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Ways of perceiving

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In this essay I will explore three keywords to conclude with a final research question to explore in my third year project. My keywords are as follows: Motion graphics, Advertisement, and Visual communication. I have chosen these three keywords due to their significance in my design inspiration as well as interest. Throughout the essay I will touch on theories of clarity, history, intent, and utilise artists such as Paula Scher, John Krasner, Saul Bass and more. I will also explore theories from theorists such as Herbert Simon, Roland Barthes, Kyle Cooper and more.

Motion Graphics is essentially “Graphics in movement,” (Silveira, 2017) Artists utilise Typography, shapes, colour, and most importantly movement to produce pieces of design essential for things such as advertisement and promotion work. While Motion graphics was only born in the “1940’s, thanks to the experimental work of Oskar Fischinger.” (Silveria, 2017) Motion, itself, in art has dominated the art space for centuries, an example of this would be cave drawings. Kyle cooper states that “There was no refined system of words used to communicate 32,000 years ago, art was the prime communicator, and a motion graphics designer may look at the cave paintings and envision words of description materialising from the crags in the rock.” (Cooper,2006,Pg10) highlighting the utility and versatility in motion design overall. Developing from motion depicted in cave paintings found in “Lascaux France, and Altamira, Spain that depict animals with multiple legs to suggest movement” (Jon.k,

2013, pg10)To the early 20th century with intertitles used in silent movies, to the great Saul bass' utility of the design in Playhouse 1960, Alcoa premiere 1961 etc, to news stations, movie titles, and Graphic design, Motion graphics remains a key part in our culture of design, its innate as "We are taught at a very young age, to relate more to visuals in motion because they are convenient, easy to remember and instinctual." (Cooper,2006,Pg9) Motion graphics and traditional graphic design work in the same way of utilising shape, colour, typography, and style to depict emotion, a feeling, a message. However, Motion graphics provides something tradition graphics could not, the depiction of motion. Felipe Silveria (2026) discusses how Before motion graphics, graphic design artwork was only usable on a flat format made to highlight its best qualities. While Graphic design focuses on creating designs for user interaction such as signage, brand identities, Logos, published text pieces etc, Motion graphics brings these ideas and elements to life through motion, using qualities such as time, speed, opacity, position, angle, and more. Through these qualities motion graphics can provide messages, inspiration, advice, and instruction through how they are made, ways in which this is done is by focusing on "what' is moving across the screen, typographical, pictorial, or abstract elements. And 'how' that something is moving." (Jon.k, 2013, pg16) This links back to what I said previously about us being attracted to motion innately due to its prevalence in our lives growing up in the 21st century, motion carries a lot of emotion through "The

speed, direction, and fluidity of movement” according to Carse & Waterman productions [LTD] (2025) this use of emotion can be utilised to convey messages in anyway the designer seems fit whether that's to advocate for a cause, provide information on a large scale, or advertise a product or introduce a movie etc. And in some cases the “Motion itself can be the message” With an influx of different software, styles, and tricks accessible to designers it's hard to know when something lacks clarity, even in graphic design, John Krasner relays that It is easy to get overwhelmed by the amount of tools you have as a designer (jon.k 2013) showcasing how important clarity and attention is. The ways in which something moves forces us to interpret it in specific ways. Capturing the attention of individuals in our fast-paced society seems impossible, motion graphics allows advertisers and other companies to put a pause on peoples scrolling or walking and allow them to focus on one thing entirely. BlueEdge states that 10% retention is had when looking at text alone and a 95% retention when the addition of graphics is present (BlueEdge, 2023), highlighting the power of movement. An artist who almost initiated the motion graphics movement was Saul Bass. Continuing his career as an established designer, Saul Bass later moved into movie production and title sequences. One title sequence that captured my attention was ‘The man with the golden arm.’ This piece of graphic design came from Saull bass asking the director Otto Preminger, “Why not make it move?” Fandor (2018) The title sequence is

choppy, flawed, and amateur but it shows intent, it shows clarity and care for the work. It provided a whole different aesthetic and message for the movie's opener; it provided the mystery and uncomfortable tense feeling that drug addiction in the movie can provide.



