

Design

— Cinema



Helena Tude Machado

Master's Dissertation | Supervisor: Dr. Marta Varzim
MA Communication Design | Porto, 2019

An analysis of
the graphic language
as a narrative strategy
in Hollywood's
contemporary films

Design & Cinema:

**An analysis of the graphic language
as a narrative strategy in Hollywood's
contemporary films.**

Helena Tude Machado

Master's Dissertation
Supervisor: Dr. Marta Varzim

MA Communication Design
ESAD Matosinhos
Porto, 2019.



Abstract

Graphic design elements have always been part of cinema's hybrid language, as a material of expression manifested through the visual channel, together with the cinematographic image. This graphic language is present throughout an entire filmic narrative in the form of verbal, pictorial and schematic elements applied to extra-diegetic titles and animations, as well as intra-diegetic printed or handmade graphic props, which together form a movie's graphic identity and aid in conveying meaning to the narrative. The objective of this research is to investigate the intentional and strategic use of the graphic language in movies – also referred to as graphic configurations – as decisive or secondary elements in unfolding a narrative, contextualised into Hollywood's contemporary cinema. Through qualitative and quantitative methods, the research develops into historical and theoretical investigations, drawing constant parallels between cinema's and design's fields of study, which leads to the proposal of a system for analysing a movie's graphic strategy, by systematically recording the appearance of graphic configurations in movies and interpreting their meaning based on a set of categories and rules. This system is verified through the application to four detailed case studies, which together with the other findings present in the research, culminate in ten major conventions or guidelines for the further use of graphic configurations in the construction of any narrative film. The major conclusions also include the identification of the three main functions and levels of representation acquired by the graphic language in movies.

Key words

cinema, graphic language, visual communication, graphic analysis, film narrative, contemporary film, Hollywood

Resumo

Elementos do design gráfico sempre fizeram parte da linguagem híbrida do cinema, como matéria de expressão manifestada pelo canal visual, juntamente com a imagem cinematográfica. Essa linguagem gráfica se faz presente ao longo de toda uma narrativa fílmica na forma de elementos verbais, pictóricos e esquemáticos aplicados a títulos e animações extra-diegéticos, bem como objetos de cena gráficos intra-diegéticos, impressos ou feitos à mão, que juntos formam a identidade gráfica de um filme e auxiliam em transmitir significado à narrativa. O objetivo desta pesquisa é investigar o uso intencional e estratégico da linguagem gráfica nos filmes – também denominada configurações gráficas – como elementos decisivos ou secundários no desenvolvimento de uma narrativa, contextualizada no cenário do cinema contemporâneo de Hollywood. Por meio de métodos qualitativos e quantitativos, a pesquisa se desdobra em investigações históricas e teóricas, traçando paralelos constantes entre os campos do cinema e design, o que leva à proposta de um sistema para analisar a estratégia gráfica de um filme, através de uma coleta sistemática das configurações gráficas e a interpretação de seus significados com base em um conjunto de categorias e regras. Esse sistema é verificado pela aplicação em quatro estudos de caso detalhados, que, juntamente com outros achados presentes na pesquisa, culminam em dez principais convenções ou diretrizes para o uso futuro de configurações gráficas na construção de qualquer filme narrativo. As conclusões também incluem a identificação de três principais funções e níveis de representação incorporados pela linguagem gráfica nos filmes.

Palavras-chave

cinema, linguagem gráfica, comunicação visual, análise gráfica, filme narrativo, filme contemporâneo, Hollywood

Acknowledgments

I thank my supervisor, Dr. Marta Varzim, for the pertinent advising and motivational support throughout the entire year, always believing in my abilities to successfully complete this research.

I thank my father for the constant support and countless (virtual) discussions about the research topic, which were essential in defining the theme, as well as for all the suggestions and proofreading.

I thank Isabella Aragão for masterfully laying the grounds for this research.

I thank my friend and colleague Helena Nemeč for the partnership throughout this tough year, encouraging each other to (almost) never lose focus and determination.

Finally, I thank my mother and friends for being the best motivational supporters.

I could not have done it without you.



The cinema is really built
for the big screen and big sound,
so that a person can go into
another world and have
an experience.

David Lynch

Table of contents

	A note on terminology	11			
Chapter 1	Introduction	13			
	1.1 Methodology	15			
	1.2 Structure	16			
Chapter 2	Review of Literature	21			
	2.1 Historical context	21			
	2.1.1 Timeline: graphic design in film	22			
	The search for representation of the moving image	22			
	The silent film	23			
	The advent of sound	27			
	The American film industry and the shift to production design	29			
	The story before the story: graphic dimension of opening titles	34			
	The rise of computer graphics and digital cinema	37			
	Contemporary cinema and Hollywood	41			
	2.1.2 Final considerations	48			
	2.2 Theoretical framework	51			
	2.2.1 What is cinema?	51			
	The formal context	52			
	Semiotics of film language	54			
	The social context: narrative and diegesis	58			
	The filmmaking spectrum: realism vs. formalism	60			
	2.2.2 What is design?	64			
	Design as visual communication	65			
	Design as visual identification	68			
	The graphic language	70			
Chapter 3	Object of study: functions and strategic approaches of the graphic language in a filmic narrative	81			
	3.1 System of classification of graphic configurations	81			
	3.1.1 Main function	82			
	3.1.2 Form	84			
	3.1.3 Content	85			
	3.2 Methodology for graphic analysis	87			
	3.3 Case studies	91			
	3.3.1 Case study #1: (500) Days of Summer	93			
	Cinematic world	94			
	Secondary graphic approaches	94			
	Decisive graphic approaches	98			
	Final considerations	100			
	3.3.2 Case study #2: Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri	103			
	Cinematic world	104			
	Secondary graphic approaches	104			
	Decisive graphic approaches	108			
	Final considerations	109			
	3.3.3 Case study #3: The Great Gatsby	113			
	Cinematic world	114			
	Secondary graphic approaches	115			
	Decisive graphic approaches	118			
	Final considerations	121			
	3.3.4 Case study #4: Scott Pilgrim vs. the World	125			
	Cinematic world	126			
	Secondary graphic approaches	126			
	Decisive graphic approaches	129			
	Final considerations	131			
	3.4 Results and discussion	134			
Chapter 4	Conclusion	143			
	References	147			
	Film index	152			
	[Appendix A] Interview with graphic designer for film/TV Ashley Toste	157			
	[Appendix B] Detailed film graphic analysis	annexed			

A note on terminology

Throughout this research, many different terms are used to convey similar ideas, which are briefly explained here, so as to clarify any initial doubts.

The terms **feature film** and **motion picture** are used with the same meaning of a **movie**, or a **film** – necessarily associated to cinema, as music videos and television are not included in this research. The feature film refers to full-length movies, as opposed to short films. **Filmic** and **cinematic** refer to anything which is part of a movie's language – for example, **filmic narrative** refers to the narrative created for a movie, and **filmic space**, **discourse** or **text** contextualises all the content conveyed in a movie. The **cinematic world** refers to the world created inside a movie, also a **filmic universe**, or the film's **diegetic world**. The word diegetic refers to the **diegesis**, which is precisely the filmic narrative's own reality. **Extra-diegetic** elements are not part of the film's diegetic world, however convey information about the narrative, whereas **intra-diegetic** elements are inserted into the movie's reality, as the characters are aware of their existence.

The five main elements that compose a film's language are referred to as **filmic signs**, which are also **materials of expression**. The **cinematographic image** or **moving image** is a film's most basic material of expression and refers to the image obtained by a direct, mechanic representation (filmed by the camera). The combination of the cinematographic image with **graphic design elements** is what characterises the focus of this research. These elements are verbal, pictorial and schematic combinations, which represent the scope of the **graphic language** – specifically manifested as **graphic configurations**. The movie's **visual project** or **visual identity** refers to all elements present in its visual channel, which include the moving images combined with the graphic design elements. The movie's **graphic identity**, therefore, will refer particularly to the graphic design elements present in a movie, excluding the cinematographic image.

Finally, in relation to the mentioned units of film length, a **shot** is a piece of film which has been exposed without cuts or interruptions. The combination of different shots linked together so as to convey **scenes** taking place in a continuous time and space results in a **sequence**. The terms scene and sequence are used with similar meanings in this investigation, with the objective of representing a 'narrative block'.



Introduction

Design and cinema, although distinct field areas, are intrinsically connected as visual forms of communication, adopting similar principles to build their languages. When watching a movie, the spectator is exposed to a hybrid art form – its language is composed by a series of other languages, manifested through the visual and auditory channels. Indeed, both fields share a common language in the visual channel – the **graphic language**. The term ‘design’ constitutes a significantly broad and subjective area, which has gained ever-growing definitions throughout the years; nonetheless, the graphic language is key in defining design’s essence as a visual form of communication, specified into the **graphic design field** – which is the author’s professional background and the focus of this investigation, applied into the filmic context. Furthermore, the practice of design is inherently **interdisciplinary** as it works together with other areas of plastic, formal or visual creation – including not only the fine arts, but also photography, cinema and video – in conveying visual messages through the use of the graphic language.

With this in mind, the present research aims to **investigate the fundamental relationship between design and cinema, by understanding particularly how and where are graphic design elements inserted in a filmic narrative, as a material of expression of cinema’s hybrid language**. An interesting analogy is to consider **the film as a brand**. Creating a brand’s universe calls for a unified visual identity – which, applied to movies, can be demonstrated through a consistent combination of the cinematographic image with the graphic language present throughout a narrative – from the choice of verbal, pictorial and schematic elements in titles and animations, to the creation (and curation) of printed or handmade graphic props, signage and logos filmed by the camera. The graphic design elements in movies are also referred to as **graphic configurations** – term coined by Isabella Aragão in her 2006 Master’s dissertation, as an extension of the originally identified ‘written materials’ by Christian Metz in the 1970’s, and further appropriated in this dissertation. These graphic configurations are created mainly by hired specialists from the design field, which may come from different backgrounds, such as graphic, motion, digital, UX/UI, 3D, among others, and are part of a film’s art or post-production department, responding ultimately to the **production designer**. The production designer, in turn, is responsible for conceiving a movie’s visual look and feel – which will include its use of the graphic language – always working collectively with the director and director of photography, who together constitute the movie’s creative **Trinity**.

On a second and central level, the research also aims to **identify in which way the graphic language is intentionally portrayed in a movie so as to influence the spectator’s interpretation of the narrative, in secondary or decisive approaches**. The main goal of this research, therefore, is to propose a **system for analysing and comparing the intentional use of graphic configurations in distinct filmic narratives**, identifying functions and strategic approaches that the graphic language can successfully achieve in a movie. In order to reach significant results, an extensive historical and theoretical research was conducted so as to perceive the existence of graphic configurations throughout film history. Initially, their emphasis was on the written words, in much taken from literature’s dominance in the nineteenth and twentieth century, further applied to

silent film's intertitles. However, the different technological milestones which shaped cinema's development directly influenced the emergence and disappearance of graphic configurations, which became more complex with time, affecting the roles designers acquired in the industry. The advent of digital technology and the use of computer graphics in contemporary cinema significantly approximated the cinematic and graphic languages, allowing for graphic configurations to be more easily and consistently manipulated into a filmic narrative, through computer-generated software. It is in this contemporary scenario that the present research positions itself.

Moreover, relevant film and design theories were crucial in shaping the structure and behaviour of the graphic configurations, and further inferring on their significance to a narrative. By suggesting a methodology for conducting a movie's **graphic analysis**, these findings are applied to **four detailed case studies** so as to achieve results, which are later discussed and synthesised as ten major guidelines for the use of graphic language in the construction of any filmic narrative. An important matter which is reinforced throughout this entire research is that, considering cinema as essentially a hybrid language, the graphic configurations are only one aspect of its communication – they are here analysed as intentional and decisive narrative strategies, however, they have to be considered as part of a grander, holistic visual project, and need to be applied coherently in combination with the other cinematic components.

It was important to define a scope for the chosen filmography in this research, considering the endless possibilities of cinema. The films were filtered to **narrative fiction feature films** (which eliminate documentaries, short films, animations and experimental movies), **produced in the Hollywood industry** as independent or commercial productions, **in the last ten years**, in order to update this research to the present days. The choice of Hollywood is mainly due to the larger amount of options to explore from its dominant market, as well as higher production budgets which allow for the investment in digital technology and intense production design, thus becoming the most pertinent scenario for identifying **movies containing rich graphic language**. In order to successfully identify these movies, one has to watch a great deal of films, from beginning to end, with a critical eye for its graphic language, so as to decide whether it is ideal for a graphic analysis or not.

Furthermore, existing research with the focus on the use of graphic language in movies was challenging to find – the major academic reference found is of Aragão (2006), done thirteen years ago. Other authors have briefly mentioned the use of graphic language in movies, however, reduced solely to the written word – which consists of only a portion of the graphic language's potential – such as Metz (1974), in an attempt to define the five signs composing film language. On another note, Luiz Fernando Las-Casas (2005) – influenced by a similar motivation to understand the manifestations of graphic design in movies – explores the use of typography as narrative and informational elements in films, conditioned by cinematic elements such as motion, rhythm and sound – however, once again, limiting the graphic language to its verbal aspect. Anyhow, considering that this research is done thirteen and fourteen years after Aragão and Las-Casas, respectively, and considering the author's choice of the Hollywood industry as selection criteria, it is critical to point out that contemporary Hollywood movies portray extremely visual and dynamic projects, in much through their strong use of special effects and computer graphics, which in turn convey complex and rich, often computer-generated graphic language – based precisely on the combination of not only verbal, but pictorial and schematic elements as well. The contemporary approach that this research follows, therefore, has Aragão's work as the major reference and inspiration for its development – as she is the only author who explores the expressive potential of the graphic language in its entirety in movies.

[1] Roberto Tietzmann, 2007.

[2] Mauro Baptista (2006, 2008), Ludmila Ayres Machado (2011).

[3] Brad Chisholm (1987), Roberto Tietzmann (2007), Isabella Aragão (2006).

[4] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gilzixSh4E&t=84s>.

Additionally, other existing work intersecting design's and cinema's fields of study focuses on either punctual functions of the graphic language, such as in creating the opening titles [1], or on the function of the production designer in conceptualising a movie's visual project [2]. These functions, however, are mainly exterior to the film's narrative, or diegetic world, not influencing directly on the interpretation of a movie's plot. Other academic work focuses on a historical approach to the silent movie's intertitles [3], which are pertinent, however limited to the early stages of cinema. Therefore, in order to contribute on what appears to be a gap in literature, the present work aims to provide a complete overview to the use of graphic language in contemporary movies, as a decisive or secondary element, strategically contributing in the comprehension and unfolding of a narrative. By proposing a system for conducting a movie's graphic analysis, this research allows any person interested in graphic design or cinema – as professionals or enthusiasts – to further explore and identify a film's graphic identity. **This work intends to facilitate knowledge to filmmakers, who can convey more expressive messages in their movies by using intentional and strategic graphic configurations, as well as give designers more visibility and awareness to the possible roles they can acquire inside a movie production.** The purpose is to further relate the areas of graphic design and filmmaking which, although connected by a series of principles and elements deriving from similar languages, contain few academic work dealing with their intersections.

It is also important to mention that this work is a development from the author's final Bachelor graduation project, completed in 2015, which aimed to identify the graphic language as a narrative element in movies through the creation of an eight-minute short fiction film, called "New Eyes" [4], that used graphic configurations to unfold its narrative through different approaches. The author's fascination for the world of cinema, combined with the academic and professional background in the field of graphic design, were the main inspirations and motivations to reach this intersection and focus of study.

1.1 Methodology

This is essentially a **qualitative** and **subjective** research, which aims to describe and interpret the characteristics of the graphic language used in specific filmic narratives in order to reach significant conclusions. The qualitative aspect of the research is based on an extensive Review of Literature exploring **historical** and **theoretical** contexts, which help to understand the intrinsic and fundamental relationship of design and cinema as visual forms of communication. Further on, based on this relationship, the major objective of the work is to propose a system for analysing the graphic language in movies, verified by its application to four detailed **case studies**. This system is approached through a **graphic analysis** of the movies, described step-by-step in the third chapter of the dissertation. This analysis mixes qualitative and **quantitative** methods, through a systematic recording and collecting of graphic configurations, which are counted and measured but also described and interpreted, in the form of **content and thematic analyses** (together they build up the graphic analysis). The objective is to identify possible patterns and draw parallels among different movies' graphic language. Through **inductive reasoning**, where the data collected determines the themes identified in each movie, this research aims to present initial guidelines for developing a possible theory of graphic language in narrative films. The results allowed the author to move from specific observations done in each case study to more general strategies, which can be applied in the construction of any filmic narrative.

As mentioned previously, the chosen filmography for the case studies was selected following specific criteria in order to limit the research's scope. Besides narrowing down the sample to narrative fiction feature films produced in Hollywood in the last ten years,

the movies also needed to portray rich graphic language, which can only be identified by watching the entire movie with a critical eye for its graphic dimension. Therefore, this investigation is subjective as it will depend on the researcher's individual ability to identify and interpret a movie's graphic language. The units or set of categories for conducting the analyses are based on the system of classification proposed by Aragão (2006), which was updated according to the present research's needs. Consequently, the graphic configurations are classified according to seven revised categories, which are: (1) main function, (2) graphic symbolisation, (3) formal nature, (4) method of insertion, (5) diegesis, (6) narrative significance and (7) relation to other filmic signs. These serve effectively as indicators to identify and count the graphic configurations present in movies, as well as to interpret their meaning to the narrative. The thematic analysis further divides the interpretation of the collected graphic configurations into different narrative themes which help to establish the film's secondary and decisive graphic approaches, together with an overview of its cinematic world – thus forming the movie's **graphic strategy**.

On a final note, this research followed the approach defined by Bestley & Noble (2005) as **context-definition**, where the initial work involves a “thorough analysis of a broad range of **secondary research**, mapping the territory to be investigated and determining the range of work which has already been done within the target context”, in order to determine the focus of the project and the working methodology. **Primary research** was conducted by watching the countless movies in order to define the scope of the project, as well as the project's intention and the appropriate methodology for testing and evaluating the potential outcomes (resulted from the case studies).

1.2 Structure

This dissertation is divided into four main chapters: the first chapter consists of the **(1) Introduction**, which presents the research topic and question, identifying the main objectives, as well as the specific objectives which lead to the general aim. It also presents the relevance, motivations and prior work, and identifies existing research on the topic so as to perceive possible gaps in literature. Finally, it includes the **(1.1) methodology** used throughout the research and the **(1.2) structure** of the dissertation.

The second chapter consists of the **(2) Review of Literature**, which has the objective of situating this research within existing knowledge on the area. The first part of the Review of Literature presents a **(2.1) historical context** of the relation between design and cinema, in the format of a timeline, which follows the emergence and development of cinema, from silent to contemporary films – however focusing on the moments where one can draw parallels to the use of graphic design elements in movies, as well as the changes and development in the role of the designer in a movie production.

The second part of the Review of Literature consists of the **(2.2) theoretical framework**, which is divided into the two main subject areas of this research – cinema and design – explored individually in terms of the main theories which are necessary to understand the use of graphic language in movies. For cinema, since it is not the background area of expertise, an introduction of its main characteristics and language is presented, further reinforced by the presentation of film theories associated to areas such as semiotics, cognitive psychology and film studies in general – which in some way condition the existence and perception of graphic configurations in movies. For design, the origins of the term were briefly identified, and further specified to the graphic design field, based on graphic design principles and the understanding of design as visual communication, which aid in identifying the scope of the graphic language present in filmic narratives.

[5] Based on Aumont & Marie (2004).

The third chapter of this dissertation relates to the **(3) Object of study**, which consists of the graphic configurations' functions in filmic narratives. This is the most important chapter of the research, and is further sub-divided into four parts: the **(3.1) system of classification of graphic configurations**, which is based and updated from the existing system defined by Aragão, leading to the **(3.2) methodology for graphic analysis**, which explains the step-by-step process adopted in the subsequent case studies in order to identify and interpret different uses of graphic configurations in movies, through a graphic analysis. The graphic analysis is based on regular film analysis tools which uses the concept of frames to break down the shots' elements [5], however focused on the appearance of graphic configurations. After the methodology becomes clear to the reader, the third part of this chapter consists of the four detailed **(3.3) case studies**, which are necessarily produced in Hollywood, in the last ten years. The case studies are explained by their cinematic worlds, followed by secondary and decisive graphic approaches and final considerations, which was the best format identified in order to have a consistent overview of the movie's graphic strategy, inserted into a holistic visual project. After the four thorough case studies are presented, the fourth part shows the **(3.4) results and discussion**, which summarise the main points identified in the case studies and reaches final major conclusions.

Finally, the last chapter of this dissertation consists of the **(4) Conclusion**, which reinforces the research question and objectives as well as the major conclusions, presents the limitations to this investigation and suggests further recommendations.



—
Movies
are the memories
of our life time,
we need to keep
them alive.

Martin Scorsese



Review of Literature

2.1 Historical context

According to Aragão (2006), graphic design elements are part of a film's language, as one of the five filmic signs, or materials of expression, which are conveyed through the visual and auditory channels. In the 1970's, Metz used the term 'written material' to define the graphic dimension of film, reducing it solely to the written word. However, a film can show other graphic design elements in its narrative besides letters and numbers – such as shapes, lines, images and visual schemes, which are pictorial and schematic, and thus do not fit into the 'written word' category. Aragão's purpose is to broaden this concept as she proposes a new term – graphic configurations – to represent every graphic design element present in a filmic narrative which, combined with the cinematographic image, convey meaning through the visual channel. When studying the formal aspects of a movie, it is convenient to conduct an inverse process of breaking down a filmic narrative into its fundamental parts. By doing so, one can visualise what are the basic components that build up a film's language so as to better perceive how it communicates. The graphic language in movies, although poorly discoursed, has always been a part of these components. It was precisely during the early cinema, with the silent film, that graphic design elements started to be implemented in the film's visual narrative with clear functions. Since then, film language has changed and evolved in many ways, as well as the graphic language itself, introducing and influencing the role of a designer in a movie production.

There are two facets to be considered here: one is the technical and formal aspect of graphic design elements inserted in the movies; the other is the actual role of design in the film industry, highlighted by a series of touch points throughout the filmic process. The main objective of this research is to deepen the academic knowledge regarding the graphic language found in movies, however, in order to understand these specific elements, one first needs to take a step back and see the bigger picture – why is there a need for graphic configurations in movies? Who is responsible for defining and creating them? How are they important for the interpretation of movie narratives? Answering these and other questions implies in breaking down not only a film's language but also the filmic production process, in order to better define the roles of each professional – considering that cinema is, in its essence, a collaborative form of art. Being collaborative, no work can be done by itself or can stand alone. This also includes the graphic configurations, that cannot be seen as an isolated product but part of an intricate narrative, with different layers of complexity. In short, although the use of graphic configurations is, to a certain extent, intentional, their use will always be conditioned to a greater motive.

The next section aims to present an overview of what events led to the development of cinema and how its language was defined in more than one century of existence – from silent to contemporary films – through a **timeline of graphic design in film**. The objective is to draw parallels between the graphic design elements and major milestones in film history, so as to understand how graphic configurations have always existed in cinema's language, as well as identify the ongoing changes which shaped their structure and behaviour in filmic narratives and the role of the designer in creating them.

