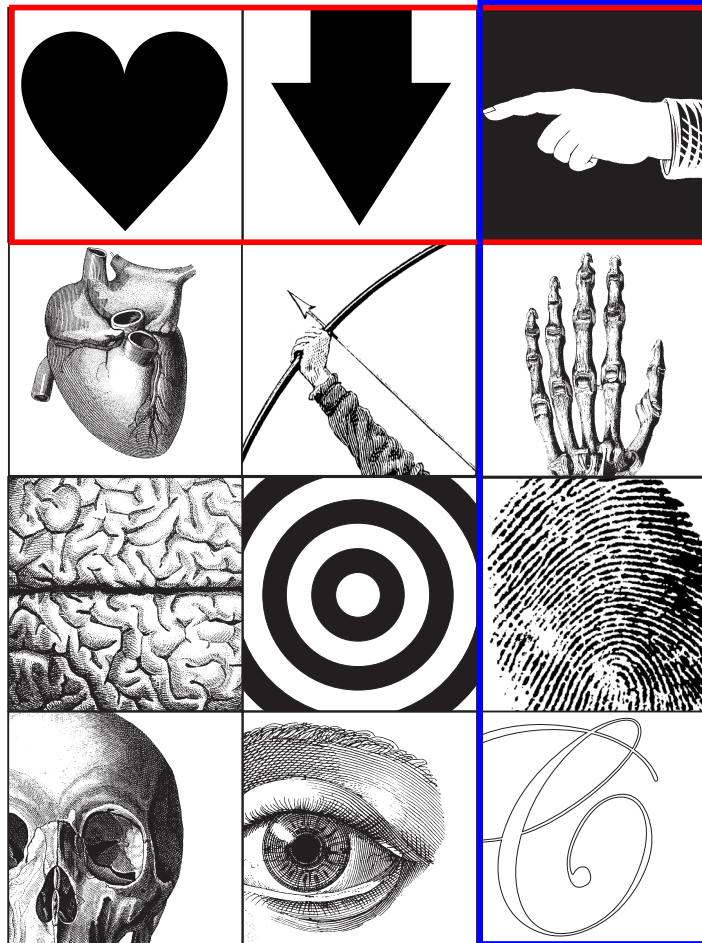
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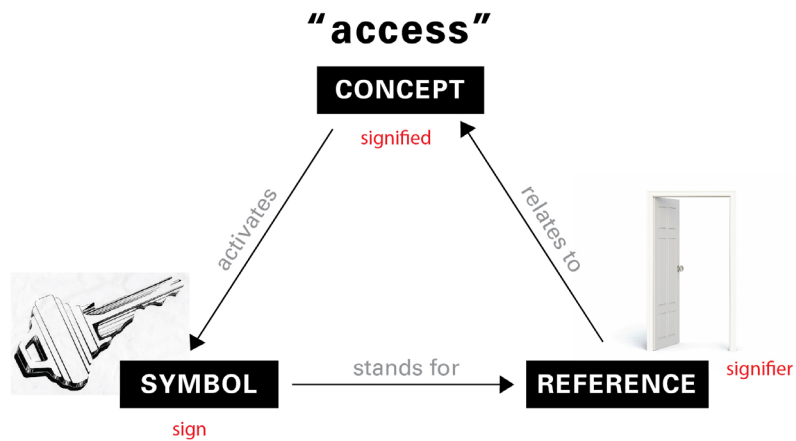
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Vertical configurations consist of Semantic associations: images that deal with the meaning between signs.

## Semiotic Theory



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**Semiotics — The Study of Signs**

1. Iconic signs convey the idea of the thing they represent by imitating them, such as a photograph of an object or action.
2. Indexical signs convey information by 'indicating' their physical connection with the thing they represent, such as smoke to fire.
3. Symbolic signs are general signs that have become associated with their meanings by conventional usage.

**Denotation & Connotation**

Denotation: a literal meaning. Could almost be described as obvious or common sense in its literalness.

Connotation: range of cultural, social or personal interpretations of a sign, image or word.

In the science or art of semiotics, *denotation* and *connotation* relate to the relationship between the signifier and the signified. How the connotative meaning of an image or a sign, for example, is understood by the "reader" becomes an analytical tool and also forms the basis of a useful strategy for the graphic designer.

**Sign, Signifier and Signified**

Graphic design signifies. It represents. It communicates.

A word is a signifier and the object it represents is the signified. A sign is produced when these two elements are brought together.

Today's audience has become highly sophisticated readers of signs and symbols. We decode meaning from compositions with subconscious ease. That is why it is important for designers to understand how meaning is formed.

**Isolation of the sign**

When choosing an image, you want to synthesize (or reduce the amount of graphic information) so that the audience is focused on the subject.

Some ways of achieving this is through: cropping; isolation (reducing the amount of background graphics); simplifying by reinterpreting the image through line drawing or silhouettes.

Remember the more clear and articulate each images is, the greater the chance that more individuals will understand your reason for using it as part of your communication/message.

**Design Strategies**

Visual Metaphor / Allegory / Compare and Contrast / Double entendre / Education / Humor / Iconic / Symbolic Indexical / Irony / Parody / Ridicule / Sarcasm / Satire / Scientific notations / Simile / Substitution