Figure 1 (The man with the golden arm title sequence, Saul Bass, 1955) (“The Man with the Golden Arm (1955) title sequence - YouTube”)

An advertisement is defined as “An industry used to call the attention of the public to something, typically a product or a service”

according to Adjust GmbH (2026) From this definition I notice the word attention the most, as that is the whole premise of an advertisement, to attract attention. This premise is backed up by the word advertisement and advert both being rooted in a Latin word “‘advertere,’ meaning turn towards.” (Angela. G, 2002, pg 9)

Advertisement works by capturing the attention of the public and relating, communicating, and conveying to them something. It is not as simple as promoting a product, “Advertising as we know it today uses layout and illustration, both

photography and art; it uses colour and music, even choreography and drama. So much more is going on than just a sales argument with the consumer” (Paul Feldwick, 2026) highlighting how much of an art advertisement is. How in which advertisements capture this attention is in a multitude of ways, like the tools of graphics design, colour, shape, imagery, bold typography are all utilised but in specific ways. With the influx of different texts and publications on display to us daily it is hard for advertisers to make their type bold enough or capturing enough, a tool used to bypass this is “The startling image” (Angela. G, 2002, pg10) and that advertisement agencies have been known to use “deliberately upsetting, outraging, or otherwise irritating to the general public” publications. Another method is typography, not specifically what it read as but what its viewed as and the message behind it. We are more likely to read handwriting text as something more human and personal as opposed to mechanical text generated on machines, things such as distinct handwriting featuring hearts as dots above eyes reads as a younger author. Sign and Symbols are another technique to provide context or to provide a direct message to people, semiotics plays an influential role in how we view advertisements because “Symbols are culturally agreed conventions” (Angela. G, 2002, pg82) meaning that we all agree that a heart represents love or yellow and black are typically warning signs. USCDornsife states that we see around 5,000 adverts per day (Dornsife, 2023), and the hook that makes people watch these

adverts is the emotional factor as “Ads are geared towards both thinking and feeling” (Dornsife,2023). Leading back to my previous statement, it is the colour, the imagery, the boldness that typically stands out. “Ads with the simple design and iconic imagery, that stand out form a busy environment, may make the most of the time available”(Dornsife, 2023), this raises the question of how far a design can go in order for it to be successful or fall flat and become clutter in someone’s eyesight on their phone etc. Roland Barthe was a key thinker in the study of semiotics and touched on its use in advertisement slightly. Gaining his knowledge from Ferdinand de Saussure, he explained that “Photography has a power to convert which must be analysed” (Paul Virilio, 2026) Meaning an image can not only show reality but also shift our perception of it. Highlighting how the conversion of meaning into something emotional, dramatic, joyous is a key tool used in advertisement, Barthe helps us realise that the more visuals are converted or reframed, the more information with meaning is constructed rather than simply communicated to us on an advert.



Figure 2(Nike just do it, 1988) Nikes ‘Just do it’

advertisement was launched in 1988 for their first television campaign, was created by the design studio Wieden+Kennedy. The brand adjusted their company for this

advertisement to appeal to a universal crowd and distance themselves from just their products to becoming a lifestyle brand. This simple, empowering piece of text highlights the significance of clarity and an emotional factor, motivation, and belief, in an advertisement, this contrasts now to modern day advertisements utilising tools such as motion graphics, bold colour, and a lack of clarity. This resurfaces the question of the balance of understanding and impact in advertisement.



(Figure 3 se7en title sequence, Kyle Cooper, 1995)

This piece of work is by the artist Kyle Cooper for a thriller named SE7EN, the title sequence used in SE7EN (1995) utilises dark, fragmented and unsettling imagery of razor blades cutting thin layers of skin, layered imagery with dark lighting, distressed handwritten typography and flickering glitch like motion graphics. This example of advertisement relates back to a key attention grabber of thrill or uncomfortableness. This contrast between Nikes clear and direct advert highlights the boundaries of advertisement may be bigger than what is shown commercially. It also highlights Barthes theory of photography having the power to convert emotions, as Cooper provides a dark tone

and atmosphere. This encompasses a key tension within advertisement where visual intensity can enhance emotional engagement but may also reduce clarity which, in a fast paced society, is need.