2.1.1 Timeline: Graphic design in film

The search for representation of the moving image

Since the early ages, humankind has searched for ways to represent the moving image, as a need to capture reality seen by our eyes. The first manifestations of what would eventually be called cinema emerged in prehistoric times, with the sequential drawings in cave walls, moving along to the invention of the pinhole camera and photography itself. (Aragão, 2006) Figures such as Fox Talbot, Niepce and Daguerre contributed to the first photographic records of static objects and personal portraits. However, the technical limitations of photography were evident with the difficulties in synthesising motion. “Through the recording of immovable objects or posed characters, we realise the fundamental limitation of the photographic narrative: its inability to extract continuous time from events.” (Machado, 2011, p. 20, free translation)



Image 1
Frame taken from one of the Lumière Brothers' first movies, *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1896).

Image 2
Frame taken from George Méliés' movie *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902).

In the 1870's, facing this challenge, American researcher Eadweard Muybridge was able to record twelve different sequential images of a galloping horse, that when combined together, transmitted the essence of movement. He was a key crossover figure between photography and film. Muybridge's and other investigators' work from around the world culminated in inventions such as Edison's Kinetoscope, as well as the Lumière Brothers' Cinematograph, which marked the beginning of cinema. At the end of 1895, in Paris, the Lumière brothers premiered ten short films, under fifteen seconds long. The night was a success and the Lumière brothers kept making films, with the focus on documentaries. They included depictions of workers leaving a factory at the end of the day, and a notorious film of a speeding train heading directly at the camera – *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1896) – which apparently terrified its unsuspecting audience (image 1). However, they failed to see the commercial and narrative potential of movies, and even said that the 'cinema is an invention without a future.' (Ministry of Cinema)

For [Auguste and Louis Lumière], the cinematograph was a laboratory instrument, which should enable the (...) researcher to record phenomena of nature in motion and facilitate their observations by the repeated and enlarged projection of the collected images, as many times as desired. (Jeanne, & Ford, 1966, p. 16, free translation)

As a response to the Lumière brothers' outlook, George Méliés, a former magician-turned-director, envisioned the possibility of filming fictional and illusionist shots rather than the documented reality. His famous movie *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902) showed the first attempts of fictitious and even surreal narratives in film, through the use of camera tricks and optical special effects (image 2). However, Méliés' magical trick films were still very far from what is nowadays referred to as a narrative film.

Many trick films are, in effect, plotless, a series of transformations strung together with little connection and certainly no characterisation. But to approach even the plotted trick films, such as *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902), simply as precursors of later narrative structures is to miss the point. The story simply provides a frame upon which to string a demonstration of the magical possibilities of the cinema. (Gunning in Strauven, 2006, p. 383)

The silent film

It is common knowledge that the early films, dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century, were silent – meaning they did not have sound synchronised to the actions shown in its filmic space. They would, however, be accompanied by orchestras, or live bands, to score the happenings on the screen. In some cases, they would even have lecturers who would literally explain the events that were happening in the narrative. These assets were a way of transforming the act of watching a movie into a pleasurable and even emotional experience. However, they were exterior elements to the movie, which were not part of the film's narrative. (Nowell-Smith, 1996)

Cinema until approximately the first decade of the twentieth century was known as 'cinema of attractions', where the audience went to see visual spectacles that had no necessary plot. They also engaged full attention of the spectator through direct eye contact with the camera. It was seen as an exhibitionist cinema, as opposed to the "voyeuristic aspect of narrative cinema" (Gunning in Strauven, 2006, p. 382). Cinema started out increasingly related to traditional art forms such as theatre and literature. This implied a certain hybridisation between them, that could be observed through the excessive 'presentationalism' of the scenes.

This mode of representation was predominantly presentational in its acting style, set design, and visual composition as well as in its depiction of time, space, and narrative. Rooted in theatrical discourse, the concept of a presentational style was originally used to describe a method of acting that dominated the American and English stage during most of the nineteenth century. (...) Lacking words, actors often resorted to extensive pantomime to convey their thoughts or actions, pushing the use of conventionalised gestures to an extreme. (Musser, 1990, p. 3)

With the cinema of attractions, there was no dominant narrative, only reproductions of routine and ephemeral actions. Synchronised sound was not seen as a necessity when the audience could already anticipate the expected sound. By this moment, the conception of the cinematographic image was closest to the one associated to photography, where the ultimate objective was to represent the daily reality – only through different media. The efforts to include synchronised sound were only manifested when movies started developing their own visual narratives and would, therefore, need further explanation to advance the plot. The films of this period were often referred to as 'cinema of narrative integration'.

The films of this period (...) no longer relied upon viewers' extra-textual knowledge but rather employed cinematic conventions to create internally coherent narratives. (...) In general, the emergence of the 'cinema of narrative integration' coincided with the cinema's move toward the cultural mainstream and its establishment as the first truly mass medium. (Pearson in Nowell-Smith, 1996, p. 23)

At this point, there were clear limitations to what the silent cinematographic image could address and the need arose to better identify its cinematic components, as well as suggest new ones. As an attempt to initiate a well-rounded filmic language, filmmakers started to use techniques and procedures that would help develop an autonomous visual narrative. One of these attempts was to use written words, expressed through **intertitles** (also known as title cards), which were inserted in between scenes of original cinematographic footage. They consisted of either filmed static compositions or drawings on the film negative and were inserted through editing techniques with the objective of contextualising the story to the viewer. These intertitles included additional information in the form of written words

as well as other graphic elements such as ornamented frames, that represented possible dialogues, captions, quotations, and even poetry. These cards were usually created by a lettering artist in order to create narrative continuity and allow for audiences to follow what they were seeing (May, 2010).

Conventions used for time and space displacements, such as fades and camera cuts, for example, were not always understood in this way by the spectators. Thus, the presence of lecturers or intertitles were features enforced by directors as a way to better ensure the understanding of the plot - although in some cases it could lead to some redundancy. (Nesteriuk, Oliveira, & Taú, 2015, p. 337, free translation)



Image 3.1
Frame taken from the French silent movie La Passion de Jean D'Arc (1928).

Image 3.2
Following frame that shows a dialogue intertitle, in French, translated as "I swear to say the truth, all the truth..."

The intertitles used in silent films can be divided into two subcategories: **expository and dialogue intertitles**. The first had the objective of transmitting extra information regarding the story's narrative, frequently related to factors such as time and location. The latter had a more specific function of visually translating the dialogues between characters, by selecting excerpts of the conversations that were meaningful enough for the interpretation of the story (images 3.1 & 3.2). The emergence of dialogue intertitles was a direct consequence to the lack of synchronised sound. The expository intertitles, however, presented themselves as narrative strategies exterior to the film's universe, and were fully explored for its graphic potential. (Chisholm, 1987)

D. W. Griffith was an American filmmaker who took advantage of graphic design elements in his visual narratives. In his movie Intolerance (1916), as well as his previous ground-breaking film, The Birth of a Nation (1915), one can notice the use of intertitles to improve the movie's comprehension and interpretation (images 4.1-4.4).

Intolerance came out in 1916, at a time when the feature-length film was imposing itself, a development rendered possible by, among other factors, the use of intertitles which made it possible to tell longer and more complex stories and to fix their meaning for the viewer. Once the lecturer was excluded from screenings, intertitles were used as captions to the animated stories. They played a preponderant role in the construction of narrative continuity and in the lengthening of films. We may even wonder if they partly motivated these developments. (Dupré la Tour, 1995, p. 56)

Griffith used different fonts, backgrounds, and visual compositions in the title cards to discern between opening credits, dialogues and narration, as well as to represent different moments in the narrative. Choices in typography, scale, contrast, colour and alignment helped give rhythm to the text, in order to match the rhythm of the scenes. There was a strong visual play with the graphic design elements, which performed a major role in the movies' visual identity. Although the written word was the main element in the intertitles, other graphic elements were used, such as the ornamental frame, the 'paragraph' symbol, and what could be considered a logo, or trademark, composed by the initials of the director – D and G (image 4.1). The aesthetic choices for creating these visual compositions were based on graphic design principles. Dupré la Tour (1995) discourses about the strength of the written word in silent films, as opposed to the ephemeral nature of speech. Although most of the graphic design elements in intertitles had merely ornamental functions, her considerations can be extended to graphic configurations in general, present in a filmic space.

The written word is the visualisation of discourse in a material space that is demarcated and practically permanent. Hence, it can relieve the human brain of the task of memorisation by taking on the task of storing, conserving and transmitting information, in unlimited quantities and in a reliable manner through space and time, in contrast to the ephemeral nature of speech. Thus, the strength of the graphic image of language lies in its permanence and solidity. It can break out of spatial and temporal constraints by transmitting its content in graphic form, through its literally tangible materiality which is the very strength of writing. (Dupré la Tour, 1995, p. 62)



Images 4.1-4.4
Four frames taken from Intolerance (1916). Frame 4.1 shows the movie's main titles while frames 4.2-4.4 show different types of intertitles, all of which explore graphic design elements in their creation.

Titles were undoubtedly the first form of graphic configuration noted in film history, be it through opening titles or intertitles. The latter, unfortunately, have been – for too long – considered 'a necessary evil' and discredited by many film theorists, regarded as palliatives for the absence of sound. Researchers have underestimated their importance as aesthetic and narrative strategic elements. Their main functions were to anchor and fix the meaning of the image in the viewer's memory, providing him with landmarks, which helped stage historical events and structure narratives. (Dupré de La Tour, 1995). Hence, intertitles were an extremely effective graphic tool for reinforcing a film's narrative interpretation and clarifying possible visual misconceptions.

The strength of the written word in movies can be observed through a direct influence from literature's predominance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Fiction and non-fiction literary texts largely affected the language and aesthetics of cinema – expressed visually in much through the style of the intertitles. As Las-Casas (2005) refers to in his study of typographical elements in movies: "If movies were influenced by written text and literature, so did movie titles and credits. As [...] movies' narratives and presentations show, many of the formats to display typography on the screen are similar to those of printed book pages." In this way, it is verified how cinema in its early ages had major influence from other traditional art forms such as theatre and literature in order to build its language, affecting the disposition of the graphic configurations as well.

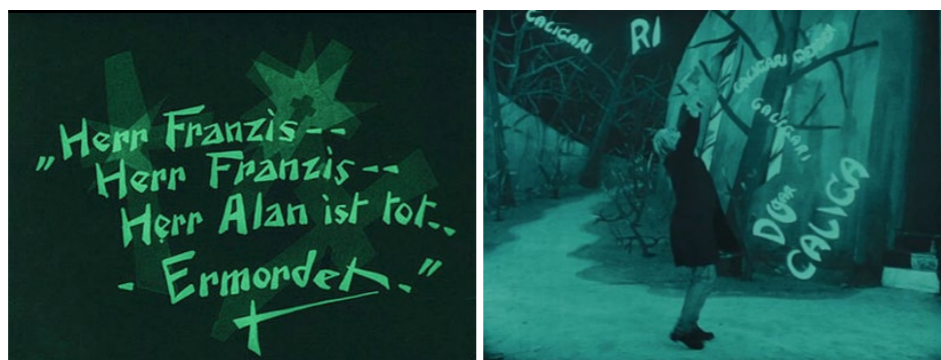
Besides the intertitles, other forms of graphic configurations could be observed in silent movies, such as the **filmed graphic objects**, which were physically inserted into the scenes and filmed by the camera – which is the case of the poster sign positioned in the entrance



Image 5
Frame taken from Intolerance (1916) which shows an example of a filmed graphic object.

of a venue, in a scene from Intolerance (image 5). They differ from the intertitles in nature, since they are included as part of the original footage, instead of inserted in between them. The method of production is also different, considering the filmed graphic objects are pre-produced to be used during the shooting, whereas the title cards are usually included in post-production, during the process of montage. However, the narrative significance of filmed graphic objects in the silent films was mostly accessory to the cinematographic image, as they did not receive particular attention. (Tietzmann, 2007)

In the acclaimed German silent movie, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920), the use of intertitles and opening titles can be observed through a very stylised manner, as a clear manifestation of the German expressionism present in its historical context (image 6.1). This aesthetic movement originated in other forms of art such as painting and theatre, and made its way into cinema in the 1920's and 1930's, as a rejection to realism. The excessive and even bizarre visual style of these films was an escape or break from reality. In The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari the set is uncanny, distorted with pointy lines and angles, transporting a sense of perpetual uneasiness. Those feelings are transferred to the visual compositions seen in the title cards. "Featuring sharp, angular typography designed to match the disturbing subject matter and twisted visual landscape of the film, the highly stylised titles and intertitles of Caligari echo the lettering found in the work of contemporary Expressionist illustrators like Josef Fenneker." (Perkins, 2015, para. 2) They were seen as innovative, ignoring established rules seen in other intertitles, which were limited to simple plain text on black cards with the focus exclusively on clarity and readability for the audience. Sadly, the German designer responsible for the title cards remains unknown, and therefore uncredited, until today – a very usual fact to occur back then, when designers still did not have visibility in the film industry. Additionally, the movie also featured one of the earliest examples of situational typography, which is positioned in the setting of a scene, through the use of special visual effect – in this case, stop-motion animation (image 6.2). With the intention of intensifying the emotions of madness portrayed in the scene, the phrase "Du Musst Caligari Werden" (You Must Become Caligari) appears out of thin air repeatedly and growing out of the trees, as a manifestation of Caligari's insanity. (Perkins, 2015)



Images 6.1 & 6.2
Frames taken from the expressionist German silent movie The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920), which show stylised intertitles and an example of situational typography applied to the movie's set design through stop-motion animation.

This is an effective example that reinforces equally the power and significance of the graphic language in a narrative as a means to intensify emotions transmitted through a screen, as well as its long-lasting endurance throughout film history, presenting itself as a solid factor of the filmic equation. In general, the cinematographic experience of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari displays a very cohesive visual unity that can be seen throughout all of its components – from the scenery, to the graphic language, to the costume and make up, to the cinematography. It might be due to the strong aesthetic influence of German expressionism, but there is no denying that its visual filmic project stands out as a masterpiece of its time, influencing future generations of filmmakers and art directors.

Overall, the limitations of the moving image seen but not heard encouraged filmmakers to resort to the graphic language as a means to bring additional and exciting information to the narrative. It is compelling to see how graphic design and filmmaking have walked hand in hand from its earliest days, when film language was still being established. With this in mind, it is verified that graphic design has always been a fundamental component in movies, which started through the use of main titles and intertitles in early silent films, but was also represented by the filmed graphic objects.

The advent of sound

By the end of the silent period, the cinema had established itself not only as an industry but as the 'seventh art'. None of this would have happened without technology, and cinema is in fact unique as an art form in being defined by its technological character. (Nowell-Smith, 1996, p.3)

Technological advances were essential in defining cinema's hybrid language, and graphic configurations are directly related to the evolution of technology in the film industry, which reached a series of important breakthroughs – the first being sound technology. "Wait a minute, you ain't heard nothing yet..." – these were the words of the first synchronised dialogue in feature length films, portrayed by Al Jolson in The Jazz Singer (1927). Although there were only two scenes with synchronised speech, they had a massive reaction with the audience, who burst into standing ovation. By the mid-1930's, nearly all films produced in Hollywood would be 'talkies', or all-dialogue films, marking the death of the silent film. This was a major milestone in the history of film, which changed the relationship between movies and its spectators, as well as film language itself. (Ministry of Cinema)

It is very interesting to notice that even after the insertion of synchronised sound as a material of expression in film language, graphic configurations in the form of intertitles did not cease to exist. In fact, one of them did: the dialogue intertitle was quickly found obsolete and substituted by sound, since from that moment on there was no need to represent the dialogue through text. Yet the expository intertitle still found its way in cinematic language – filmmakers could keep using them to further develop a narrative, regardless of the sound it accompanied. The circumstances changed, and filmmakers found themselves equipped with two powerful tools to transmit information besides the filmed image: sound and graphic configurations – one did not substitute the other anymore. Hereinafter, sound would seamlessly be present as a permanent filmic component, but graphic configurations in the form of expository intertitles became a strategic possibility to add more information to the scenes, if chosen by the director. It is important to note that although intertitles were directly affected by the arrival of sound, the opening and final credits and the filmed graphic objects were not, since their conveyed messages did not necessarily depend on the auditory component.

The advent of sound in cinema paved the way for the graphic language to take on a new proportion as it became a choice whether to represent information graphically – allowing for its plastic and aesthetic functions to be reinforced. **The fact that intertitles were not viewed as necessary anymore made their use more selective and creative, as opposed to the extremely functional aspect they initially acquired.** In a certain way, this was a decisive moment to solidify the power and personality of graphic language in cinema.

As an attempt to synthesise the use of the written word in film, Tietzmann (2007) defines five types of connections that have existed in cinema since the beginning of the twentieth century: (1) the opening credits; (2) the dialogue intertitles and (3) expository intertitles; (4) the endogenous typography and (5) the final credits. Even though, once more, only

the written word is taken into account, these connections can be extended to graphic configurations too. Furthermore, a new way of organising them in terms of the graphic language is suggested, based on Tietzmann's definitions. Each of these connections convey additional messages to the movie, which cannot be transmitted entirely through the filmed image.

The **opening titles** initially informed the film's authorship through small graphic symbols that were added into the set or in the intertitles. In silent films, their function and aesthetics were limited to an objective and simplistic nature. Throughout the years, their role became remarkably stronger and more complex, which will be revisited later on. The **dialogue intertitles** presented specific excerpts of conversations between characters, which had to be perceived as a synthesis, intercalated with original shots. Clearly they could not represent a complete dialogue, or else there would be too many interruptions, disturbing the flow of the filmic discourse. The **expository intertitles** served as a means to communicate additional information, such as of time and location (images 7.1 & 7.2), which would thicken the plot, providing information which only exists in the graphic dimension. The **endogenous typography** consists of words and texts that are part of the set (i.e. a store's name sign), the costume (writings in shirts, labels), the characters (tattoos), or props (letters, notes, computer screens, and any printed matter). The **final credits** were not fully explored until the 1960's with the end of the major American studios' monopoly. Before that time, they were resumed to mostly "The End", with no technical information about the participating film crew (image 8).



Images 7.1 & 7.2
Frames taken from
Citizen Kane (1941), which
exemplify expository
intertitles giving
additional information
regarding time
displacement.

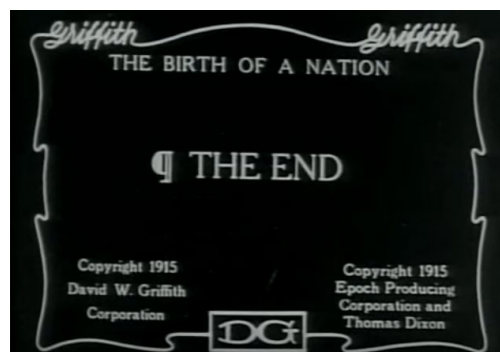


Image 8
Frame taken from the
final credit of The Birth
of a Nation (1915), which
is reduced solely to the
'The End' and copyright
information.

These established connections can be narrowed down, in terms of graphic configurations, into three main categories that are seen today in movies: (1) **filmed graphic objects**, which would substitute and broaden the term endogenous typography, including not only the written word but other graphic elements as well; (2) **opening and final credits**, here condensed into one section, with the objective function of denoting the beginning and end of a motion picture as well as presenting the cast and crew; and finally (3) **expository intertitles**, which refer to any supplementary narrative information in the form of text and/or other graphic elements, that can be inserted in between scenes, but can also be superimposed over the filmed image, through post-production. The dialogue intertitle was eliminated from these definitions, since it became obsolete with the advent of synchronised sound. The expository intertitle will further receive new additions to its scope, as a direct consequence of technological advancements – which will be explored in the next sections.

[6] Hollywood's star system privileged actors' photogenic physical beauty as it centralised the narrative on the actor as the 'star' of the movie.

The American film industry and the shift to production design

(...) **From the end of the First World War onwards, one film industry – the American – has played a dominant role, to such an extent that much of the history of cinema in other countries have consisted of attempts by the indigenous industries to thwart, compete with, or distinguish themselves from American ('Hollywood') competition. (Nowell-Smith, 1996, p. xx-xxi)**

Before moving any further, it is relevant to display a short overview of how the film industry was developing historically. Prior to the First World War, European film industries dominated the international market, with special emphasis to the French and the Pathé studio, who established offices in major cities around the world. They were seen as a dangerous threat to the American producers, since a large portion of films exhibited in the United States still originated in Europe. With the First World War, the currently unified European film movement was completely destabilised and Americans seized the opportunity to establish their worldwide hegemony, instituting west coast's Hollywood as its main stage. (Ministry of Cinema)

Not only did European exporters such as France, Britain, and Italy lose control over overseas markets, and find their own markets opened up to increasingly powerful American competition, but the whole cultural climate changed in the aftermath of war. The triumph of Hollywood in the 1920's was a triumph of the New World over the Old, marking the emergence of the canons of modern American mass culture not only in America but in countries as yet uncertain how to receive it. (Nowell-Smith, 1996, p. 4)

The Hollywood system operated as an integrated industry, controlling all aspects of cinema from production to distribution. The movies from this industry were seen at the time as more appealing because of their well-structured narratives, grandiose effects, and effective star system [6], which added a new dimension to screen acting. Followed by this energetic ascent, Americans were faced with opposition overseas, specifically from the Russian Soviets, who sought to define their own style of cinema against the American way. Sergei Eisenstein was an important figure who helped develop the theory of montage and reinforced it through his most famous movie, *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Although highly regarded, the Russian theory of montage was more admired than it was imitated. The only true system that was emulated around the world was the Hollywood classical system. Through Hollywood's easy to mimic and comprehensive editing style, as well as its exploitation of the star system, the American studio system rose to complete power, foreseeing what is now called the Golden Age of Hollywood. (Ministry of Cinema)

One might ask why is it critical, in terms of the graphic language in cinema, to acknowledge Hollywood's ascension and stabilisation in the international film industry. The answer lies in the sophisticated inner structures built by the industry's professionals, aiming to establish consistent and collaborative departments in film production – including an extremely organised **art department**. The supervising art directors were head of the hierarchy, and managed the work of other art directors and unit members, such as set decorators, property masters, painters, carpenters, signpainters, scenic artists and specialty crafts people. (St. John Marner, & Stringer, 1974)

It is true that European film movements such as the German expressionism, the Italian neo-realism, and the French nouvelle-vague strongly contributed to art direction, in an attempt to challenge Hollywood's predominance. (Barnwell, 2004) However, it was in the United States, in 1939, that a major landmark was achieved in regards to the art department and to the role of design in film. Producer David O. Selznick gave William Cameron

Menzies the unprecedented title of **production designer** for the visual complexity of his work in the movie *Gone with the Wind*. The original role of the art director was extended into the one of the production designer – and this represented much more than just a change in nomenclature.

His detailed visualisation of *Gone with the Wind* incorporated colour and style, structured each scene, and encompassed the framing, composition, and camera movements for each shot in the epic film. Menzies' contribution helped expand the function of the art director beyond the creation of sets and scenery, to include the responsibility for visualising a motion picture. As a result of his extraordinary vision, William Cameron Menzies is recognised as the father of production design. (LoBrutto, 2002, p. 2)

The work of the newly credited production designer, thus, became significantly larger in a movie production, taking in responsibility for the visual art and craft of cinematic storytelling. Evidently, this is not a one-man job, and to establish the look and style of a motion picture the production designer acts collaboratively with two other professionals – the director, as the central creative force, and the director of photography. Together they form what is called the **Trinity** (LoBrutto, 2002, p.6), and a film's successful accomplishment will depend much on their good relationship and creative workflow. The director's style of work will strongly influence the production designer's active participation in a film's conception – some directors give more freedom to the designer, especially if the movie includes studio-built sets. Other directors, who usually come from an art department background, prefer to have bigger control over the design content of the film, which considerably diminishes the production designer's creative autonomy. (St. John Marner, & Stringer, 1974) Nonetheless, the production designer is of utmost importance for his organisational skills, which allow for a better communication among all the different departments inside a film production.

Although the term production design was technically established in 1939, it took about thirty years for the industry to fully recognize and implement it altogether. There were constant misconceptions between the terms production designer, art director, and set decorator and often designers would be mistakenly uncredited. In European and South American countries, the term art director is preferably used even nowadays, as production design most commonly refers to higher budget productions – which at the time were mainly from Hollywood, who had the necessary funds to invest in production design. The more a movie invests in production design, more elaborate is the screenplay in terms of visual metaphors, colour palettes, architectural and period specifics, locations, designs and sets. (LoBrutto, 2002)

In this comparatively new art form called Cinema, film sets have developed rapidly from canvas theatre backcloths to their present highly sophisticated form. The rapid development of film sets over the last few decades has been made possible not only by increased budgets but also by the very high standards of craftsmen who build and make the sets. (St. John Marner, & Stringer, 1974, p. 10)

When a production designer comes across a screenplay, there are certain elements that need to be broken down in the script, such as defining each location present along the filmic narrative. LoBrutto (2002) points out that it is important to characterise a detailed list of the locations, including relevant information such as:

- Interior (Int.) or Exterior (Ext.)
- Identification of the actual location; for example, Ext. Farmhouse, Int. Jazz Nightclub
- Time period

[7] Although the scope of his work assimilated to the one of a production designer, due to bureaucratic matters, Griffith was credited as art director.

- Destination—in what city, state, town, or country is the location situated?
- Time of day or night
- Season/weather conditions

It is possible to visually represent these characteristics through the settings, costumes, make up, and lighting. It is also possible to reinforce this information through the graphic language. A great example is the use of expository intertitles (in between or superimposed over the filmed image) to clarify information regarding time or location (ex. *Rio de Janeiro, 1960*; *Three years later*). Many directors use graphic configurations as a narrative strategy to fix, or anchor, image meanings – as a consequence of their initial use in silent movies. For establishing time periods, the filmmaker may also use, besides setting and costumes, the graphic language of the time to help set the mood with veracity.

For instance, Cameron Crowe's feature film *Almost Famous*, although produced in 2000, is set in the American rock scene of the 1970's and has its aesthetics quite influenced by the hippie counterculture movement. To assist in successfully transmitting the ambience of the seventies, the art director [7] Clay A. Griffith chose to use organic and bulbous typography in the set, referring to the psychedelic aesthetic (image 9.1). He also chose to use real graphic memorabilia from the time, such as Simon and Garfunkel's vinyl record and the board game *Risk*, in an attempt to establish some kind of connection between the viewer and the collective imaginary of the 1970's culture (images 9.3 & 9.4). In this way, the movie has the ability of evoking emotions such as *nostalgia* – the longing for a time or place that is no longer part of one's life.

Of course these elements will be more appealing to spectators that have actually lived this time period, or that are great enthusiasts of its relics – ratifying the perception that the interpretation of a filmic image will always depend on the viewer's cultural baggage and personal history. In summary, the choice of implementing graphic elements and objects in a film's design can eliminate the need to transmit information through other cinematic components, such as speech. The movie character does not need to say that they are in 1970's, if his surroundings already show it, through graphic language, music, costumes, and settings.



Images 9.1-9.4
Frames taken from *Almost Famous* (2000), which show the use of typography following the psychedelic 1970's aesthetics and other references to the time period, as well as graphic memorabilia of the time.

Not necessarily all movies that have significant production design, though, will have a powerful graphic language. However, all movies that have a powerful graphic language will derive from a well-rounded production design and art department. **Essentially, the graphic language** – manifested through graphic configurations in the form of filmed graphic objects, opening and final credits, and expository intertitles – **is part of the visual look and feel of a movie, which in turn is the utmost responsibility of the production designer. He will, therefore, supervise other designers such as graphic, motion, and special effects designers, to build together the visual identity of a motion picture.** This information is usually displayed in the movie's final credits which show the different artists and designers that are part of the art department, under the responsibility of the production designer and the art department coordinator (image 10).

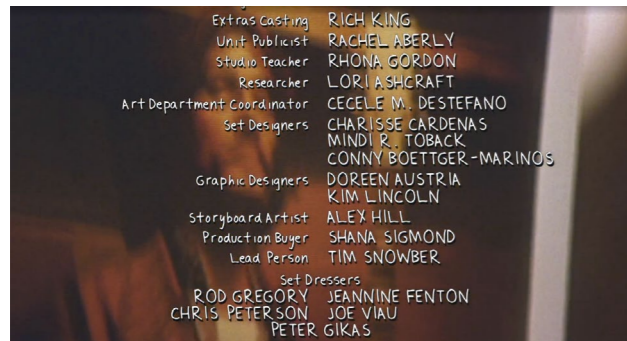


Image 10
Frame taken from the final credits of *Almost Famous* (2000), which show some of the artists and designers working in the movie's art department, including: set designers, graphic designers, and storyboard artist.

Baptista (2008) refers to production design as a possible line of interdisciplinary research between design and cinema. The prevailing key point is on the term 'design', which in definition can be very broad considering its wide-ranging applications, but essentially compels a core quality common to all its subareas – **the ability to connect distinctive elements into a unified and coherent visual project.** This quality can also be extended to the production designer, in the cinematic context, where he will bridge contrasting parts of a movie into a consolidated visual identity – thus becoming a key figure in the realisation of a movie. The creative process behind a designer's work will be based on the same core concepts, whether it is production, graphic, or motion design, for instance.

Understanding the pillars on which production design is fundamentally based emphasises the value of design in the film industry. It can be observed, through real-life cases, how having a background in design influences the way directors perceive a consistent visual universe for their movies. **Alfred Hitchcock**, one of the world's instantly recognisable personalities of cinema, started his career as an advertising designer for the *Henley Telegraph Company*, moving on to become a title card designer for silent films in 1921, and a year later a set designer for six films in the newly formed *Gainsborough Pictures*. (Spoto, 1977) Eventually, his abilities as a designer, understanding the components of a powerful visual image, were acknowledged through his ultimate accomplishment of becoming a feature film director.

An important aspect of Hitchcock's filmmaking method, which surely derives from his design background, is his total involvement in every aspect of the film's visual conception, from pre-production with script breakdown and storyboarding (image 11), to production meetings with set, costume and title designers, to post-production editing and special effects. This is why Hitchcock has said that his films are 'finished before shooting begins', and his actors have the impression that he has already seen the whole film in his head.

The design of a Hitchcock film, then, is really a series of interconnecting designs – the careful locking together of various parts: sets, props, dialogue, costumes, characters, plot and above all theme, that deepest area of ideas and concerns for which there is no verbal equivalent, and to which the visual image most clearly points. (Spoto, 1977, para. 11)

Image 11
Examples of meticulous storyboard design for the movie *Family Plot* (1976), done by a storyboard artist in direct collaboration with Hitchcock – which ratifies the designer-turned-director's keen eye for detail in his movies' visual compositions, always with the intention of conveying meaning to every element in the sequences.

Credits: (Spoto, 1977)
Print Magazine XXXI:IV



Another interesting tool used by production designers in conceptualising sets and imageries is the **metaphor** – a figure of speech –, where an idea is translated visually in the form of an analogy, in order to communicate main themes of a story. By transforming common objects or images into powerful and meaningful symbols regarding an aspect of the narrative, a layer of poetic complexity is added to the story – which might be perceived or not by the audience, depending on their critical eye and attentiveness. The production designer has the autonomy to decide whether these visual metaphors will be more subliminal or explicit to the viewer, however the final interpretation of the spectator is always subjective. An interesting example given by LoBrutto (2002) is of the movie *The Untouchables* (1987).

In *The Untouchables* (1987), directed by Brian DePalma, production designer Patrizia Von Brandenstein perceived Al Capone as a Sun King, an extraordinarily powerful man who controlled Chicago. Von Brandenstein conceived the idea that the city revolved around Capone and created a floor mural visualising the mythic image of a powerful sun figure. She placed the mural on a barbershop floor where Capone gets his haircut. (LoBrutto, 2002, p. 27)



Image 12
Frame taken from *The Untouchables* (1987), which shows the floor mural designed to symbolise the metaphor of Al Capone as the Sun King, by alluding to the mythic image of a powerful sun figure.

In this pertinent example, the production designer made use of the graphic language in the form of pictorial elements in creating a floor mural rich in visual metaphors. Its symbolic meaning might pass unnoticed by the spectator, as it is seamlessly part of the scene's background. However, the camera's composition and angle, seen from above, allows for the viewer to fully perceive the floor mural, which might act on a subconscious level as a subliminal message. Furthermore, **the use of visual metaphors in movies is in much portrayed by the graphic language, which leads to the next main topic of this historical investigation – the opening titles.**

[8] Motion design, or motion graphics, is a discipline that applies graphic design principles to filmmaking and video production through the use of animation and visual effects. Final outcomes include films, videos, animated text, and web-based animations and apps. A typical motion designer has been trained in traditional graphic design and has learned to integrate the elements of time, sound, and space into his or her existing skillset. Motion designers also come from film or animation backgrounds.

The story before the story: graphic dimension of opening titles

Hitchcock's work as a designer-turned-director is frequently linked to one graphic designer, possibly the most famous of the film industry, who revolutionised the creative potential of opening titles. Saul Bass was an extremely important figure in the history of graphic design in film, since he was the first professional in the industry to look at opening titles with different eyes. Until the 1950's, most titles were limited to functional aspects and had the sole intention of marking the beginning of a movie, presenting the film's title and main staff. Creatively speaking, they were minimally explored and told little information about the subsequent narrative. Bass's contribution was in the idea of creating 'a movie inside a movie', where the opening credits would set the mood and express the following story through visual metaphors in the form of simple animations – pioneering the use of **motion design** [8] in film, as well. In an interview done in 1996 with Pamela Haskin, Saul Bass said:

I began thinking about what to do at the beginning of a film. Obviously, the point of any title is to support the film. (...) My initial thoughts about what a title could do was to set mood and to prime the underlying core of the film's story; to express the story in some metaphorical way. I saw the title as a way of conditioning the audience, so that when the film actually began, viewers would already have an emotional resonance with it. (Haskin, 1996, p. 10-17)

Bass used basic elements of graphic design, such as geometric shapes and typography – frequently hand-drawn – to represent complex visual narratives. Essentially, Bass had a true minimalistic approach to design and perhaps this is why his creations became so relevant in the history of design and film, due to the originality of its form. He also became known for his film posters, where he reproduced the visual identity created in the opening titles, only in static form. Bass worked directly with famous filmmakers such as Alfred Hitchcock, Otto Preminger, and later on in his career, Martin Scorsese, together with his wife Elaine Bass.

Image 13
Taken from Pamela Haskin's interview with Saul Bass in 1996, these frames show the famous opening title sequence created by Bass for the movie Anatomy of a Murder (1959), which use pictorial and schematic elements in its conception.

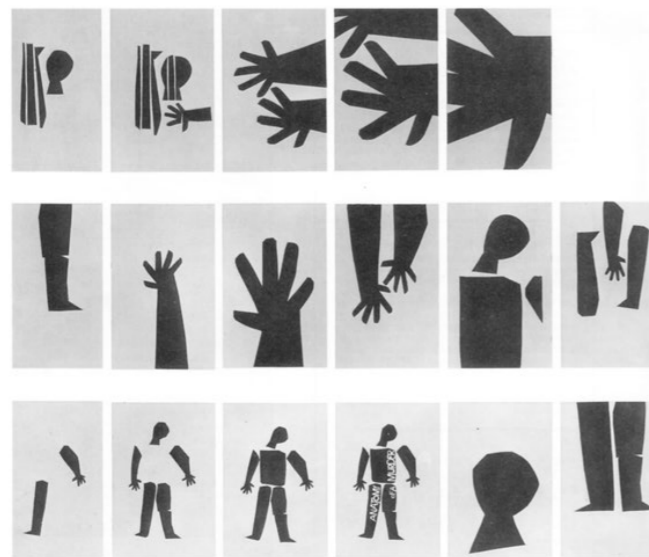


Image 14
Poster created by Saul Bass for the same movie, transferring the elements used in motion to the static form.

Credits: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/4824>



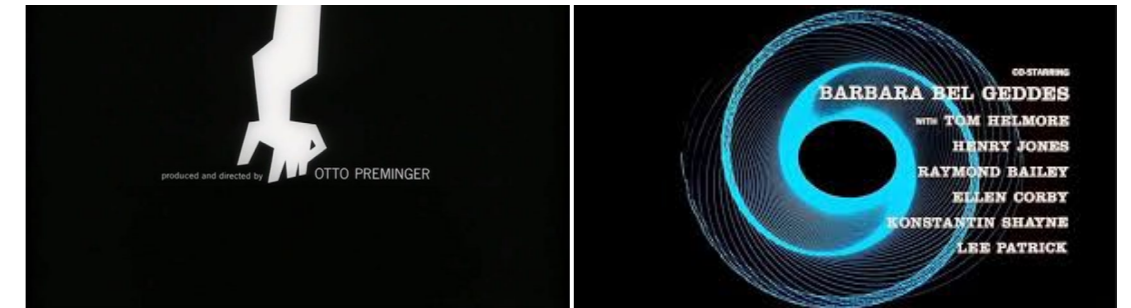
It is meaningful to mention that Saul Bass also had experience in corporate logo design, being responsible for creating many iconic and long-lasting visual identities, such as Continental Airlines and AT&T. Interestingly, logo design was much more profitable than his film work, and that is why eventually he ended up prioritising corporate design over the film industry. But the similarity between the two can be seen in his work.

Saul said that a film symbol is like a company logo but with a shorter life to do its work. A film symbol still had to attract, and like a record cover or book cover, had to nonverbally express the essence of the movie (...). Thus he 'invented' the film symbol and film credits accordingly. The design of the film symbol and credit before the film started told the mood of the story before the story. (Petit, 2014, para. 2)

Bass made an extraordinary analogy, which is reiterated in this dissertation, of the film as a logo, symbol, or even as a brand. **Through a strong graphic element in the opening titles, such as the illustrated hand in The Man with the Golden Arm (1955), or the spirals in Vertigo (1958), a motion picture, in all its narrative complexity, can be recognised simply by a graphic symbol – just like the whole universe of a brand, tangible or intangible, can be recognised by an individual logo.** Designer Steven Heller, in his acclaimed book Design Literacy, refers to Bass's creations for The Man with the Golden Arm poster: "Rather than hype the film, the graphic reduced the plot, the story of a tormented drug addict, to an essence – a logo really – that evoked the film's tension." (Heller, 2004, p. 222)

Image 15
Frame taken from Saul Bass's opening title sequence for Otto Preminger's movie The Man with the Golden Arm (1955), which uses the pictorial hand icon as the movie's main graphic symbol.

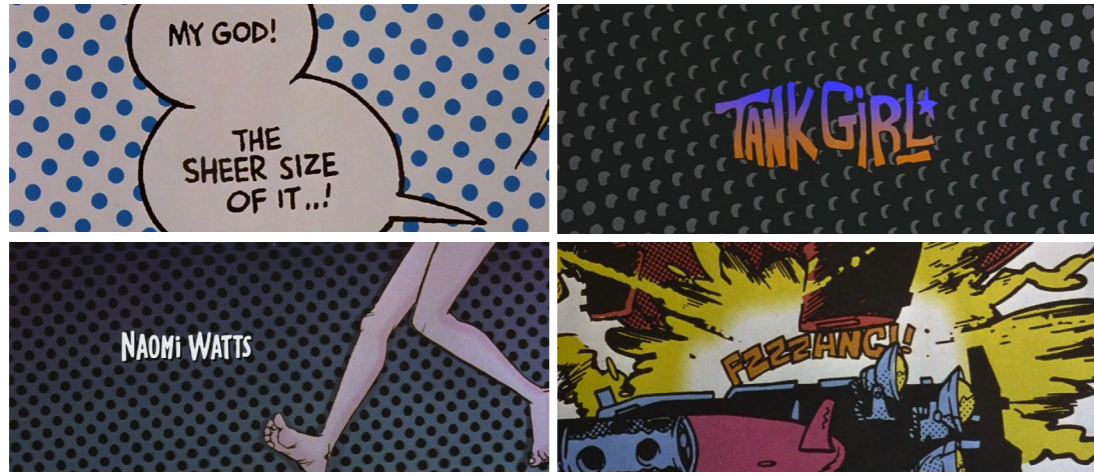
Image 16
Frame taken from Saul Bass's opening title sequence for Hitchcock's movie Vertigo (1958), which uses the pictorial spirals as the movies' main graphic symbol.



Bass's legacy has reverberated all over modern and contemporary cinema, influencing many title designers and bringing visibility to the practice of graphic design in film. His prestige is largely due to opening titles, which have become increasingly more complex in terms of the quality of the graphics and the narrative itself. "Saul Bass's contemporaries Pablo Ferro and Norman McLaren were equally seduced by the seventh art, widening the use of graphic language in film and becoming the forerunners of Kyle Cooper, the designer responsible for the opening of Seven (David Fincher, 1995)," (Aragão, 2006, p. 32, free translation) Interestingly enough, Kyle Cooper co-founded and named, in 1996, the creative digital agency Imaginary Forces, which is known for creating the opening titles of many acclaimed movies and television series – including one of the movies used as a case study in this investigation.

Rachel Talalay's post-punk apocalyptic movie Tank Girl (1995) – an adaptation of the comic strip with the same name –, sets the tone straight from the start with its opening titles filled with action-packed animation sequences of the comic book images. The title designer, Andrew Doucette, used the original artwork of the comic strip creator, Jamie Hewlett, as source material to trigger off his creative process. Through dynamic editing and a stimulating soundtrack, the titles anticipate the high spirits of the movie, rooted in the comic book's visual aesthetics. These compiled graphics can be observed throughout the whole filmic narrative, with animations in the opening and final credits, as well as in between scenes, functioning as expository intertitles. (Landekic, 2016) In this case, the **choice of using graphic language also served as a cheaper narrative strategy**, since filming some action shots like a jet flying, for instance, would be way over the established budget. This is usually a recurring response in independent movies, especially, due to limited time and budget.

Images 17.1-17.4
Frames taken from Tank Girl (1995), which show the opening title sequence reproducing work from the original source material, through upbeat soundtrack as well as graphic elements from the comic book aesthetics.

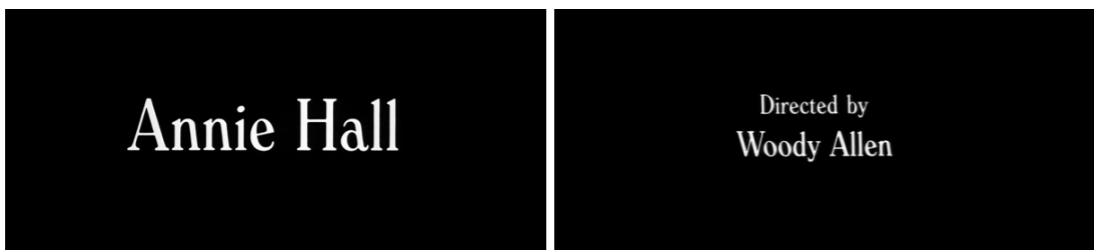


Besides the title design and animations, Talalay also hired a graphic designer, Eric Rosenberg, to create all the graphic props disposed in the film, such as package labels and fictitious logo signs. Rosenberg has plenty of experience in this area, having created graphics for movies such as *Forrest Gump* (1994), *The Truman Show* (1998), as well as *Almost Famous* (2000). Much of his work for *Tank Girl* was inspired by the original comic strip, so, in terms of research, he already had a starting point. Ultimately, designers who work in film (production, graphic, title, etc.) will never create artwork out of the blue, meaning that there are always inspirations and references to start from, some more obvious than others. It works in the same way as the creative process of logo design – the first step is to always do research and benchmarking.

Whatever the subject of a film, the designer must spend many hours ensuring that the visual detail he will put into the screen images will be accurate. Even though he will have many people working for him it is still necessary for him to have a remarkably wide general knowledge of periods and styles of costume, architecture, the decorative arts, etc. (St. John Marner, & Stringer, 1974, p. 44)

It was seen, from some examples, the creative potential of opening titles in higher layers of complexity. However, the level of complexity does not necessarily dictate the quality and efficiency of the titles. Simple and straightforward can also work, if that is the purpose of the designer. Many memorable titles derive from plain white text on a solid background, as if paying homage to silent movies and their title cards. A great example is Woody Allen's fascination for the font Windsor – centralised in white on a black background –, which he religiously uses in all of his movie titles, from *Annie Hall* (1977) on. "Windsor is as much a marker of Woody Allen's work as thick-rimmed glasses, neurotic characters, and New York City." (Fuller, 2017, para. 3) Once more, the power of the graphic language is evidenced through a consistent construction of a film's visual identity, or in this case, a director's visual identity or signature style, instinctively inserted into pop culture.

Images 18.1 & 18.2
Frames taken from the opening titles of *Annie Hall* (1977), in the famous signature style of Woody Allen.



In short, opening titles are an essential component of a film, and the only necessary graphic one. Minimally, in terms of graphic language, every movie must have opening and final credits. It is up to the Trinity to decide whether these will be more visually elaborate or simple and straightforward. The main issue to keep in mind, though, is the fact that the opening titles are only one possible manifestation of the graphic language in a filmic narrative. The opening titles are often mistakenly considered as the only cinematic graphic design configuration, and this is clearly observed through the vast amount of academic work from designers on this specific subject. However, as has been shown throughout this historical investigation, there are other forms of graphic configurations that contribute to a film's design, which should not be disregarded. **With this in mind, the main objective of this research is to gather a concise and complete analysis of a film's graphic language, which includes not only opening and final credits, but also filmed graphic objects and expository intertitles. By uniting all of these categories, one can determine a movie's graphic identity.**

The rise of computer graphics and digital cinema

Following the creative boom of opening titles, pioneered by graphic designer Saul Bass in the 1950's, the next twenty years in the film industry were defined by clashes in hegemony from North American and European productions. As a response to a weakened traditional studio system due, in part, to Europe's new wave upturn, a new generation of filmmakers emerged in the United States, brought up on television and foreign cinema. This period was commonly referred to as New Hollywood, where the American industry saw itself forced to adapt to the practices of European cinema, that went beyond the previously established classical method. Narratives became more sophisticated in representing realities, with characters who were now confused and perhaps not as clearly motivated as before, and American censorship was re-evaluated as more amounts of sex and violence were portrayed in motion pictures. (Ministry of Cinema)

This shift was clearly embodied through the growing phenomenon of 'blockbusters', which were highly lucrative, high budget feature films with popular worldwide releases and significant, computer-generated special effects. At this point, cinema's core structure was experiencing an internal revolution, where its original foundations – the cinematographic image – acquired a new digital and graphic dimension, manifested through the use of **computer graphics**, as opposed to the traditional optical and physical-mechanical special effects used in earlier films. (Aragão, 2006) Movies such as Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) were avant-garde in the use of computer graphics and are, until nowadays, part of the worldwide pop culture. Besides, they also accompanied promotional merchandising design which reinforced their graphic identity and guaranteed their financial success as box-office hits. No films had ever made that much money so quickly.