Visual communication is described as “Storytelling; it’s how we communicate information and create experiences across a range of visual mediums” (Falmouth,2026) highlighting its importance in the thought processes behind all aspects of design as “Information is a necessity for our survival.” (Zhang. Y, Yu. R, Shi. X, Hong.K ,2022) It provides clarity and meaning through communication of the design. Its use to our society is to “Help enrich our lives, teach us visual literacy and help us to understand systems, messages, and points of view.” (Zhang. Y, Yu. R, Shi. X, Hong.K ,2022) The way in which it does this is by using tools such as Typography, colour, and layout top help with immediate communication and understanding from the viewer. Meaning is applied to these designs through visual communication, distinct colours provide different meanings through colour theory, different typography provides the same effect with modernised type providing a futuristic, modern touch, or a serif type providing professionalism and an academic touch. The use of signs and symbols is another tool in visual communication to provide innate, direct messages. Highlighting how signs such as imagery do not just provide meaning on their own but do so through user interpretation and the agreed

agreement of signs meanings as “Signs derive meaning form cultural and social conventions.” (Bouzida, 2014. Pg1001)

Interpretation plays a significant role in communication, especially visual, showing another side where “The interpretation of visual messages depends on the viewer” (Jelle.B, 2024) not everyone views artwork the same or understand the tone of text the same. Herbert Simon was a key thinker in the overstimulation of society and the influx of new information we constantly witness, he says that “I have to eyes, there is only so much I can foveate on” (Jelle.B, 2024) showcasing how too much information often leads to underconsumption and a lack of comprehension from the viewer. It shows how visual communication is essential in ensuring clarity but does not always ensure attention if used incorrectly. This ties back to motion graphic and

its use in advertisement, the strong tools of shape, colour, typography, movement, and visual communication increases stimulation in a positive way, as shown before, but it reraises the question of the effective clarity and attention in the design in such an oversaturated market. The visual communication of motion graphics utilises

motion to direct eyes, the visual communication of motion graphics in advertisement utilises speed and emotion to grab the attention of the consumer or viewer. Paul Virilio is a key thinker when it comes to speed and politics, he focuses on the advancement of technology and attention. "Speed perverts the illusory order of normal perception. With speed, the world keeps on coming at us" (Paul. V, 2026) highlighting how fast paced visuals are not always processed properly or we are not given enough time to fully take them in. This is the contrast of visual communication and advertisement.



(Figure four, Paula Scher, 2015) This is the work of Paula Scher, a graphic designer who utilises visual communication well through her use of hierarchy, typography, and

colour. The use of large typography and shapes in the central plain of the piece directs your eye immediately there, the use of complimentary colours, orange and blue, with the contrast of the white to highlight the most important parts provides great visual communication and direction for the viewer. The campaign was used for the Atlantic theatre company in New York. The central design and its silhouette were used in other posters and advertisements for the company, providing a clear visual brand as well as recognisable features. The white spacings almost look like stage lights or even doors leading to different shows provided for the theatre company, providing great visual communication.

My keywords separate themselves from each other as they are all for different subjects. My first keyword, Motion graphics, is a product of art and design. How my keywords link together in a relationship is by the tool, the context, and the theory. Motion graphics is a tool used to provide information and shows how items move, Advertisement is the context for why motion graphics was propelled into the media in the 20th century, to appeal to the need of motion and a larger attention grabber. And the visual communication is the theory behind why things work, why the compositions and motion of the motion graphics provide meaning. I would like to know more about how motion graphics is used in advertisement, as well as how people view art and advertisements. My area of study I am most interested in is how

complex can a design be in advertisement to still withhold the principles of visual communication, clarity in a message. My research question will be “To what extent can motion graphics be pushed before clarity is lost in advertising?” When it comes to a possible practice based project for next year I was thinking about seeing how far I can push motion graphics advertisement and possibly advertise a single product or something similar with iterations, each advancing in visual communication, possibly focusing on hierarchy for one, text for another etc.

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