Budgeted at the highest level, launched in the summer or the Christmas season, playing off a best-selling book or a pop-culture fad like disco, advertised endlessly on television, and then opening in hundreds (eventually thousands) of theatres on the same weekend, the blockbuster was calculated to sell tickets fast. By the early 1980's, merchandising was added to the mix, so tie-ins with fast-food chains, automobile companies, and lines of toys and apparel could keep selling the movie. (Bordwell, 2006, p.3)

Hollywood was gradually establishing a solidified new film aesthetic, through bigger control of all aspects of the image. Reality was displayed as a result of the latest technology available in the film industry. The **digital revolution** allowed for computers to be inserted into the cinematic process as major tools for editing and image manipulation techniques – which increased exponentially the possibilities of film production. “Not only special effects, but all the manipulative potential of computer-generated images allowed for the creation of artificial sceneries, digital colouring of old films, three-dimensional animations, and electronic graphics.” (Aragão, 2006, p. 40, free translation) These behavioural changes in cinematic nature particularly reinforced the capabilities of filmmaking in alliance with technology. It seemed like all major filmic developments were directly associated to technological advancement. This co-reliance dictated the rhythm of film production since early ages and affected the way film language progressed and was perceived. “Digital media redefines the very identity of cinema. (...) When, given enough time and money, almost everything can be simulated in a computer, to film physical reality is just one possibility.” (Manovich, 1995, p. 1)

Manovich (2001) defines the new principles of digital filmmaking, which are widely represented by the use of computer graphics. They include characteristics such as live action footage functioning as “raw material for further compositing, animating and morphing.” The result is a new kind of realism, which can be described as “something which is intended to look exactly as if it could have happened, although it really could not”. Manovich then synthesises this new metamorphic nature of digital cinema into the following equation: **digital film = live action material + painting + image processing + compositing + 2D computer animation + 3D computer animation** (Manovich, 2001, p. 301). With this assumption, several layers are now added into the film spectrum, transforming the cinematic language into a more complex and ever evolving web of elements. Manovich makes a pertinent comparison between the current digital cinema and its early ages, when manual construction and animation of images were explored through analogue techniques. He suggests that digital cinema is an evolution of early cinema’s animation and painting technology and even considers digital cinema as a sub-genre of painting, in order to reach its plasticity.

Live action footage is now only raw material to be manipulated by hand: animated, combined with 3D computer generated scenes and painted over. The final images are constructed manually from different elements; and all the elements are either created entirely from scratch or modified by hand. (...) The history of the moving image thus makes a full circle. Born from animation, cinema pushed animation to its boundary, only to become one particular case of animation in the end. (Manovich, 1995, p. 9)

Curiously, we can notice the world's first fully painted feature film being produced in 2017, validating Manovich's theory in a certain way. The movie *Loving Vincent* tells the story of the well-known troubled artist Van Gogh, through the unprecedented use of oil painted frames. The filmmakers Hugh Welchman and Dorota Kobiela recruited 125 oil painters from 20 countries to paint roughly 65,000 canvas using a frame-by-frame animation technique, similar to stop motion. The ambitious film took nearly six years to be finished and was nominated for a Golden Globe for best animated feature. During the production process, they shot the original performances of the actors on a green screen at 12 frames per second and edited it regularly as a live-action film. Afterwards, they broke it into shots and the artists had to paint frame by frame in the style of a Van Gogh painting. (Giardina, 2017) The result is a poetic and breath-taking visual account that leaves the spectator in awe from beginning to end.

Image 19
Making of the movie *Loving Vincent* (2017).
Credits: <https://www.awn.com/news/polands-ceta-played-key-role-loving-vincent>

Image 20
Screenshot taken from the video of CeTA Film Studio, which shows the VFX breakdown of the movie *Loving Vincent* (2017).
Credits: <https://vimeo.com/252674139>



Loving Vincent accurately verifies Manovich's prediction of how digital cinema could be considered a sub-genre of painting. The film is ultimately considered animation, although it started out as live-action footage that was further manipulated through painting (analogue technique) and later on digitalised to a computer. This transformational process only strengthens the idea that cinema in the digital age has no boundaries, and that creative possibilities are endless, where the production becomes only the first stage of post-production. (Manovich, 2001)

Images 21.1 & 21.2
Frames taken from *Loving Vincent* (2017), showing the final outcome of the movie – which reinforces the new language of film defined by Manovich (1995), where live action footage is only raw material to be manipulated by hand.



It is in this context of endless digital possibilities that cinema's essence starts to be questioned, as theorists criticise or at least try to grasp the extent of the consequences caused by the digital revolution, especially in Hollywood. Theorist William Brown even suggests the concept of a 'post-humanist' cinema, which explicitly opposes the original idea identified by the French in the 1940's, of films as faithful representations of reality.

...the mix of 'real' and 'virtual' elements, even on the level of colour, suggests a cinema that is no longer an indexical representation of a reality that existed before the camera (even if that 'reality' was part of a 'fictional' world, i.e. a set), but rather a new, post-humanist reality, which possesses a new ontology that similarly raises questions about our old, 'human' reality. (...) In other words, digital cinema is a cinema that can be made without cameras and it is a cinema that can be made without human characters or even actors. (Brown in Buckland, 2009, pp. 70-71)

The extensive innovations caused by digital technology could not pass unnoticed by some filmmakers, which led to the emergence of movements such as the *Dogme 95*, created by Danish directors Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, who sought to return to basic traditional values of story, acting, and theme, excluding the use of elaborate technological special effects. These reactions were an inevitable consequence to the direction cinema was heading – up until now, the furthest it got from the film language established in the foreign new wave, which searched for low-budget aesthetics and questioned Hollywood's industrial cinema of high costs and excessive bureaucracies. (Baptista, 2008) Nevertheless, there is space in the industry for all of cinema's possibilities, and that is in fact where the richness of the seventh art lies – in the infinite artistic explorations available to a filmmaker, which allows for him to choose which type of cinema to convey.

We no longer think of the history of cinema as a linear march towards only one possible language, or as a progression towards more and more accurate verisimilitude. Rather, we have come to see its history as a succession of distinct and equally expressive languages, each with its own aesthetic variables, each new language closing off some of the possibilities of the previous one. (Manovich, 1995, p. 15)

Anyhow, considering that the focus of this research is solely on the graphic language of movies, the topic of digital cinema and its consequences on modern and contemporary cinema should not be too extended – as it alone is enough theme for a complete thesis. It is important to note the transformations caused by the digital revolution in cinema, but the main objective is to contextualise it in terms of how the graphic language was developed. Before delving deeper in this matter, it is important to clarify and differentiate the terms ‘special effects’ from ‘graphic configurations’. Special effects are analogue or digital procedures by which altered or illusory cinematic images are obtained from the outcome of shootings, in order to achieve a photorealistic effect. This means that special effects mostly intend to convince the spectator of the image’s ‘realness’, imitating reality and therefore with the ultimate intent of not being noticed by the spectator. **Special effects, therefore, are not considered graphic configurations.** Graphic configurations do not have the objective of faithfully imitating reality and are chosen to be portrayed in the graphic form, as they are clearly elements which are not part of movie’s cinematographic realism – with the exception, of course, of the filmed graphic objects, which are real physical objects inserted inside the scenes.

Furthermore, a film’s graphic language is directly affected by the advent of digital media, making it much easier to create graphic configurations and to mix them with the original footage. Opening and final credits and expository intertitles, from this moment on, are mostly created by computer software in the post-production stage. Filmed graphic objects can be either handmade, or created with computers, depending on their ultimate objective. The change from analogue to digital technology allowed even further for designers to become intrinsically part of a film production. The birth of the world wide web, the emergence of increasingly powerful computers and the release of editing software, such as After Effects and Premiere, are key factors which led to the search of graphic designers to work in film, in much through the field of motion graphics. (Aragão, 2006)

Moura (2004), in his Master’s dissertation, discourses about the impact of new digital technologies in the audiovisual productions, differentiated by his personal point of view as a designer. He defines two main possibilities for the practice of design in cinema: the first is **horizontal**, and considers the designer as an interlocutor, contributing with the director in the planning of a movie. This function can be attributed to the production designer, or art director, and reinforces the ability of the designer to materialise ideas and abstractions, combining the practical qualities of physically producing something, with the abstract aspect of conceiving, or planning. In this possibility, the designer is part of the filmic process as a whole, contributing with the Trinity in conceiving a complete visual filmic project. The second insertion is **vertical**, and considers the designer as executor of specific tasks throughout an audiovisual production, such as designing the opening titles, or creating graphic props. In this situation, the designer works in an isolated and minimised manner, responding to higher professionals – as opposed to the horizontal insertion, where he will be part of those higher professionals.

Ultimately, whichever task assumed by a designer in a movie production – either through a horizontal or vertical insertion – it must be considered in its plurality, as part of a larger audiovisual project. There is an alluring freedom in cinema to portray

[9] User experience and user interface design.

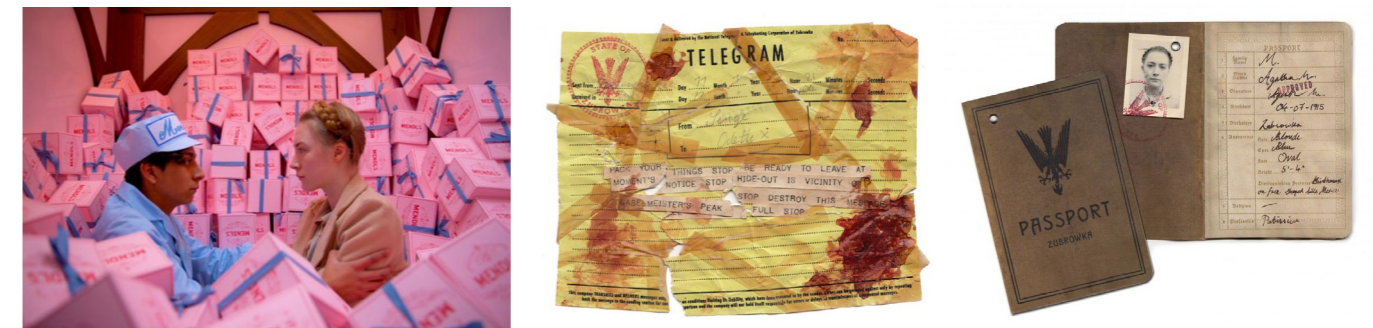
any type of universe – be it through a strong use of special effects or through a more realistic, ‘raw’ cinematographic content. **What matters, essentially, is understanding how one will visually express a movie’s content and which is the best strategy to do so, in terms of narrative, techniques, tools and materials.** The main objective in this research is to comprehend how the graphic language is inserted into this equation, as an element which helps to convey a movie’s message. To reach conclusions, an extensive analysis was made throughout film history to point out major events that led to the emergence (and disappearance) of graphic elements in movies, as cinematic components. By understanding these terms, it becomes possible to draw a direct parallel with contemporary cinema, and more specifically, Hollywood cinema – which is the focus of this study.

Contemporary cinema and Hollywood

The concept of digital cinema should not be taken to the extreme, as contemporary cinema cannot be generalised as films that use manipulations and special effects. However, it is evident that the digital revolution brought closer together the graphic and cinematographic languages, as it allowed for graphic configurations to be more consistently explored in a filmic universe. Through some examples shown along film history, the authenticity of design in cinema can be perceived, be it through the role a designer can take in the production of a movie, as well as through the insertion of graphic design elements in a film’s universe. The possibilities for design in cinema go beyond the repeatedly referred title design, and extend into other areas such as production, graphic, motion, typography and even UX/UI design [9]. Considering the new metrics of digital filmmaking defined by Manovich (2001), a designer must be up to date with the latest technologies and understand how graphic design can be adapted onto a screen, exploring new visual grammars brought by the virtual medium and the concept of motion.

Likewise, movie directors must expand their mindset by including design principles as foundations for their audiovisual projects. **The direct relationship between director–designer should be explored consistently in film productions, not only through a horizontal insertion but also vertical – where graphic, motion and digital designers also have creative autonomy in the movie’s visual project.** Contemporary Hollywood cinema has shown some great examples of directors that already present this concern, such as **Wes Anderson**, who is famous for displaying meticulous aesthetics for his movies. In his major production *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), Anderson hired lead graphic designer Annie Atkins to produce all of the movie’s diegetic graphic identity. Atkins created all graphic props – as print, signage, and fictitious logos – which helped establish the visuals of the fictional land of Zubrowka, where the story is set, and thus making it believable.

Images 22.1-22.3
Some of the many graphic props created by designer Annie Atkins for Wes Anderson’s movie *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014).
Credits: Annie Atkins’ official website – <http://www.annieatkins.com>



[10] Content taken from Roman Mars' 99% Invisible podcast.

[11] <http://tilda.fontbureau.com/>.

Atkins gave a series of interviews regarding her graphic design work in the film, and one matter she constantly reinforces is the importance of establishing the correct time period and setting for the movie. Since she usually works with period pieces, the amount of research dedicated into creating the props is valuable, to avoid misleading aesthetics for the time period. The graphic objects need to transport the viewer to the chosen era in a natural and believable manner; thus, graphic design elements should be almost 'invisible' in the sets. The more coherent they are with the chosen aesthetic and time period, the less spectators should notice them, since they are supposed to look as if they were really part of that scenery. Rather, the focus should be on the story that unfolds as a central plot, and set design should be merely an accessory to help build the diegetic universe of a film. Quoting Atkins, "the attention of the audience should really be on the drama that is unfolding between the characters, not graphic design. I think you should notice it but only subconsciously. We are building a world and we are using graphic design to do that." [10]

On another matter, these filmed graphic objects can also tell subliminal stories of their own, such as, for instance, on the opening scene of the Cold War period movie *Bridge of Spies* (2015), where a man is being chased in the New York subway. The spectator can notice a sign that says "Walk do not run" (images 23.1 & 23.2), which brings irony to the sequence, as the characters will start to run in search of the man. The sign, which was also created by Annie Atkins together with a series of other street signs (image 24), helps to unfold the narrative in a more dynamic way, by transmitting additional information that can only be perceived by the viewer in the graphic dimension.

Images 23.1 & 23.2
Frames taken from the *Bridge of Spies* (2015) which show a subway sign with the words "Walk do not run" intentionally positioned while the characters are chasing a man.



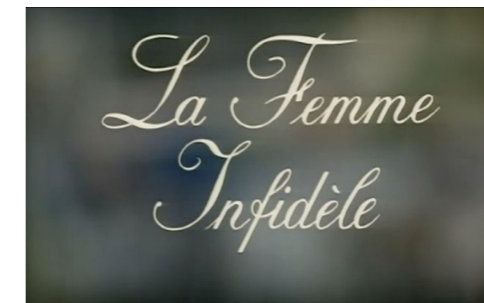
Image 24
Signs created by graphic designer Annie Atkins so as to deliver verisimilitude to the period film *Bridge of Spies*.

Credits: Annie Atkins' official website: <http://www.annieatkins.com>

Wes Anderson's care for graphics and visuals in his movies is also exemplified in *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012), where acclaimed lettering and type designer Jessica Hische was hired to create the typography for the opening and final titles (images 25.1 & 25.2). Her initial design references included Edwardian script at first, and later on the titles of movie *La Femme Infidèle* (1969), suggested by Wes himself (images 27 & 28). Hische sought to create a less formal typeface that somehow would refer to 1960's New England, through an accordingly sweet and youthful outlook – as the movie suggests. Ultimately, her typeface, named Tilda [11], determined the branding of the film, as she ended up creating a whole alphabet to be used throughout the movie, in the final credits, and in the promotional

>
Images 25.1 & 25.2
Frames taken from the opening and final titles of *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012), which use the typography created by designer Jessica Hische.

>
Image 26
Moonrise Kingdom official poster, which also uses Tilda typeface created by Jessica Hische.



>>
Images 27 & 28
Hische's references for creating Tilda – title for the movie *La Femme Infidèle* (1969) and Edwardian Script.

Credits: <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/moonrise-kingdom/>

Image 29
Still from the *Harry Potter* film series, which shows the *Daily Prophet* newspaper, a graphic prop explored countless times throughout the HP's films.

Image 30
House of MinaLima gallery shop in London, UK.

Credits: <https://revistagalileu.globo.com/Cultura/noticia/2018/11/brasileiro-integrante-de-design-grafico-de-animais-fantasticos-2.html>

poster (images 26). (Landekic, 2013) The importance of the typeface in the movie's graphic identity is tremendous, as it intentionally helps dictate the tone of the film. Wes Anderson consciously chose to invest in graphic language as a visual strategy, just as he did with *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and many other of his movies.

Another popular example of graphic language in film that must be mentioned is the *Harry Potter* film series, produced from 2001 to 2011. Although there were, alongside the seven movies, different directors, the graphic designers responsible for creating most of the graphic props were the same for all the films. Brazilian designer Eduardo Lima and English designer Miraphora Mina worked together in the seven productions as well as in the *Fantastic Beasts* franchise, creating thousands of printed props, and eventually launching their own graphic design studio, entitled Minalima. Part of their success was also due to the open-to-public studio visit in London, where fans can see the real sets used in the movies, which include a small section of the visit that refers to all the graphic props created by Minalima. The duo has a gallery and store in London, the House of Minalima, where they showcase their entire treasury of graphic work, not only from *Harry Potter* but from other artwork and publication they made. Invariably, graphic design for film gains visibility and becomes more prominent through marketing and capitalist strategies, which aims to make a business out of selling either replicas of the graphic props, books and catalogues that contains images and information on the graphic props, or tickets to studio visits. *Harry Potter* and Minalima have used all of these strategies successfully, which helped fix *Harry Potter*'s graphic identity into the twenty-first century pop culture.



[12] See case study #3 (The Great Gatsby) for more examples of the newspaper in physical and virtual forms.

On another note, it is important to consider the different **formal natures** that graphic configurations acquire in movies. The three mentioned categories – filmed graphic objects, opening and final credits, and expository intertitles – are manifested through two major forms: **physical and virtual**. For instance, graphic props have a physical form, as they are constructed manually or through printing methods, to be inserted in a scene, possibly being interacted by the actors. They are part of the film's diegetic world and help set the scene. On the other hand, opening and final credits as well as intertitles will most likely have a virtual form, being created and visualised through a computer screen, on post-production. The same graphic configuration, though, can acquire different formal natures depending on the choice of the designer – for example, a newspaper can be a filmed graphic object as it can also be a computer-generated element inserted in post-production [12]. In summary, the virtual and physical forms can and should be explored collectively in creating the graphic identity of a motion picture. These and other important matters regarding the distinct characteristics of graphic configurations will be revisited throughout the theoretical framework and more thoroughly discussed in the third chapter of this research, with the case studies.

In regards to the virtual form of graphic configurations, another subarea of design that has grown in film for the last years is of the **UX/UI design**, manifested by the creation of **digital user interfaces** in a filmic narrative. They are mostly explored in science fiction movies and suggest how technology would work in the future. These digital interfaces are completely hypothetical and often non-functional, serving merely as symbolic representatives for a possible futuristic technology. The basis for creating these interfaces undoubtedly come from graphic design elements and principles, being in its essence a graphic design work. However, these elements need to be transformed into responsive, moving images, and this is where the dimensions of motion design and UX/UI design are inserted in the equation.

In *Minority Report* (2002), production designer Alex McDowell worked together with scientists and other designers to create a stunning futuristic aesthetic, but also recognisable by the contemporary audience. The design work in the movie was a key visual strategy in connecting all of its cinematic components, and the cutting-edge technology seen in the film is said to have influenced and made possible contemporary technologies. “McDowell said that over 100 patents have been issued for ideas first floated in the movie, which is set in Washington DC in the year 2054,” such as gestural interfaces, flexible displays, voice activation, “driverless cars, wearable technology, 3D video and digital advertisements that recognise who is looking at them and adjust their content accordingly.” (Fairs, 2015) Much of the movie takes place in a futuristic city, which was designed entirely by McDowell in great detail at the pre-production stage, understanding its transport infrastructure and its social, political, and cultural systems. This style of work can be seen through much of McDowell's filmography, where he calls his holistic, design-led approach “**world building**”.

...Steven Spielberg, Alex McDowell, and screenwriters Scott Frank and Jon Cohen conceived together the story and visuality of *Minority Report*. The collective work offered an unprecedented and definitive experience: the script was written based on potentially interesting visual aspects pointed out by McDowell. This shift in strategy made the art department, from pre-production, an information center for all other team professionals, and reaffirmed how design can effectively influence a movie, possibly as much as the script. (Machado, 2011, p.13, free translation)

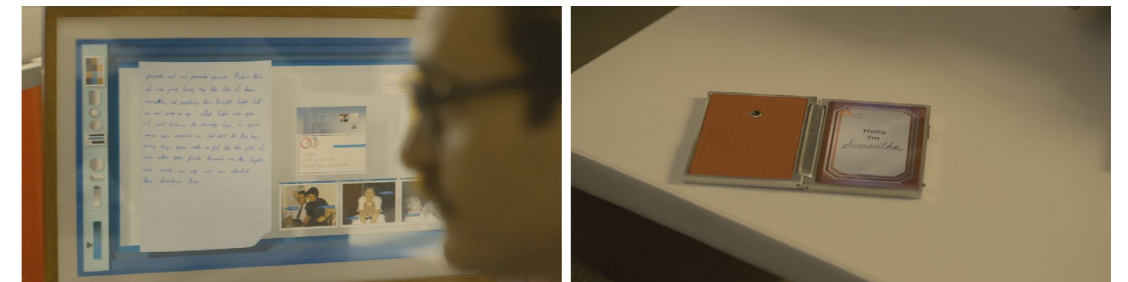
McDowell's concept of world building is effective in creating filmic universes which, even though fantastic, are believable by the audience. Another reference to this concept is of the movie *Her* (2013), directed by Spike Jonze, which is set in a near future – although it is

Images 31.1 & 31.2
Frames taken from *Minority Report* (2002), which show the use of digital interfaces (UX/UI design) as graphic configurations in order to build futuristic aesthetics for science fiction films.



considered a science fiction movie, it does not present usual characteristics of this genre such as the use of colder colour palettes (mainly blue) referring to technology. Instead, Jonze's movie appeals to a more retro style, with the use of sepia, warm-toned images. The graphic configurations are explored as digital interfaces applied to computer's and phone's screens. They are created for the main character's profession as a ghost-writer (image 32.1) – where he speaks the content of letters and the computer writes them down, in the form of calligraphy – as well as to represent the innovative operational system in which the main character gets involved, called Samantha (image 32.2). There is a clear intention to 'humanise' technology, in much through the use of graphic language as handwritten calligraphy, seen as a unique approach to escape the commonplace of science fiction movies. Graphic designer Geoff McFetridge was responsible for projecting much of the graphic interfaces, and is credited as the movie's 'graphical futurist designer'. (Kondo, 2016)

Images 32.1 & 32.2
Frames taken from *Her* (2013), which show different digital interfaces created for the film's universe, however bringing a 'humanised' aspect to technology.



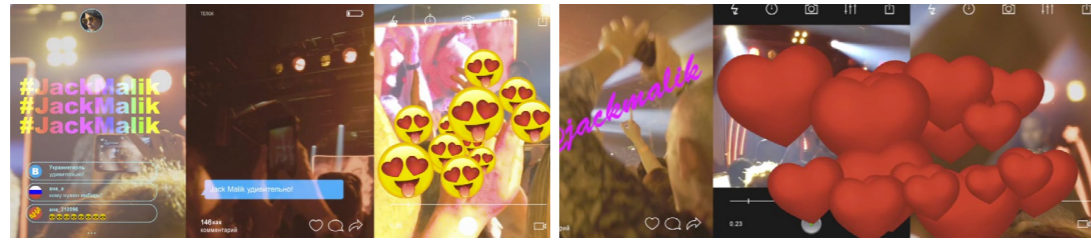
Last but not least, another virtual form of graphic configuration is given through **graphic animations** which are superimposed over a filmed image, as a means of filmic expression. These graphic animations can represent any additional information to the plot, according to the Trinity's choice, and are usually included as a way to make a story more dynamic, thickening the plot. They have a clearly distinct formal nature from the realistic cinematographic image, and are instantly recognised as elements exterior to the movie's universe, therefore, their use should be very cautious as to not become too abrupt and decontextualised from the film's language. One example can be observed on Mark Forster's movie *Stranger Than Fiction* (2006), where the opening scenes show the main character's obsessive daily routine broken down into details through superimposed graphic animations that reinforce his compulsive behaviour (images 33.1 & 33.2).

Another interesting application of graphic animations exist as representations of **social media language**. Considering the contemporary scenario of the contextualised Hollywood films, occasionally graphic configurations take the form of social media elements, as seen through smartphone screens – such as text messages, emojis/emoticons and digital interfaces which simulate Instagram, Twitter, Facebook or other social media platforms. Examples include the movie *Yesterday* (2018), which uses Instagram's social media elements to represent the popularity of the main character's music around the globe (images 34.1 & 34.2); as well as *Chef* (2014), which uses Twitter's graphic language in a comical way so as to represent the impact that social media can have in a person's life and

Images 33.1 & 33.2
Frames taken from
Stranger Than Fiction
(2006) which show
graphic animations
superimposed over the
cinematographic image in
the opening scenes.



Images 34.1 & 34.2
Frames taken from
Yesterday (2018) which
show superimposed
graphic animations
simulating Instagram's
user interface.



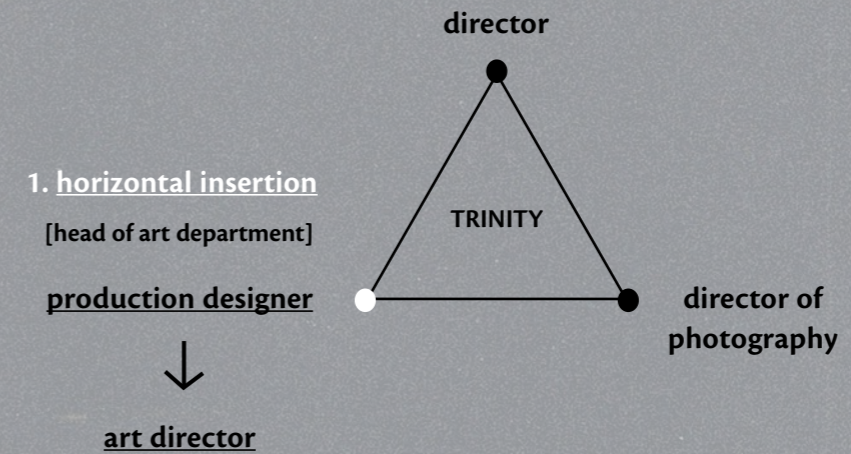
Images 35.1 & 35.2
Frames taken from
Chef (2014) which show
superimposed graphic
animations to represent
Twitter's social media
language.



business (images 35.1 & 35.2). This strategy works effectively in bringing a technological and up-to-date feel to the movie, as well as approaching younger generations, who most likely will identify with what they see on screen.

Besides the expository intertitles, therefore, other virtual configurations exist in contemporary movies, as digital user interfaces and/or graphic animations. With this in mind, the previously defined category of expository intertitles will hereinafter be expanded to (3) **expository graphics and intertitles**, so as to include all of these possibilities. They are condensed together in one category because they have the same intention or function of conveying additional information in the graphic dimension, through graphic design elements which are exterior to the film's universe (even though the intertitles will usually be positioned in the transitions from one scene to another, while the graphic animations can appear at any given moment).

Possible roles for a designer* in the construction of a film's graphic identity



2. **vertical insertion**
[art and post-production/visual effects departments]

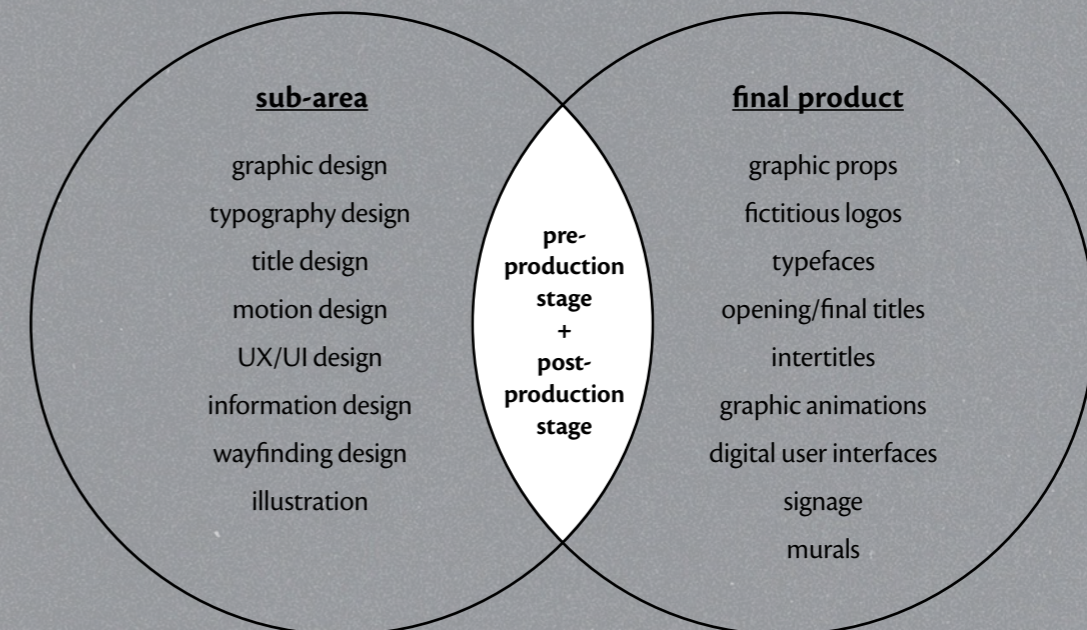


Diagram 1
Possible roles a designer
can acquire in the
conceptualisation of a
movie's graphic identity.
* The term designer here
refers to the specialists
responsible for creating
the movie's graphic
configurations.

2.1.2 Final considerations:

Diagram 1 aims to demonstrate the possibilities for a designer's work in film, contextualised to a movie's graphic identity – which considers the creation of graphic configurations. To reach this compiled conclusion, it was compulsory to study the history of film since its early ages with silent cinema, when the graphic language was first implemented in a filmic narrative through expository and dialogue intertitles, as well as filmed graphic objects. Other graphic configurations, such as more complex opening and final titles, were added to the picture effectively from the 1950's on, with Saul Bass being its pioneer. The inclusion of production design as an established function in a movie production helped to materialise the design practice in cinema, although smaller productions still use the term art director. With the digital revolution, computer graphics paved the way for virtual graphic configurations to become a solid component of film language. Additionally, graphic props have become a strong possibility for graphic designers in film, being popularised with movies such as *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and the *Harry Potter* sequel.

Ultimately, the contemporary film industry sees countless possibilities for designers – integrated into an increasingly collaborative crew – and they can be represented by Moura's (2004) division of horizontal and vertical insertion. The horizontal insertion refers to the work of a production designer or art director, who will be responsible, together with the director and director of photography, for the visual look and feel of a movie. The vertical insertion relates to punctual functions a designer might have throughout the production of a movie – hired during specific production stages – and consist of smaller roles to create individual elements such as opening and final titles, graphic props, and any other type of graphic configuration. These designers can come from different backgrounds, such as motion, graphic or UX/UI design, as long as they present the necessary skills to create such elements, through the use of computer-generated software or through analogue methods. The specialists are part of either the art department, responsible for creating the set design in pre-production stage – which includes all the graphic props used in the shootings; or in the post-production department, integrated with the visual effects department, in order to combine the graphic animations and titles with the movie's editing and final outcome. It is true that designers can also work in other functions related to the distribution of a movie, such as creating promotional posters and merchandising graphic pieces – but these are extensions of the movie's graphic identity, which should adopt the same language in its construction. Additionally, designers can work together with illustrators or concept artists in the pre-production stage in order to create storyboards or other concept arts, however, these do not function effectively as graphic configurations, as they serve as tools for the visualisation of the future live-action footage and sceneries. Therefore, **in this research, the main focus is on the functions of a designer during the pre-production, shootings and post-production stages in effectively creating graphic configurations.**

As previously mentioned, the advent of digital technology revolutionised the way in which films were produced, expanding the range of options available for a filmmaker, as well as increasing the financial revenue of film production – in much through growing reliance on blockbusters, sequels and remakes. Hollywood was certainly the industry that explored to the fullest these structural changes, dominating the cinema market with three distinct industry sectors, from highest to lowest: **(1) the six traditional major studios** – Warner Bros., Disney, Paramount, 20th Century Fox, Universal and Columbia – focused on franchise-spawning blockbusters and budgeted in the \$100–\$250 million range; **(2) the indie and specialty division** – subsidiaries of the conglomerates – represented by studios such as Fox Searchlight, Focus Features, and Sony Pictures Classics, that produce more modestly budgeted films in the \$30–\$50 million range for more specialised and discriminating audiences; and finally **(3) the truly independent producer-distributors,**

which are represented by hundreds of companies that supply over half of all film releases, usually budgeted in the \$5–\$10 million range, or less. (Schatz in Buckland, 2009) It is interesting to show these numbers as a way of demonstrating Hollywood's omnipresent position in the film market, having representatives on all budgeting levels, from major studios to the independent companies. In terms of visual projects, therefore, one can find the most varied collection of filmic narratives in Hollywood's contemporary scenario, with countless graphic explorations. The strong presence of production design and increased digital technology makes Hollywood, accordingly, the most pertinent contextual scenery for this research. **With this in mind, the present work intends on selecting fictional filmic narratives produced in Hollywood, from the twenty-first century (denominated contemporary), as case studies to analyse specific circumstances of the use of graphic language in motion pictures.**

Moreover, the graphic language should be inserted in a filmic universe through a conscious and strategic use, which is only possible with the deepened knowledge of the theoretical aspects of the languages that compose cinema's hybrid nature, and how they are different and alike. With this in mind, the next chapter aims to investigate the theoretical basis of the cinematographic and graphic languages, dealing with film, design and semiotics theories.

I believe that one of the secret engines that allows cinema to work, and have the marvelous power over us that it does, is the fact that for thousands of years we have spent eight hours every night in a 'cinematic' dream-state, and so are familiar with this version of reality.

Walter Murch



La La Land (2016)

Credits: <https://www.moviemaniamania.io/wallpaper/pm6pspd828-la-la-land>

Review of Literature

2.2 Theoretical framework

To further perceive the use of graphic language in movies and how they might be significant in a narrative, one needs to be able to identify the elemental structures that compose filmic expression. By presenting an introductory overview of cinema's core qualities and how it communicates with the audience, the reader can then visualise where the graphic language is inserted as a manner of cinematic expression. This chapter will, therefore, first explore the theoretical basis for defining cinema and its language (conditioned to the film's graphic dimension), and later on, through design theories that comprise the field of graphic design, explore the definition of the graphic language itself, applied to the practice of design in film. During this process, parallels will be drawn between both languages, so as to identify their intersections and how they can work together successfully in making a motion picture, through real examples.

2.2.1 What is cinema?

The film experience is made up of many activities: our eyes and ears pick up and analyse image and sound, our minds apprehend the story, which resonates in our memory; furthermore, our stomach, heart, and skin are activated in empathy with the story situations and the protagonists' ability to cope. (Grodal, 2000, p.1)

The power of moving images has been legitimised across the twentieth and twenty-first century as motion pictures became an intrinsic part of mass culture, connecting distinct viewers and inspiring ambitious artistry and ingenuity. Whether designed to engage us through visceral, action-packed sequences or through more traditional aesthetics, films usually appeal to the masses as they portray imageries that would otherwise not be visible, inciting our senses and emotions. The ability of a viewer to connect or identify with the characters in a filmic narrative leads him or her to relate to their own personal experiences or, in a bigger level, to the surrounding world – prompting reflection.

Movies contribute to a sense of belonging. That is, viewing movies creates the opportunity to participate in different forms of social activity, from going to a drive-in theatre to watching a DVD at home with friends. Movies bring a range of people together, provide them with a common experience, and create a reference point around which to build shared values and beliefs. (Nichols, 2010, p. 7)

According to Nichols (2010), a film relies on two primary sources for its shape: a formal context and a social context. The formal context involves medium-specific qualities related to technology available in the film industry, allowing for cinematography, sound, and editing techniques to be explored, through a vast repository of stylistic alternatives. The social context, in turn, relates to a story's thematic focus, referred to as its content, as opposed to its form. "The social context turns our attention beyond aesthetics and film technique to issues that are not specific to the film medium but, instead, characteristic of

[13] The term design, in this spectrum, refers to industrial design, exemplified through “clothing, furniture, eating utensils, and so forth”, which often are not even dignified of being included in the artistic spectrum, and are highly mimetic.

the times and culture in which a film appears.” (Nichols, 2010, p. 14) These two aspects of cinema can be condensed into **form** and **content** – one does not exist without the other, and the two should work together in building consistent cinematic worlds.

The formal context

It is definitely a challenge to define in few words what comprises motion pictures, due to their high level of complexity. Nonetheless, some major characteristics that help shape what is cinema can be identified, in terms of its formal context. The first characteristic considers cinema as an **art form** – precisely the seventh art, coined by the Italians. Cinema as an art form consists of a compilation of aspects that derive from different traditional artistic backgrounds, such as theatre and painting. In some level, they all share the same objective: representing reality through different ranges of artistic expression. In the beginning of cinema, for example, many sets were constructed based on theatrical performances, with painted backdrops. Likewise, the concept of musicals as a film genre arises as a reference to the theatricality inherently present in film’s history. In the twenty-first century, movies that rescue cinema’s theatrical roots can be noticed, such as *Anna Karenina* (2012), which is set mostly in a fantasy Russian theater world, or *Les Misérables* (2012), based on the French historical novel turned into musical.

One of the oldest theories of art, dating back to Aristotle’s *Poetics* (fourth century B. C.), classifies art forms according to their level of abstraction, representing a valuable way of organising the artistic experience. “According to the Greek philosopher, art was best understood as a type of mimesis, an imitation of reality dependent on a medium (through which it was expressed) and a mode (the way the medium was utilized). The more mimetic an art is, then, the less abstract it is.” (Monaco, 2000, p. 28) It is impossible, though, for any art to completely reproduce reality, due to medium-specific limitations characteristic of each art form. Painting and cinema, for example, have similarities, as both are pictorial and representational arts; however, huge differences lie on method of obtaining these representations, as cinema uses a camera through a mechanical process, and painting consists of an abstraction from the artist himself.

The following image shows the spectrum of arts classified from most mimetic (left), represented by design [13], to most abstract (right), represented by music.

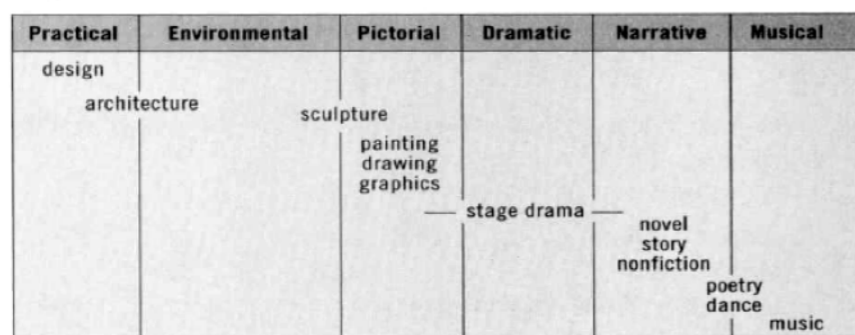


Image 36
Spectrum of arts classified from most mimetic to most abstract. Taken from James Monaco’s book, *How to Read a Film* (2000, p. 28).

“Where do photography and film fit in? Because they are recording arts, they cover essentially the entire range of this classical spectrum.” (Monaco, 2000, p. 28) Photography, as a precursor of film, situates itself in the pictorial area – however, it is seen as closest to a mimetic representation, since it also covers functions in the practical and environmental fields. Film, in turn, is broader as it covers the entire range of categories, functioning as a practical, environmental, pictorial, dramatic, narrative and musical art form. Essentially, elements from all of these traditional art forms can be identified in a filmic space – which

therefore comprise in its language both mimetic and abstract devices. In summary, **cinema as the seventh art is a compilation of all its pre-existing arts, blended together to develop a complex, intricate new form of technological art, that has the ability to faithfully represent reality through multiple moving images, as well as suggesting new forms of perceiving this same reality, through elements exterior to cinema’s essential photographic nature.**

Although traditional art forms helped to establish cinema as the seventh art, in its essence, it has been erected upon the technological discovery of new media. (Carroll, 1996) “From the beginning, film and photography were neutral: the media existed before the arts. (...) In short, the art of film developed by a process of replication. The neutral template of film was laid over the complex systems of the novel, painting, drama, and music to reveal new truths about certain elements of those arts.” (Monaco, 2000, p. 38-39) Thus, the transformation of the existing technological media into cinema as an art form leads to the second major formal characteristic of film, as a **technology**. Apart from traditional art forms, it is clear that cinema was a subsequent development from photography (photography itself having derived from painting), as a means to represent moving reality as we see it. Technological advances in the photographic devices allowed for movement to be synthesised through camera lenses. Throughout the twentieth century, the advent of technology dictated the evolution of movies, from the origins of the cinematographer, to the emergence of sound, to the digital revolution – highlighting a perpetual co-dependence between cinema and technology.

Alongside, another significant characteristic of cinema relies in its industrial facet. As filmmaker Paul Rotha once wrote, “cinema is the great unresolved equation between art and industry”. Cinema is industrial in its entirety, by virtue of its use of industrial technologies in successive processes of production, distribution, and exhibition, that have been organised into a powerful and efficient machine. (Nowell-Smith, 1996) Cinema as an **industry** has grown exponentially in the last century to become a billion-dollar business, spread around all places of the globe. As mentioned previously in this research, the Hollywood industry has dominated cinema’s market for many years, exploring to the fullest the potential of the medium. It is important to emphasise, however, that cinema as a globalised industry has representatives from all continents and is in no way defined by one region only, independent of their profitability.

Further on, considering that cinema is an industry, it is implied that it demands for a varied amount of professionals to work together in the accomplishment of a movie. It is impossible to produce, distribute and exhibit a motion picture alone, which leads to the fourth major characteristic of cinema: it is **collaborative**. Cinema’s collaborative essence can be associated to this present research, where the production designer will play a major part in the film’s visual conception, together with the director and the director of photography. The production designer is responsible for the whole art department and, in collaboration with the other dozens of departments – which in turn consists of hundreds of workers – will help bring a film to life.

After comprehending cinema as a technological, industrial and collaborative art form – differentiating it from other backgrounds such as theatre, painting, and photography – one can grasp its major concerns and how they aid in defining its essence. As a final characteristic, and possibly the most significant to this research, cinema has to be perceived as a form of communication, with the objective of conveying meaningful messages. As any other form of communication, there needs to exist a language that will define how it will communicate. Film as a **language** relies on images to tell its story, by means of signs. It also relies on sound as a secondary component to address narratives,

[14] *Mise-en-scène* is a French term that means “put in the scene”. The term derives from theatrical use, where it refers to all the elements of stage design (walls, windows, furniture, props, and so on). In cinema, the term refers to the arrangement of what appears in front of the camera. It can include set design, lighting, costumes, props, character placement, and movement. (Nichols, 2010, p. 60)

thus evidencing that film language is **hybrid**, or heterogeneous, consisting of more than one language, in this case, represented by visual and auditory channels (hence the term audiovisual). These two channels, though, can be further subdivided into five essential filmic signs, or materials of expression – which will be explored on the next sections.

Semiotics of film language

Considering cinema as, essentially, a visual form of communication, it is important to understand how it conveys meaning to its moving images – after all, the main objective of a movie is to incite some kind of reflection from the viewer, that will be manifested through specific emotions. A filmmaker will choose to create a scene in a certain way – through different montage techniques, frame composition, lighting, sound elements, *mise-en-scène* [14], and so on – so as to transmit a message and cause a premeditated reaction from the audience. Every element present on screen should help to convey meaning, some more evidently than others. The audiences’ reactions will depend on the viewer’s familiarity or not with what they are seeing, however, there is a ‘universality’ to certain visual metaphors, which are reinforced by patterns of organisation that operate repeatedly in filmic narratives (as well as in the real world) and establish themselves as **conventions**. These basically function as guidelines for selecting certain types of imageries and for arranging them into scenes. Film conventions may vary over time, but some exist permanently in the cinematic world, such as the idea of continuity – which “includes all the ways of organising shots so that the transition from one shot to the next does not jar the viewer”. (Nichols, 2010, p. 30) **Continuity is reinforced commonly through the combination of cinematographic images (comprising the concept of montage), but also through the use of other elements, such as musical soundtrack or even graphic configurations in the form of intertitles, which can help to perform coherent transitions between scenes.**

Furthermore, it is precisely the conventions, in the form of visual metaphors, that allow for filmmakers to anticipate what their generic audience will perceive. In the silent cinema, for example, where the auditory component was still not present, directors had to rely solely on the visual signs – “almost all viewers recognise a film shot of a hat as a hat. They might well be able to infer things about its wearer (...) from the type of hat and how it is worn. Similarly, viewers recognize something about a character’s social status from her clothing, expressions, gestures, and actions.” (Nichols, 2010, p. 34) In a deeper level, this visual perception might even lead to the arising of personal feelings of the viewer, such as a desire to own the same hat, or it may trigger memories of a similar hat that could have belonged to a deceased relative... The possible reactions are endless and there is no way a filmmaker can exert total control of his spectators’ reactions.

Most films, as metaphorical statements about the world around them, also possess an inherent ambiguity. Because they say what they mean indirectly, by means of their perspective on and representation of a distinct cinematic world, room for different interpretations, stressing different aspects of qualities of a film, always exists. (Nichols, 2010, p. 25)

Although one cannot acknowledge all the infinite possibilities of spectators’ reactions, one can study the active use of **signs** – based on Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiology theory – as basic filmic elements used to create meaning in a motion picture. According to Nichols, “all films rely on the basic building block of the sign”, which consists of two facets: the **signifier** and the **signified**. “The spectator instantly attaches a signified, the meaning of a given image, to the signifier, the thing seen or heard. The signifier is what is materially presented to the viewer. The signified is the meaning the viewer supplies to it. Together they form a

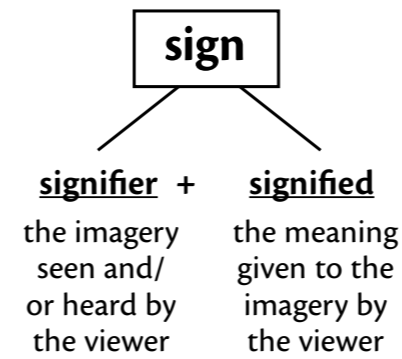


Diagram 2
Visual scheme which shows the definition of signs applied to a filmic narrative – a combination of the signifier and signified.

[15] According to Louis Hjelmslev, every language is characterised by either a single type of material of expression or some specific combination of materials of expression. As the name suggests, the material of expression is the signifier’s material nature, whether physical or sensory.

[16] This notion excludes experimental and animation films, because these types of films are not based necessarily in the cinematographic image.

sign.” (Nichols, 2010). By comprehending the importance of signs as the smallest meaningful unit of communication, and furthermore contextualising it into film language, one can infer, therefore, that **cinematic language is composed of signs** – which in turn comprises a combination of the signifier and signified, be it through image or sound. These signs are denominated in film language as materials of expression [15], referring to the material nature of each of these signifiers. Since cinematic language is heterogeneous, these signs as materials of expression derive from distinct natures. First, they can be divided into two main channels: **visual** and **auditory**, which fundamentally constitute cinema’s hybrid facet. Moreover, each of these channels can be subdivided as follows: the visual channel consists of the **moving images** (also called the cinematographic image) and the graphic written material (in the form of **graphic configurations**). The auditory channel consists of the verbal language (in this case, oral, in the form of **speech**), the **noise** (analogical sound effects), and the **musical soundtrack**. (Aragão, 2006)

Only one of the five materials is specific to cinematic language and that, of course, is the moving image. It is because of the issue of specificity that theorists have often tried to define the essence of cinema in the image alone. (Aumont, 1992, p. 160)

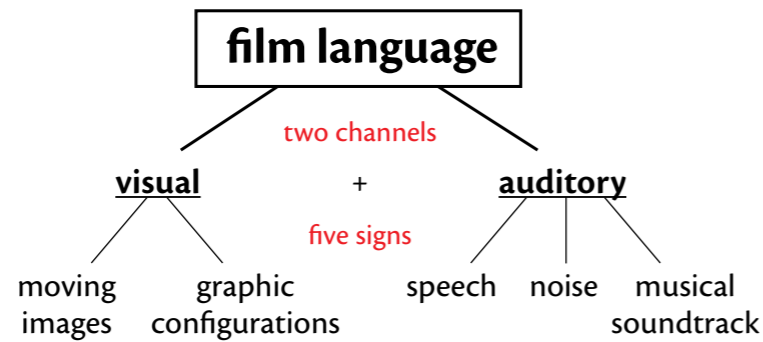
The term ‘moving images’ is what characterises essentially the cinematographic language – it has semiotic priority, in the sense that for a film to be considered a film, necessarily the basis for its visuality is the filmed image itself. The cinematographic image is different from the graphic, or photographic image – even though these last two may be present in a filmic universe, they are not specific to cinema, as they derive from the fields of photography and graphic design. The image is cinematographic because (1) it is a mechanical representation of reality, (2) it comprises motion, or movement, through the combination of multiple photographic images, and (3) it is mobile, through the notion of camera movement and the connection between shots. On the impression of reality in film, Metz (1974) discourses about the differences between the cinematographic and photographic image, in terms of movement.

Motion imparts corporality to objects and gives them an autonomy their still representations could not have; it draws them from the flat surfaces to which they were confined, allowing them to stand out better as figures against a background. Freed from its setting, the object is “substantiated.” Movement brings us volume, and volume suggests life. (Metz, 1974, p. 7)

In an attempt to define the material dimension of cinematographic expression, Metz affirms that, besides the characteristics of the filmed image itself, there needs to exist a combination with auditory components (dialogue, noise and music) and written material, to form a concise overview of film language [16]. Despite Metz’s pioneer advance in defining cinema’s language in the 1970’s, the graphic dimension of the cinematographic language was reduced to the term ‘graphic written material’. In his view, then, the graphic language consisted of the written word solely (letters and numbers). Araújo’s work innovates precisely in redefining this equation, by extending the concept of ‘written material’ to ‘graphic configurations’, which will include not only the written words, but also other graphic design elements, such as shapes, lines, images, and visual schemes. The graphic configurations, therefore, will consist of one or more of these elements combined. On the next section, the definition of graphic image, graphic language and graphic configurations will be deepened, based on existing theories. Fundamentally, the process of perception of a movie is complex, since it deals with a hybrid language of distinct formal natures, where information will arise from different origins: one will look at scenes in a

Diagram 3

Visual scheme that represents fundamentally film language – five signs, or materials of expression, that derive from two channels. When combined, they build what is called a movie. However, only one sign is necessary in defining a movie – the moving images.



motion picture and perceive content from the moving image (visual), the sound elements it accompanies (auditory), and, when present, the graphic configurations (also visual), and will further on combine the meanings of the scenes together so as to comprehend the broader cinematic world of the movie. The combination of these perceptions go way beyond the basic assumption of one-to-one signs between an image (signifier) of an object – for example, a knife – and the meaning (signified) of this object – “murder weapon” or “cutlery”.

Within a complete film, a shot of a knife becomes part of a broad spectrum of actions and gestures, situations and events, motives and desires. Every film envisions a world of its own with its own spatial and temporal dimensions, its own distinct forms of activity and thematic concerns. These worlds often bear similarity to the world in which we live, and they frequently bear similarity to each other, as genre films make clear. (Nichols, 2010, p. 70)

On a broader view, by combining form and content, filmmakers can build complex cinematic worlds that will transport the viewer to a certain context. For example, the movie *Across the Universe* (2007), directed by Julie Taymor, transports the audience to a world populated by the music of the Beatles. In this case, the filmic sign of the musical soundtrack is essential in defining this world and unfolding the narrative, which is loosely based on the lyrics of the songs – thus reinforcing the combination of formal elements with the thematic focus of the movie. The visual channel needs to be in sync with the movie's purpose as well, therefore, a combination of the Beatles' soundtrack together with the moving images and graphic configurations, will work to build the movie's cinematic world.

In the following example from *Across the Universe*, the five filmic signs are significantly present in a scene and are combined together to convey meaning. In the sequence where the song “Strawberry Fields Forever” is performed, there is a great deal of graphic exploration, as animated expository graphics are superimposed over the filmed image and in between scenes. To contextualise the scene: “Strawberry Fields Forever” plays in the background and is sung by the main character – artist Jude – who is mixing strawberries with red paint and pinning them onto a canvas. At the same time, scenes of his friend Max in the Vietnam war appear edited in between Jude's scenes. Through a series of graphic explorations, the strawberry becomes a metaphorical object, functioning as an analogy to the bombs and bullets in the war, and the colour red as an analogy to blood.

This visual metaphor is reinforced through animated expository graphics, which consist of a mix of photographic images – newspapers with headlines about the war and cut-outs of strawberry images – with dripping red paint and original footage of the war. There is a noticeable work of motion design in creating this animated photographic digital collage, which is mixed with the cinematographic image through editing techniques

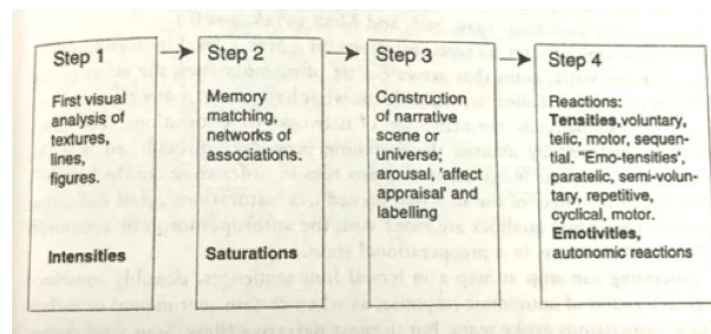


Images 37.1-37.4
Frames taken from the sequence of Strawberry Fields Forever in *Across the Universe* (2007), which show animated graphic configurations as visual metaphors conveying meaning and intensifying emotions.

and overlaying. By combining all of the filmic signs – the moving images, graphic configurations, musical soundtrack, noise and dialogue (the lyrics of the song, performed by the characters) – the sequence succeeds in transmitting feelings of tension, conflict, anguish, and even melancholy, as the characters in the movie are all going through tough moments in their lives, contextualised by the Vietnam war. While the lyrics repeat “nothing is real” in the background, the viewer can apprehend the meaning of the scene, as unreal and fantastic elements appear on screen in the form of graphic configurations, in a truly profound visual experience.

Grodal (2000) theorises about the viewer's processing of fiction in an audiovisual input, through a four-step process, in non-conscious and conscious levels. The steps will be explained in relation to the previously presented sequence for better understanding. The first step consists of basic **perception of textures, lines, and figures**, in a more superficial and aesthetic level – very much related to graphic design's basic principles. The brain will try to analyse and identify colour, contrast, figures, ground, and spatial dimensions, breaking down the complex cinematographic image into simple visual elements. This step creates perceptual intensities but does not generate any meaning. Many abstract paintings and experimental films, for instance, try to produce an input that can only be processed at Step 1, bounded to visual appreciation.

The second step consists of **memory-matching**, by creating networks of associations. After perceiving the lines and figures that form an image on step 1, the viewer can then associate this image to an identity – which is the case when the spectator associates the image of a strawberry on screen to the identity of the real fruit (evidently, this process will occur with all elements present on the screen, the strawberry is one example). The brain searches its memory-files for possible matches, aided by feelings of familiarity or unfamiliarity. This process can be directly associated to the semiotics theory, by the combination of an image (signifier) to its meaning (signified). A film that concentrates its perception on Step 2 is commonly labelled as 'lyrical'; since it shows different visual items that activate a set of memory-files, but not necessarily tell a story – like many music videos do. However, in most narrative films, Step 2 processing immediately leads to Step 3, which consists of relating and contextualising the items seen and determined in Steps 1 and 2 to a **narrative scenario**, identifying characters and a story behind the images. For the graphic configurations in question, in Step 3 the viewer will finally understand that the red strawberries with dripping paint are an analogy to the bombs in a bloody war, thus generating meaning through a visual metaphor. Furthermore, he will also understand the characters' feelings towards the war and situate them in the narrative. Grodal calls Step 3 the “cognitive-emotional appraisal and motivation phase”, where the items are put into the framework of a hypothetical narrative scenario and lead to some kind of arousal in the spectator – such



as accelerated heartbeat, sweat or adrenaline secretion, etc. Finally, Step 3 leads to Step 4 with reactions at a high level of arousal, represented through **feelings and emotions** – voluntary feelings or autonomic reactions such as crying, laughing or shivering. (Grodal, 2000) These reactions will be manifested differently by each viewer, reinforcing the ambiguity present in any filmic interpretation.

Image 38
Grodal's (2000, p. 59) visual scheme of the viewer's processing of fiction, divided in four steps.

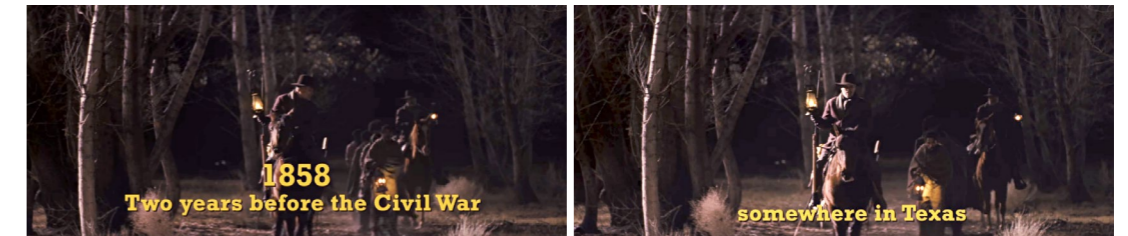
By breaking down the spectator's cognitive process of perception of the filmic language through Grodal's theory, it can be observed how the most fundamental visualisation of the cinematographic image refers to principles and elements based on graphic design – such as lines, shapes, textures, colour, scale, among many others. This only emphasises the intention, in this present research, to point out the similarities inherently present in cinema and design, as visual forms of communication. **By understanding how both fields derive from the same principles, they can further ally strengths so as to create more meaningful, visually-driven motion pictures with rich graphic language.**

The social context: narrative and diegesis

An important observation to make about the expository graphics present in the “Strawberry Fields Forever” sequence is that they are **extra-diegetic elements** – meaning they are not part of the film's fictitious world, or **diegesis**. Diegesis is a Greek word that means “narrative”, but it refers to the fictional dimension of a narrative – the reality proper to the story, apart from the external reality of the reader. “Musical scores, intertitles, commentary by a narrator (...) are called extra-diegetic because they do not belong to the same world as the characters, who normally remain completely unaware of them. Extra-diegetic material helps establish the filmmaker's distinct attitude or perspective towards the story world.” (Nichols, 2010, p. 49) In *Across the Universe*, much of the music is actually performed by the actors in the scene, so they are not considered extra-diegetic elements, however, when the songs play apart from the reality of the filmic world, as background music, it is considered an external element. Regarding other elements in this sequence: the spectator consciously knows the difference between the real strawberries that are filmed objects in the scene from the composited photographic image of the strawberries, animated through motion design. The graphic configurations, in this sequence, are not part of the real world of the characters. The choice of using these elements becomes, therefore, a representation of the filmmaker's style and speak directly to the audience. Some might criticise the excessive use of extra-diegetic graphic configurations as they create a bigger distance between the movie and its viewer, due to their disparity to real-world reality. However, most of the times, the intention of these graphic configurations is not to substitute reality, but to precisely bring another dimension to the cinematographic image and to bring more dynamism to the scene.

According to Aragão (2006) and Aumont, & Marie (2003), the notion of narrative is defined by the form in which a story is told, with a beginning, middle and end. In a romance novel, for example, a story is told through written words, in a conversation through oral words; in cinema, then, a story is narrated through images, sounds and graphic configurations. Some films choose to use a narrator to tell a story, who speaks directly to the viewer, oblivious to the characters in the narrative. However, in the cases where there is no narrator, the story is told almost by itself, with no obvious intervention. In these circumstances, frequently the graphic configurations serve as ‘loopholes’ where the film addresses the viewer

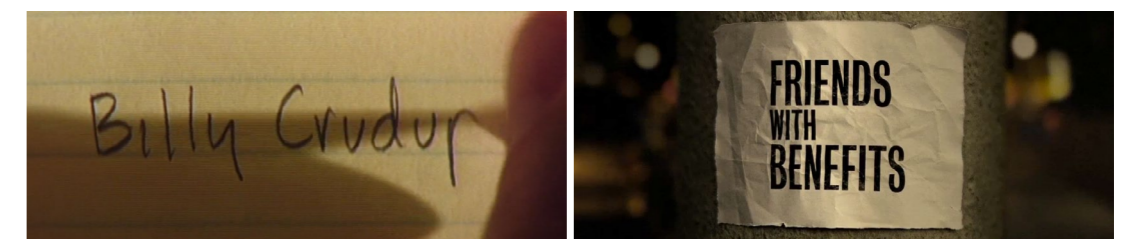
directly. A clear example is the use of expository intertitles, that inform the viewer about additional facts of the story. This is the case of a sequence in Tarantino's movie *Django Unchained* (2012), shown in the two frames below, where the information of time and location is superimposed over the ongoing filmed image, in the form of written words. The narrative, therefore, unfolds despite the emergence of this extra-diegetic configuration and the characters are completely unaware of it – which shows that the message is directed explicitly to the viewer.



Images 39.1 & 39.2
Frames taken from *Django Unchained* (2012), which show expository intertitles to convey information about time and location.

Aragão (2006) mentions in her work, as well, the existence of **totally extra-diegetic** graphic configurations – which do not belong to the diegetic universe of the movie neither provide any information about the narrative. This is usually the case of the opening and final credits, since they are (1) elements exterior to the diegesis and (2) give information about the film's cast and crew, which has nothing to do with the story itself. However, defining these limits is a very delicate exercise, since there are always exceptions. For example, in most of the movies, the opening titles are computer-generated and inserted in post-production, however, there are examples of opening credits that are presented as filmed graphic objects inside the movie's world, and therefore are intra-diegetic elements. It is the case of *Almost Famous*, where the director's name and the main cast is written in pencil on a notebook and filmed. It is also the case of the movie *Friends with Benefits* (2011) where the opening credits appear printed on papers glued on the streets (although it also involved some image manipulation on computer software). It is important to keep in mind that in cinema the possibilities are endless, and that is why one can only speak in terms of the majority, and not the totality.

Images 40 & 41
Examples of opening titles as intra-diegetic filmed graphic objects. The first frame was taken from *Almost Famous* (2000) and the second from *Friends with Benefits* (2011).



Following the cue, the **intra-diegetic elements** are thus presented inside the story's fictional world, in the visual or auditory channel. The dialogue enunciated by the actors, the sounds triggered by the different actions, and the music played inside the scenes – on a radio for example – are all part of the film's diegesis. Graphic configurations can also be intra-diegetic if they appear as filmed graphic objects. For example, on the frame below, also of *Django Unchained*, the actor interacts with a piece of paper containing graphic language that is meant to be read by the viewer – mainly because the paper is filmed during enough time, and in a certain angle that indicates for the spectator to read it, directing the eyes to the object. In the case of *Django* – a contemporary Western movie – the graphic language composing the object follows the genre's conventions as it uses bold and serif fonts and the usual ‘wanted dead or alive’ text. This helps situate the spectator in the movie's cinematic world and shape its graphic identity – it is no coincidence that the font used in the intertitles is also bold and serified...

Images 42.1 & 42.2
Frames taken from *Django Unchained* (2012) which show a filmed graphic object in the style of Western movie language.



The filmmaking spectrum: realism vs. formalism

After understanding the concepts of diegesis and narrative and how the graphic configurations can be inserted inside and outside a film's universe, influencing the viewer's perception, it is interesting to briefly contextualise them in terms of film theory. Around 1945, when film language was still being discovered and structured, the French film theorist **André Bazin** argued that the goal of cinema was to represent the real world with the greatest commitment to **realism**. He advocated the use of wide shots, long takes, with the camera at eye level and limited editing, so as to create the perspective of a person observing the events. (Bazin, 1967) In his point of view, extra-diegetic elements should be used cautiously and in a very limited manner in order to not interfere in the reality of the film.

In defiance to Bazin's realist view, theorists such as Rudolf Arnheim believed that cinema's stylisation could work as a strong and powerful form of artistic expression. Essentially, Arnheim did not believe that cinema could perfectly represent reality and it was precisely in this differentiation that lied cinema's powerful language. For example, a close-up image makes an object appear enormous, which would not occur in real life perception; however, in a movie, it can be an effective way of transmitting ideas of power and "giganticism" – relying on visual metaphors to convey messages. (Carroll, 1996, p. 4) This way of perceiving cinema opposes the idea of realism, and can be further on illustrated by the theory of **formalism**. In formalist movies, the beauty or power of the image is primary, displacing a sense of reality; the visual presentation is stylised and the story expresses the director's personal vision or passion, which may even be an obsession. In terms of narrative, the film usually presents extraordinary characters and events, while the perceptive viewer is aware that the narrative is being manipulated for an effect. Most directors who are great stylists are formalists to some degree, which is the case of Wes Anderson. Additionally, genres almost always considered formalist are musicals, science fiction, horror/supernatural, and fantasy. (Melani, 2011) The movie *Across the Universe* can be considered formalist as it presents a high range of artistic expression in its visual project and belongs to the musical genre. Contextualising to this research, **the more a movie explores the combination of the five filmic signs (including graphic configurations) through a different range of techniques and styles, and not only focus on the photographic essence of the moving images, the more formalist it is considered. The presence of extra-diegetic elements, thus, also characterises this style of cinema.**

If one considers the filmmaking spectrum as a horizontal line, on the left end lies realism, as opposed to formalism, on the far right end. These two tendencies were best represented by French filmmakers working in the earliest days of cinema. On the realism side there were the Lumière brothers, making films that were static shots of real-life events. On the formalism side there was George Méliès, telling highly stylised stories with elaborate sets, costumes, and special effects, with no interest in imitating reality. The majority of the contemporary mainstream Hollywood cinema, though, lies precisely in the middle of this spectrum, referred to as **classicism**. By mixing together elements of both realism and formalism but avoiding extremes, classicism takes formalist production aspects (such as

non-diegetic music, sets, visual effects, editing and camera angles) and puts them in service of a story with realist values. The truth is that movies grounded in reality are more easily accepted by audiences, since they are familiar and effortless to understand. Even if the story is fantastic or absurd, there is a certain tendency to bring realist aspects to the movie.

Some fantasy films have a 'narrative realism' – the agents act in time-spaces, and have motivations and intentions similar to those in everyday life – combined with a thematic irrealism (talking plants and weird décor, for instance); other films may have a perfect naturalistic setting, but with a temporal structure quite dissimilar to everyday experiences of linear time. The feeling of reality is thus created using a large set of standard assumptions about the world, assumptions which are checked during viewing. (Grodal, 2000, p. 37)

It is relevant to acknowledge the filmmaking spectrum, so as to contextualise the three main tendencies in terms of the graphic language and to understand how different styles of cinema can use graphic configurations through different approaches. On another note, Hollywood movies are mainly characterised as classic, however, the focus of this investigation is to identify if they tend more to the left side of the spectrum, as realist films, or to the right side, as formalists. For the case studies analysed in the next chapter, therefore, the movies will be only categorised as either realist or formalist – meaning they tend to one of the sides, even though they might be initially identified as classic.

As Willems (2017) notes in his video essay, from a contemporary perspective, the idea of merely wanting cinema to recreate reality seems short-sighted and dismissive of the great potential of the medium. Embracing formalism can be a strategic approach to engage audiences as well, and this can be done through the conscious insertion of graphic configurations in cinematic worlds, as well as through a stylised editing and vibrant set design. A perfect example of this approach is the contemporary masterpiece *La La Land* (2016), directed by Damien Chazelle, where one can observe a great deal of formalist elements present along the narrative. These elements help craft a meticulous and impressive imagery of Los Angeles' and Hollywood's legendary sceneries. The director's attempt was to recreate Hollywood's classical film style, however emphasising its contemporaneity through a confident, exciting shooting style and stylised art direction. The opening scene introduces a dream-like dancing musical number midst a traffic jammed bridge, entirely filmed in one shot, which begins to transport the viewer into the movie's cinematic world – a world where reality and dreams are blended together. The music numbers constantly serve as indicators of a dreamed world as opposed to the dullness of mundane real life. The style of editing and visual representation, as well as the use of intra and extra-diegetic graphic configurations helps to represent both sides of the characters' lives: their dreams versus their realities. (Laskin, 2016)

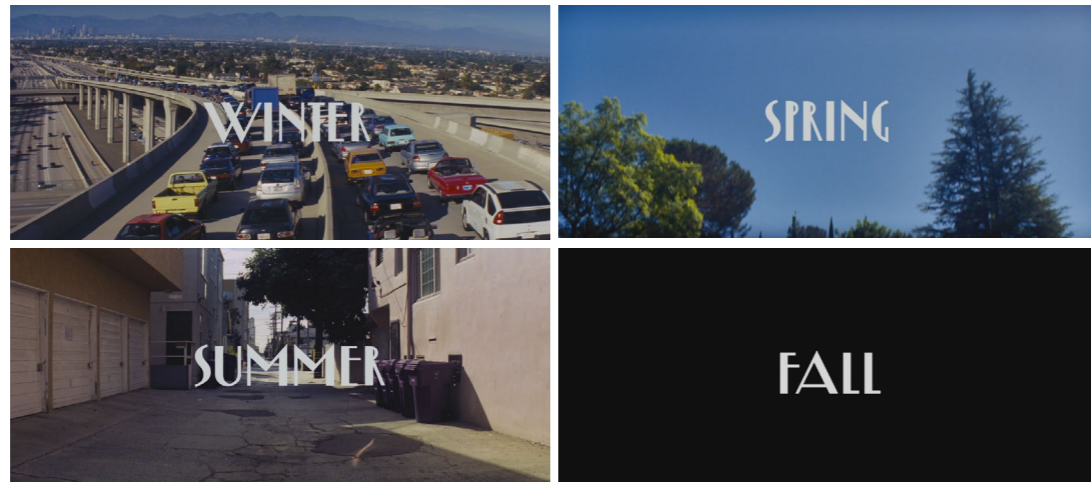
For example, in the sequence where Mia Dolan (masterfully played by Emma Stone) – an aspiring but struggling actress working as a barista in a café in the Warner Brothers lot – goes to a typical Hollywood party with her roommates, the viewer can notice a clear visual differentiation between what is dreamy and what is reality through gradient colour filters applied onto the moving image and extra-diegetic expository graphics of Hollywood vibrant neon signs. One goes from seeing fireworks on screen following a four-minute dance number to a hard cut of a "no parking sign", an intra-diegetic graphic configuration, which situates the viewer back into Mia's frustrating reality. While she walks back home in the empty wilderness of L.A.'s dawn, the spectator can observe street illustrations of cinema personalities that allude to her unreachable desire, at that moment in the narrative, of becoming a famous actress.

Images 43.1-43.4

Frames taken from La La Land (2016), representing the dreamy life of Los Angeles in the top frames vs. the frustrating reality of life as an aspiring actress in Hollywood, in the bottom frames.



The movie also makes use of another category of graphic configuration, the expository intertitles, functioning as extra-diegetic elements positioned throughout the movie in order to communicate the time-span of the story, which has the four seasons as reference points in the narrative.



Images 44.1-44.4

Frames taken from La La Land (2016) which show expository intertitles being used so as to represent different time references in the narrative according to the four seasons.

The end scenes of the movie (or the epilogue as they refer to in the credits) are extremely formalists as they portray a hypothetical world in which the two main characters would have remained together and built a family. To visually represent this alternative life, theatrical stages and painted backdrops serve as set design, reinforcing the unreal and illusory nature of the situation, which only happened in their dreams. This type of stylisation, alongside a considerate amount of intra and extra-diegetic graphic configurations, a very dynamic editing style and camera movement, and remarkable colour palette, distances La La Land from the realist tendency, positioning itself strategically closer to formalism. The acclaimed movie was well received by the public and won a series of prizes, including Oscars for Best Art Direction, Best Director and Best Photography and a BAFTA for Best Movie.

Images 45.1 & 45.2

Frames taken from La La Land (2016) which show stylised backgrounds as a reference to theatrical stages' painted backdrops, reinforcing an unreal or illusory situation.



From the example of La La Land, it is clear that formalism can function as a very successful approach, when well crafted – which does not eliminate or overshadow the efficiency of other approaches such as realism. Overall, the most important matter to be considered when crafting cinematic worlds is the idea of **verisimilitude** – or a movie's inner truth in the diegetic world – by embracing its own concept of reality. Essentially, a movie should have a concern in producing credible filmic universes, which are believable, even though they might never exist in our real world reality. For example, returning to the case of Across the Universe, throughout the whole movie the spectator is presented with scenes that mix cinematographic footage with graphic explorations, especially during the songs' performances – bringing a certain 'magical' or 'dreamy' vibe to the film. By repeating this formula along the movie's discourse, the spectator gradually apprehends these graphic elements as intrinsic components of that film's language. The director is obliged to show his audience how the reality of the film functions and the rules by which it operates – in this way, the viewer can feel comfortable in understanding the filmic universe and even accepting its imperfections or unreality for the sake of personal amusement.

The voluntary suspension of disbelief, an expression recorded in 1817 by English critic and essayist poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, refers precisely to the willingness of a viewer or reader to accept the premises of a work of fiction as true even if they are fantastic, impossible or contradictory. It is the suspension of judgement in exchange for the premise of entertainment, or the acceptance of a certain level of improbability for the benefit of the story that allows the viewer to get involved in the event.” (Varzim, 2014, p. 108, free translation)

In summary, based on Metz's and Nichol's application of semiotics theory to film, Grodal's theory of the viewer's cognitive perception of fiction, Aragão's definition of graphic configurations as intra, extra and totally extra-diegetic elements, and the three main tendencies of cinema (realism, classicism, and formalism) one can reach conclusions regarding the function and value of the graphic language present in filmic narratives. **The graphic configurations serve as flexible and adaptable signs in a movie's discourse, be it interior or exterior to its diegesis, primarily aiding in building cinematic worlds that deliver a sense of verisimilitude. Whether a movie intends on solely recreating reality (realism) or presenting a stylised visual interpretation of reality (formalism), graphic language works through different approaches with the objective of reinforcing the movie's own concept of reality, conveying meaning and triggering emotions.**

In realist movies, the graphic configurations can be predominantly used as intra-diegetic elements in the form of filmed graphic objects, helping to establish the film's visual world through a strong art direction, or set design. In this way, they are less abrupt and seamlessly placed into the film's narrative, not interfering in its realism. The graphic objects can also assume more significant and primary roles in the realist film as elements that unfold the narrative. In formalist movies, there is a larger freedom to insert extra-diegetic elements, which also work for the graphic configurations: besides functioning as graphic objects (as on realist films) they can also function as animated expository graphics and intertitles, helping to communicate and organise the narrative through a more dynamic storytelling, as well as aiding in intensifying arousals and emotions on the spectator. Examples of all of these cases will be shown with detail on the next chapter of this research. **The formalist movie is, in its essence, the perfect scenario for the exploration of graphic language, as it is less constrained by rules or conventions, therefore allowing for all types of configurations to be applied. However, the realist movie can also make strategic use of the graphic language, in the form of graphic objects filmed inside a scene, so as to contribute in the set design or serve as primary elements unfolding the narrative.**

Usually, intense use of graphic configurations can be observed in Hollywood feature films, since they represent the industry with more financial income to invest in digital technology and production design. However, there are also many movies from other regions of the world that make use of graphic configurations to tell their stories, such as European or Indian cinema (Bollywood – which is inspired in Hollywood). The Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar is well-known for his movies with remarkable art direction, in much through the handling of intra-diegetic graphic objects; however, in his latest film *Dolor y Gloria* (2019), significant dynamic expository graphics were included to illustrate an aspect of the main character's life, thus showing that formalism through the use of extra-diegetic graphic configurations is present in other cinema styles besides the classical Hollywood.

Many times, these graphics serve as cheaper options for the production of a movie, advancing the passage of time in a narrative or substituting scenes that would be too expensive to produce, or even unnecessary. They may also function as elements of humour, or comedy, since they are so distant from a film's reality and almost absurd or ironic. The reactions caused by the graphic language, together with the other filmic signs, will be dependent on how and in which format they are placed in a narrative. In the final and most important chapter of this research, a visual scheme will lay out the functions that the graphic language might acquire in a filmic narrative, exemplified through four detailed case studies, so as to demonstrate how they may cause distinct reactions in each context – with the objective of reinforcing the endless possibilities for the graphic language in movies, and how they contribute for a more creative and meaningful visual project. Before presenting the main part of this research, though, a brief overview of the field of design, and more specifically the graphic language, will be explained, contextualised into the field of cinema and its medium's specificities, which requires a different type of visual grammar.

2.2.2 What is design?

“Everything is design, design is everything.” – Paul Rand

Design:

v. to mark out; to plan, purpose, intend...

n. a plan conceived in the mind, of something to be done...

n. an adaptation of means to end...

The shorter Oxford English dictionary (Potter, 2002, p. 10)

Objectively speaking, the term “design” emerged in the mid-18th to 19th century, with the firm purpose of establishing order in the chaotic mess of the industrial world, marked by the Industrial Revolution. Between 1850 and 1930, approximately, three generations of new professionals – some already referred to as ‘designers’ – dedicated their efforts into defining the structure and appearance of artifacts produced in factories, making them more attractive and efficient. (Cardoso, 2011) Designers appeared as a response to the paradigm of mass consumption, which could potentially cause the decline of the quality and beauty of the products. The practice of design, thus, started out conditioned to its historical and social context, and was defined by the term ‘industrial design’, which characterises its early years. However, design's essence in today's globalised, informational and digital era covers a much broader view than it did in its origins.

Ultimately, design is a field dedicated to the objectification, construction, and materialisation of ideas, independent of which medium it utilizes. It shares with art, architecture and engineering the purpose of defining shapes, forming spaces and establishing relationships through visual and tactile markers. Thus, the practice of

design is inherently **interdisciplinary** as it works together with other areas of plastic, formal or visual creation – including not only what is commonly called the fine arts, but also photography, cinema and video – in conveying visual messages. By making these connections, one understands design **not only as a final product but as a major tool that can be applied to other fields.**

Design as visual communication

Much of design's history involves the configuration of increasingly complex **networks**, which have become a powerful metaphor for representing society's intricate and organisational layers. As an example, Cardoso cites the project of London's subway map (image 46), created by Harry Beck between 1931 and 1933, which aimed to organise a huge amount of interdependent information – and potentially confusing at first glance – into a clear and concise graphic, schematic representation. In other words, he reduced a highly complex reality into a simple visual representation. This is a case that exemplifies the network of **visual communication**, as a means to organise and put order into the urban space, through **signage**. “Signage is here referred to in its broadest meaning: covering not only the formal use of signs indicating directions through schematic visualisation, but also the informal use of street signs (such as signpainting), ads and spontaneous graphic interventions” (Cardoso, 2011, p. 187, free translation). Hence, **signage is one representation of design as a visual communication network.**



Image 46
Harry Beck's map design in 1933 for London's underground subway system.

Credits: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/triciawang/4097398419>

Machado (2011) puts it – with places to eat, to shop, to meet people, to talk on the phone and bathrooms. The major challenge was to build a space that looked realistic even though, essentially, it was fictional. This realistic approach needed to be reinforced by the visual communication so as to deliver verisimilitude, therefore, a graphic designer was hired to create and coordinate the implementation of all signage, based on existing airport's signage systems. The signage also included existing American logos, that were implemented onto the set – such as Borders, Starbucks, and Hudson News. Although present along the whole movie, the airport's signage system is seamlessly perceived by the audience, who most probably never notices it, since it exists solely to characterise the environment of an airport (with very little duration time on screen by itself so as to be acknowledged) – not having a primary role in unfolding the narrative. It does, however, serve as inspiration to create the movie's opening titles as well as some promotional advertising, becoming source material for the graphic identity of the movie (images 47.1 & 47.2).

Images 47.1 & 47.2
Frames taken from *The Terminal* (2004) which show the airport's signage system as reference for the creation of the opening titles, following the flight time panel aesthetics.



[17] Mock + documentary
= fake documentary.

The second example is from the movie *District 9* (2009), a science fiction film in the style of a mockumentary [17] that depicts a world where malnourished aliens land in Johannesburg, South Africa, and become marginalised refugees living in a slum called District 9. The whole movie is a reference to South Africa's shameful Apartheid past – only now aliens are the minorities, offensively called non-humans. The entire signage system was created based on Apartheid's racial segregation signs, and the viewer can notice in the first ten minutes of the movie – which introduces its cinematic world – many signs spread around the city that encourage segregation of humans from non-humans (images 48.1 & 48.2). The designers in the movie decided to create specific pictograms to represent the aliens, in the same style of the universally known pictograms of man and woman. With this, the signage system satirises and references the prohibition signs and the rhetoric used in the Apartheid. (Kondo, 2016) These signs catch the viewer's attention more strongly than in *The Terminal*, mainly due to the viewer's unfamiliarity with them, but also because they have specific camera framing and duration on screen that allows for the spectator to acknowledge it. Additionally, the same type of signage was used for the movie's advertising on billboards, benches and other physical media – which aroused the audience's curiosity and introduced the movie's graphic identity (images 49 & 50).

Images 48.1 & 48.2
Frames taken from *District 9* (2009) which show the alien segregation signage.



Images 49 & 50
Images of *District 9*'s advertising campaign spread around different media in the cities, applying the same visual identity of the signage system used in the movie.



Credits: <http://www.bcdideas.com/district-9-ads-jerk>

Parallel to signage, another dimension of the visual communication network defines design's history and is commonly depicted in movies – the **print**: letters, books, magazines, newspapers, posters, maps, packaging labels and other portable artefacts for communicating information through image and text placement. The production of these printed materials comprises the graphic industry, “which faced its economic boom between 1830 and 1920, when information became more accessible to the world and graphic production was industrialised”. (Cardoso, 2011, p. 191, free translation) These printed graphic objects have become an inherent part of society as major communication vehicles. It is not surprising, therefore, that they are portrayed so often in filmic narratives. The newspaper, for instance, is handled as a graphic prop in countless movies. In many cases,

it is seen as a trivial piece of information, especially when camera angles and duration on screen do not allow for the viewer to perceive any written information from the newspaper. However, there are indeed many moments in movies where the newspaper functions as a powerful and strategic graphic tool, bringing in additional information to the movie's narrative and even serving as substitutes to whole scenes. For example, the 1941 avant-garde movie *Citizen Kane* uses the newspaper constantly throughout its narrative for showing headlines that tell essential information about the plot, many times serving as an alternative to actually showing what the headline says.

Images 51.1 & 51.2
Frames taken from *Citizen Kane* (1941), showing newspapers that present relevant information to the plot, which is only displayed in the graphic dimension of the movie – meaning it has to be read and perceived by the audience.



In a second example from the movie *La La Land* (2016) one can observe the use of posters to transmit valuable information to the plot through the graphic dimension. The three posters appear glued in street walls so as to inform the spectator that the main character Mia Dolan is finally going to present her autobiographical theatrical play, entitled "So Long Boulder City" and that it is playing 'tonight'. The posters are filmed during enough time so as to allow the viewer to read this information and acknowledge the prop's layout and therefore can be considered relevant graphic configurations which help tell the movie's story. Like newspapers, posters are also commonly depicted in a film's universe as major communication vehicles.

Image 52
Frame taken from *La La Land* (2016) which shows posters of the main character's theatre play exposed in the streets.



In both examples, the focus or attention of the scene is on the graphic object. Grodal (2000) discourses about the concept of 'attention' in films, which can be applied to graphic configurations on screen as an indicator of the significance this element has in the overall meaning of the scene.

The basic mental models for depicting attention are based on sight: our eyes have at a given time a point of origin, a direction, and a focalisation that highlight some phenomena and exclude others. The attention works like a spotlight beam that can be focused. (...) This part of human attention is mimicked by a camera, which also controls what can be visually attended to by a location, a direction, and a lens configuration. (Grodal, 2000, p. 62)

The ability to draw attention or focus to a specific 'phenomena' in a movie, by the camera, is responsibility of the director and director of photography, and the hierarchal choices made will influence directly on the perception of a filmic narrative and its graphic configurations. “Depending on camera movement and framing, graphic configurations can move from mere graphic representation in the world of fiction to becoming the most significant visual form of representation of the sequence.” (Aragão, 2006, p. 96, free translation)

[18] In effect, a 'brand' is more than its visual trademark, or logo. A brand is a product (or a class of products) including its logo, its brand name, its reputation and the atmosphere built up around it. When we talk about a brand we talk about verbal, visual and conceptual aspects of product identity. (Mollerup, 1997, p. 56)

By acknowledging design as a powerful tool of visual communication that help put order into the world, and further contextualising it to the fictitious worlds of movies as a reflection of society, it is clear that motion pictures will use print and signage as graphic design elements that help create believable diegetic universes. Moreover, **the time duration that these elements have on screen, as well as the camera framing and movement, will serve as indicators of their importance in a specific sequence**, based on Grodal's definitions of focus and attention.

Design as visual identification

Besides signage and print, there is another very important dimension of design, which functions as a form of visual identification and is present everywhere in society: **logos**. Logos are the result of the creation of a **visual identity** for any type of brand [18], in the form of a simple, stylised graphic representation – usually a combination of verbal, pictorial and schematic elements. The consolidation of immaterial, conceptual qualities – such as 'warming and delicate', or 'serious and traditional' – shaped into a material reality characterises in much simpler terms the complex process of **branding**, which results in a series of definitions and associations that identify the universe of a specific brand to a consumer, including the logo itself. Following the same outlook as of signage and print, these logos, or visual identities, will also be present in filmic universes, as they are intrinsic parts of a globalised, informational society. The logos serve as a form of identification of products or classes of products, corporations, services, people, etc. The creation of a logo in the contemporary world exists primarily as an isolated, virtual form – as it is usually constructed through a computer software, such as Adobe's Illustrator (even if it is initially hand drawn, it will further on be manipulated with a computer program). However, logos are usually perceived applied to some kind of media – it may remain in the virtual world as an application to websites, apps, videos, among others; or it can become a physical application, in the form of print and signage, for instance. As an example of this process, the following images show the well-known logo of McDonald's in its primary virtual form, as well as applied to other virtual and physical media.

Image 53
McDonald's pictorial logo in its primary form.

Images 54-56
Applications of the pictorial logo in physical media such as print (packaging) and signage, and in virtual media (app icon on smartphone).

Credits: McDonald's official website and Getty Images.



When considering logos depicted inside a movie's cinematic world, there are mainly two choices a filmmaker has: (1) he can choose to use real world, existing logos in the filmic space, usually through established partnerships with the brands as **product placement** – which is the case of *The Terminal* –, or (2) they can choose to create fictitious logos to be used explicitly for the purpose of the movie, which only exist in the imaginary of the viewer. "We define such brands as **protobrands**; brands that have not been "tangibilised" or "productised" in the real physical world but which nonetheless capture the imagination and emotional attachment of real consumers." (Muzellec, Lynn, & Lambkin, 2012) The protobrand can be exemplified through the movie *Almost Famous*, which portrays a fictitious rock band called Stillwater, created based on existing bands from the 1970's. A typographic logo was created for the band, and applied to different physical media that appear throughout the movie, such as magazine covers, T-shirts, posters, among others – which help give shape to the band's collective visual imagery.

Images 57.1 & 57.2
Frames taken from *Almost Famous* (2000) which show the typographic logo created for the fictitious band Stillwater applied to different physical media.



Further on, there are situations in which fictitious logos created for movies are transferred into the real world – these are called **hyper-real fictional brands**. "Hyper-real fictional brands are brands which are both fictional and real. (...) Product placement is a process whereby a concrete brand (the real) is placed in a fictional or virtual environment (the abstract). In contrast, reverse product placement refers to creating a fictional brand in a fictional environment and then placing it into the real world" (Muzellec, Lynn, & Lambkin, 2012). A clear example is the chain of seafood restaurant called Bubba Gump Shrimp Co., created as an inspiration to the movie *Forrest Gump* (1994), and which uses the original logo from the feature film in different versions. Besides, the restaurants also use elements and phrases from the movie to further characterise their visual identity.

Image 58
Frame taken from *Forrest Gump* (1994) which shows the main character, Forrest, using a cap with Bubba Gump's logo applied to it.

Image 59
Signage of a real life Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. restaurant, based on the protobrand created for the movie.

Credits:
<http://trvlgy8o.blogspot.com>



Grodal's concepts of focus and attention to intra-diegetic graphic objects in movie sequences as an indicator of their significance to the narrative can also be extended to logos, however in a different manner. The 'reading' of a logo is evidently much more objective and direct than of a newspaper, for example. A logo many times does not have to be read, only perceived, or identified, through its visual signs. Therefore, the duration on screen and camera framing/movement measures can be less explicit, as the spectator needs fewer time to perceive a logo. Instead, the idea of **repetition** of this logo throughout a filmic narrative will be more efficient as it helps to fix its visual meaning in the viewer's perception. For example, the Stillwater band logo, although not pictured exclusively and isolated in scenes of the movie – therefore not receiving appropriate focus or attention –, is present throughout the whole film, through different applications that appear on the background of scenes, composing the sets. Even though the audience might not consciously be aware of this logo, it will be placed on the viewer's imaginary through repeated appearances. In this way, a spectator might recognise the logo when seeing it in another context, outside the filmic space, as an association to the movie – which is the case of the Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. logo.

[19] Term coined by Michael Benedikt, referred by Rafael Cardoso, 2011, p. 197.

In summary, signage, print and logos help shape the 'informational landscape' [19] of the environment, or the materialisation of information into the surrounding space – be it physical or virtual – with the main intentions of communicating visual messages and identifying brands. The present, digital society receives information from different media every single moment of the day, which might not be assimilated for its vastness. However, if a movie portrayed a city with absolutely no visual communication – no road signs, no billboards or advertisements, no newspapers, no maps, no logos, etc., something would definitely feel strange, or it would be seen as a way of making a point – some kind of reflection would be incited. The movie *They Live* (1988), for example, makes an interesting case as it describes the story of a homeless worker who finds magical sunglasses, that

[20] The documentary “The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology” (2012), written and presented by the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, show how prevailing ideologies are represented through different movies. Through psychoanalysis, Žižek explores the mechanisms that shape what we believe and how we behave. “They Live” is the first movie analysed in the documentary.

when put on, show the real subliminal messages behind every kind of advertisement, package label, magazine – basically any form of design as visual communication. It is clearly a criticism to the capitalistic and consumerist industry, and to the “invisible order that sustains our apparent freedom” [20]. The whole criticism is made explicitly through artefacts of design as visual communication (namely signage and print): they are at the same time the cause of the criticism and the criticism itself. The movie does this through explorations of the **graphic language** of design, in this case, in the form of intra-diegetic written words – inserted into the film’s fictitious reality.



Images 60.1-60.8
Frames taken from They Live (1988) which show graphic props in the form of signage and print as major elements of the movie in order to criticise the capitalist society.

The graphic language

With this in mind, it becomes relevant to define the scope of the graphic language. Firstly, it has been verified that design and cinema are essentially forms of visual communication, as they convey messages through the visual channel. Furthermore, there needs to exist a language that will define how they will communicate. The manner through which film communicates has already been defined – mainly as a combination of the five filmic signs, giving meaning to its cinematographic image. Now, it is compulsory to perceive the specific way in which graphic language communicates – which comprises the field of **graphic design**. In this way, it will become easier to identify graphic configurations in movie narratives, since they are manifestations of graphic design, adapted onto a screen.

There are conceptual similarities in the languages of cinema and graphic design, as they both intend on applying meaning – an immaterial quality – to visual elements of material reality. Both languages use the concept of signs, from semiotics theory, to attach meaning to an image. The difference lies precisely in the nature of this image. The **cinematographic**

[21] This differentiation is pointed out by Pedro Barbosa (2002) between photography and painting or drawing. These definitions were further extended to cinema and design, as they are subsequent developments of the previously mentioned art forms.

[22] Namely Gyorgy Kepes (Language of Vision), Donis Dondis (A Primer of Visual Literacy), Rudolph Arnheim (Art and Visual Perception).

[23] If the reader wants to deepen their knowledge on graphic design principles, recommended bibliography include Ellen Lupton, as well as the previously mentioned Kepes, Dondis and Arnheim.

image follows a strict relation of cause and effect, as it is a direct and mechanical materialisation of an object’s image, through the use of a camera (which can further on be manipulated, but essentially it is built upon its photographic approach). The **graphic image**, in turn, comprises an indirect materialisation of the designer’s mental image of that object [21], which can be created by hand, by a machine or a computer. (Barbosa, 2002) There is a certain level of abstraction and individuality present in the construction of the graphic image (and thus the graphic language) as it uses a specific ‘vocabulary’ – such as dots, lines, shapes, textures, colours, and typography – and organises it by a ‘grammar’ of contrasts – such as instability/balance, asymmetry/symmetry, soft/hard, heavy/light – in order to transmit an idea. This theory was elaborated in Johannes Itten’s Basic Course at the Bauhaus and sums up the concept of **visual literacy**, explored by many theorists [22] so as to define the language of modern graphic design in the twentieth century. (Lupton, & Miller, 1996, p. 62-65)

In 2008, Ellen Lupton and Jennifer Cole Phillips attempted to define the new fundamentals of design, through the book “Graphic design: the new basics”, which is the theoretical basis used for this investigation. Quoting their own words, the book serves as a “concise and visually inspiring guide for two-dimensional design”, by revisiting the pioneer and traditional work established in the Bauhaus, which focuses on formal structures – however contextualising them to new media and digital software, which includes cinema, exemplified through the following excerpt:

What are these new universal concepts? What is new in elementary design? Consider, for example, transparency... a technique whereby two or more surfaces or substances are visible through each other. (...) Transparency is crucial to the vocabulary of cinema and movement-based media. Instead of a dry cut, an animator or editor fades out an image in time (fade out) or mixes two semitransparent images (fusion). Such transitions affect the pace and style of a movie. (Lupton, & Phillips, 2008, p. 9, free translation)

The content of the book essentially lays out the possibilities of graphic design’s vocabulary, thus forming its visual grammar, which consists of basic formal principles that can be applied together to create any graphic piece, be it static or dynamic. They are, in the book’s order of presentation: (1) **point, line and plane**, (2) **rhythm and balance**, (3) **scale**, (4) **texture**, (5) **colour**, (6) **figure/background**, (7) **framing**, (8) **hierarchy**, (9) **layers**, (10) **transparency**, (11) **modularity**, (12) **grid**, (13) **pattern**, (14) **diagram**, and (15) **time and movement**. “The point, the line and the plane make up the foundation of design. From these elements, designers create images, icons, textures, patterns, diagrams, animations and typographic systems.” (Lupton, & Phillips, 2008, p. 13, free translation) Essentially, every graphic image is built based on these three elements, that when combined together repeatedly can form more complex structures. The intention in this research is not to explain in detail each one of the elements comprising this vocabulary, but to merely introduce them to the reader so an association can be made between these concepts and the graphic language present in movies [23]. This visual grammar is also relevant as a means to perceive the inherent visuality of the cinematographic image, which uses graphic design principles in its construction. On an extra note, the construction of this visual grammar is considerably complex, as they frequently present themselves combined together.

The fifteen graphic design principles presented by Lupton & Phillips (2008), therefore, should be explored collectively in creating meaningful and visually impactful design work, not only through graphic configurations but in the construction of the film’s language as well. For example, the frame taken from the movie La La Land (image 61) exemplifies the

use of the graphic design principle of **figure/background** in order to create an extremely visual and graphic sequence that contains artistic expression. This principle is applied in the cinematographic image through the use of lighting, in order to achieve the strong contrast between the background and the figures – which can only be seen as silhouettes. This aspect of the image makes it less realistic as it loses its corporality in favour of a graphic stylisation, which, as mentioned previously, was a choice of the director so as to represent an illusory and hypothetical situation.



Image 61
Frame taken from *La La Land* (2016), which shows an exploration of the graphic design principle of figure/background in its cinematographic image, through the use of lighting to transmit contrast.

Another great example is from the movie *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2011), which uses the colour red as a major visual cue throughout the whole filmic narrative, in reference to the movie's thematic focus of horror and psychopathy. As Betton (1987, p. 61) mentions, "colours imprint on our being feelings and impressions, act upon our soul, upon our state of mind; therefore, they can serve for the development of the action, participating directly in the creation of the atmosphere, the psychological climate..."

The construction of the cinematographic image, in this case, is reinforced by a remarkable art direction, which uses graphic design principles such as colour and balance (through concepts of symmetry and asymmetry), as exemplified in the following two frames. In the first frame (image 62.1), the symmetry helps to convey a sense of higher unity, through an equal repetition of one or more elements in the horizontal axis – in this case red tomato soup cans, identified by their graphic label – as if they were almost entering and taking over the protagonist's mind, thus reinforcing the film's cinematic world, where the main character's life is flooded with tragedy and anger. In the second frame (image 62.2), the asymmetrical disposition of the shot transmits a sense of instability, depositing more weight on the right side of the frame, where the woman is seated – which can be an association to the protagonist's unstable life. These are all metaphorical statements that a movie can dispose in much through the use of graphic design principles and elements. As mentioned before, the audience's interpretation of these visual signs is always going to be ambiguous, as each person might perceive it differently according to their own cultural assumptions.

Image 62.1
Frame taken from *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2011), which are based on graphic design principles of colour and balance (symmetry).



Image 62.2
In the second frame, the colour red is present again in the art direction of the movie, this time through an asymmetrical composition.

In regards to graphic configurations, since they are explicitly manifestations of graphic design elements, they should be designed based on these principles. The creator of this graphic material, then – be him a specialist (from the field of graphic design) or a non-specialist – needs to be familiarised, or educated, with the visual grammar, so as to create graphic elements that are coherent and consistent. Besides, there is a major principle that needs to be considered in its totality when dealing with graphic configurations in movies, which is the last principle presented by Lupton & Phillips (2008), and possibly the most important in this investigation: **time and movement**, as conditions to designing graphics for screen.

Artists have always sought to represent the movement of bodies and the passage of time in the realm of static, two-dimensional space. Time and movement are

[24] **Kerning:** alteration of horizontal spaces between specific pairs of characters to improve the letterfit.
Tracking: A tightening up (or an opening out) of the space between pairs of characters.
Leading: space from one baseline to the next. (Jardi, 2007, p. 60-62)

concerns of all design work: from a printed book, whose pages follow each other, to animations for film and television, which have a literal length. (Lupton, & Phillips, 2008, p. 215, free translation)

Considering the context of filmic space, graphic design elements will always appear projected on a screen, with a limited time duration, and often in a dynamic form, comprising motion. These conditions describe a different type of grammar – the **filmic grammar** – whose elements include screen format, shots, speed and movement, transition, focus, lighting and sound. Most of these aspects do not concern print media, such as speed and movement. For instance, when creating intertitles to be placed in between scenes or superimposed over the cinematographic image, the designer needs to consider the **visibility, legibility and readability** of the graphic configuration. Visibility is the quality that makes a character or symbol visually separated, or highlighted, from its surroundings. Legibility refers to the character attribute that distinguishes them from each other and readability is the quality of recognising textual material information when presented by characters in semantic groups, such as words, sentences, or continuous text. (Aragão, 2006)

These three factors can be accomplished through the correct use of graphic design principles according to the media they will be applied to – therefore, the rules for creating graphic design work for print are going to be different than the rules for screen. For example, when creating intertitles, certain principles need to be respected: the contrast (through an adequate choice of colours, as well as through the use of shadows and strokes) will help establish a clear difference between the background and the graphic configuration, allowing for its visibility; the typeface's body size and weight will make it identifiable as text, making it legible; and the kerning, tracking and leading [24] of the typeface will allow for its actual readability. These also apply to filmed graphic objects: if, for instance, the headline of a filmed newspaper is intended to be read, it needs to be visible, legible, and readable through the appropriate choices of graphic design principles – such as scale and hierarchy –, and it also needs to be framed by the camera in a certain position during enough time that allows for the spectator to comprehend and assimilate the information. The frame from the movie *Yesterday* (2019) exemplifies this case (image 62).



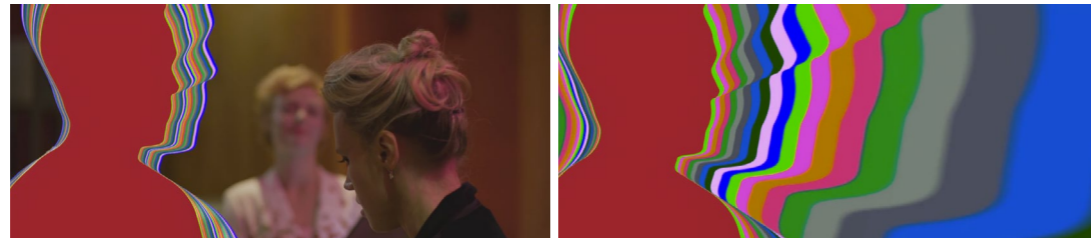
Image 63
Frame taken from *Yesterday* (2019) of a newspaper as a filmed graphic object, which contains headlines that are supposed to be read. The choices in scale, figure/background, colour, grid, and hierarchy help to make the headlines stand out and be more easily read by the viewer.

Recapitulating, then, the **graphic language** utilises its own vocabulary combined together through a set of conventions, or a **visual grammar** – which comprise the basic principles of graphic design – to communicate with the viewer. Furthermore, the graphic configurations in movies will also be conditioned to the filmic grammar, which exists due to medium-specificities that cause the need to consider factors such as **visibility, legibility and readability of the configurations on screen**. Moreover,

the graphic language does not necessarily have the intention of representing reality, as it presents different levels of abstraction and artistic expression (this approach, in cinema, could be exemplified through experimental and abstract films, as well as animation films. However, these are not objects of study in this investigation). When watching a movie, the spectator can distinguish easily a drawing, or a photography, from the cinematographic image itself – this happens precisely due to the difference in the perception of reality, which is almost perfectly represented by the cinematographic image, and which does not occur in graphic images. Thus, photographs, drawings, and illustrations, independent of their production method (by hand, by machine, or computer-generated) will be considered graphic, even if they are in movement. This is why animation movies are considered completely graphic. (Aragão, 2006)

Additionally, special effects, even though not fundamentally considered cinematographic image, are a manipulation of this image through the use of computer software (also commonly referred to as CGI – computer-generated imagery), which clearly differ from the graphic configurations. In the following example, this difference becomes clear: the first sequence (images 64.1 & 64.2) is from the movie *Yesterday* (2019), where the first frame shows the appearance of graphic language in the form of expository graphics, which are superimposed over the moving image. These graphics are based on the moving image as they have the same outline of the man on screen, however it is clearly not part of the cinematographic image as it uses the graphic image and language to communicate, in an unrealistic manner. In the second frame, the graphic language takes over the whole screen, overpowering the cinematographic image, which ceases to exist in that moment and becomes a full animation. In contrast, the following sequence from the movie *Lucy* (2014) shows the use of special effects as a manipulation of the cinematographic image (images 65.1 & 65.2). The woman's face starts to transform and melt, which obviously could not be filmed realistically and therefore needed to be simulated through computer-generated imagery to seem real. However, these effects are still part of the category of moving images as filmic signs.

Images 64.1 & 64.2
Frames taken from *Yesterday* (2019) which show the emergence and take-over of the graphic language in the form of expository graphics, superimposed over the cinematographic image.



Images 65.1 & 65.2
Frames taken from the movie *Lucy* (2014), which show the use of special effects as a manipulation of the moving images.



Now that it has become clear what is the nature of graphic configurations and which language they use to communicate, a final theory will be presented, developed by design professor Michael Twyman in 1982, which better identified the scope of the graphic language, through a very objective and clear schematic visualisation. It will be used in this investigation as a straightforward guide for defining what are graphic configurations. Twyman's intention was to broaden the view of traditional linguistics, which failed to consider the graphic language, as they only referred to the written and oral languages. For designers and typographers, the division is established mainly between verbal and pictorial elements, both in the visual channel – which is the only channel that graphic design is based upon, in its essence. Twyman proposed to combine all approaches into one visual scheme, as follows. This scheme defines the scope of the graphic language, which also applies for the graphic configurations seen in filmic narratives. **The graphic language, thus, has three primary modes of symbolisation: verbal, pictorial and schematic.** The first category, verbal, also includes numeric characters and punctuation marks. The pictorial category comprises any photograph, drawing or illustration, made by hand, by machine or computer-generated. Finally, the schematic symbolisation represents all graphic signs that are not verbal or pictorial – such as arrows and lines with the intention of organising information, through diagrams for instance. Many graphic configurations will consist of a combination of these three categories, however, they can also be used individually.

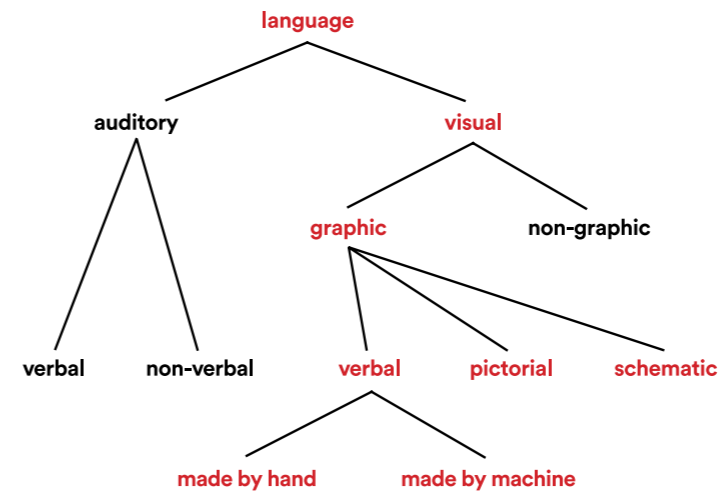


Diagram 4
Visual scheme based on Michael Twyman's (1982) definition of the language of graphic communication, which combines the views of linguists and designers. The words in red comprise the scope of the graphic language, also referred by Aragão (2006, p. 63).

the main character is a linguist hired by the American government in order to try and communicate with aliens (named Heptapods) who have just landed on Earth and speak an indecipherable language, which looks like “coffee mug stains with protruding tarantula legs” (Rhodes, 2016). The Heptapods’ ‘indecipherable language’ was created by production designer Patrice Vermette and his wife, artist Martine Bertrand, in the form of circular ‘logogram’ glyphs, which consist of essentially pictorial elements (images 66.1 & 66.2). Deciphering and interpreting the complex alien language of the Heptapods is central to the narrative, and the graphic language serves as a major tool to build the alien’s visual alphabet.

[25] Film language theorists such as Christian Metz (1974) and Jacques Aumont (1992) have discoursed about the written words as filmic signs, reducing the graphic language to the use of verbal elements only. In the design field, Las-Casas (2005) has explored the use of typography in movies, and Aragão (2006) and Tietzmann (2007) focused on the use of the written word in silent movies.

Images 66.1 & 66.2
Frames taken from *Arrival* (2016) which show the Heptapods alien language in the form of circular logogram glyphs. They are circular because the Heptapods experience time in a non-linear way, with no beginning or end, as if they are able to see all the events at the same time.

Images 67 & 68
Stills from *Arrival* (2016)
Credits: Jan Thijs/Paramount Pictures



As a final consideration, the following frames exemplify the combination of verbal, pictorial and schematic elements in different types of graphic configurations – first, as expository graphics and intertitles, and later as filmed graphic objects. The first frame on the left column (image 69) shows a static expository intertitle from *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), inserted in between scenes, which uses verbal elements to divide the narrative blocks by each character’s names. The second frame (image 70) is from *Citizen Kane* (1941) and shows a dynamic expository graphic placed in between scenes, using pictorial and schematic elements (the map is pictorial but the lines and circles are schematic). The third frame (image 71) is from *Stranger than Fiction* (2006), which also presents a dynamic expository graphic, however superimposed over the cinematographic image, using pictorial and verbal elements. The three examples on the right column show graphic configurations

[Left column,
top to bottom]

Image 69

Static expository
intertitles, inserted in
between scenes, with
verbal elements in
Reservoir Dogs (1992).

Image 70

Dynamic expository
graphic, inserted in
between scenes, with
pictorial and schematic
elements in Citizen Kane
(1941).

Image 71

Dynamic expository
graphic, superimposed
over the cinematographic
image, with verbal and
pictorial elements in
Stranger than Fiction
(2006).

[Right column,
top to bottom]

Image 72

Filmed graphic object
with verbal and pictorial
elements in The Grand
Budapest Hotel (2014).

Image 73

Filmed graphic object
with verbal and schematic
elements in Catch Me if
You Can (2002).

Image 74

Filmed graphic object
with verbal, pictorial and
schematic elements in
BlacKkKlansman (2018).

Frames taken from the movies.

in the form of filmed graphic objects, in order to perceive how verbal, pictorial and schematic elements are applied to a physical formal nature. The first frame (image 72) is from *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) and presents a printed graphic prop which contains verbal and pictorial elements in its physical appearance. The second frame (image 73) is from *Catch Me if You Can* (2002) and presents verbal and schematic (lines to separate information) elements on a printed prop. The third and final frame (image 74) is from the movie *BlacKkKlansman* (2018), which shows a filmed graphic object containing verbal (text), pictorial (photograph) and schematic (lines to separate information) elements.



By applying Twyman's visual scheme to the graphic language in movies, as well as associating it to the previously mentioned theories, it can be further concluded that **graphic configurations in movies are verbal, pictorial and schematic elements, which are equally important and may appear individually or combined together in the following circumstances: (1) inserted inside a scene as intra-diegetic filmed graphic objects, which will contain these elements in their visual appearance in the form of print, signage and logos or (2) inserted in between scenes or superimposed over the filmed image as extra-diegetic verbal, pictorial and/or schematic elements in the form of opening and final credits, as well as expository graphics and intertitles, be them static or dynamic.**

The field of design as an interdisciplinary practice presents infinite possibilities in the globalised and contemporary world, which can and should be used as a tool explored in other fields – in the case of this investigation, for cinema, in creating aesthetically rich cinematographic images, through a strong work of production design based on graphic design principles, as well as using graphic design elements as a final product, in the form of intra and extra-diegetic graphic configurations. Be it graphic design, production design, motion design, UX/UI design, fashion design, industrial design or whichever category of design one considers, there is always space for exploration in the film industry.



COLONIAL COLLEGE
BLACK STUDENT UNION

POWER

Talking about dreams is like talking about movies, since the cinema uses the language of dreams; years can pass in a second, and you can hop from one place to another. It is a language made of image. And in the real cinema, every object and every light means something, as in a dream.

Federico Fellini



Object of study: Functions and strategic approaches of the graphic language in a filmic narrative

In the previous chapter, an extensive analysis was conducted on the interconnected history of design and cinema, pointing out the major milestones that helped shape the graphic language currently found in contemporary movies. Afterwards, the formal and social aspects of cinema and graphic design were defined, based on existing film and design theories, so as to further identify what are graphic configurations and the scope of the graphic language itself – always contextualised to a filmic narrative. After defining these very important aspects of the graphic dimension of cinema, this investigation can now focus on the classification and analysis of these graphic configurations, using the system identified by Aragão as the starting point.

3.1 System of classification of graphic configurations

Aragão (2006) sought to define a classification of the graphic configurations found in filmic narratives by establishing a system of ten categories, which are based on existing theories and a sample of twenty narrative fiction movies, from 1996 to 2005. Her work was extremely pertinent and unprecedented, from the author's outlook, as never before had a designer identified so clearly and analytically the use of all graphic design elements in a movie, as a manner of cinematic expression. The intention, through this investigation, is to use her work as a starting point to further develop and update the analysis on feature films' graphic dimensions, up until 2019.

To do so, it is important to first present the ten categories she defined, so that later new observations can be made, adapting the system she created to the needs of this investigation. The first words that appear in bold and in between parenthesis are the definitions of the categories, or what they are referring to – followed by the possible classifications. For example, the first category concerns modes of symbolisation and is represented by three possibilities: verbal, pictorial or schematic. The first six categories refer to syntactic characteristics, which consider the formal structure of the graphic configurations. They are, as follows (translated from Portuguese):

1. **(mode of symbolisation)** verbal, pictorial or schematic
2. **(amount of elements)** singular or composite
3. **(composite configurations)** homogeneous or heterogeneous
4. **(method of insertion)** superimposed, in between, or inside the scene
5. **(movement)** static or dynamic
6. **(method of production)** mechanic or manual

The next four categories refer to semantic characteristics, which are associated to the content and narrative of the movie:

7. **(diegesis)** extra, totally extra or intra-diegetic
8. **(intra-diegetic)** intentional or casual
9. **(relevance of information)** decisive or secondary
10. **(significance)** redundant, complementary or independent

Aragão's main intention by establishing these ten categories was to create a system that can be applied to any narrative fiction film so as to identify and classify each one of the individual graphic configurations present in the filmic space. They are important for this research in order to understand the technicalities of the graphic configurations and how they behave on screen, so as to further apprehend their possible relevance in a filmic narrative, through the movie's graphic analysis. With this research, done thirteen years later, this system will be filtered so as to specifically **analyse intentional and significant graphic language, used strategically in narrative films and considered holistically as part of the movie's visual project, influencing its interpretation.**

As mentioned previously in this research, there is a high level of flexibility when choosing which graphic configurations will be included in the filmic space. However, unquestionably a movie needs to have opening and final credits, which are the only necessary graphic elements in a film. Due to this fact, their presence in a filmic narrative does not account as a graphic strategy per se; instead, what will matter in defining the film's graphic identity is **how these titles are portrayed.** They might comprise more complex graphic language, in the form of 'small movies inside a movie' – through the use of motion graphics, which help set the mood and tone of the film in its initial minutes – or, on the other extreme, they can be simple, static titles superimposed over the filmed image or on a solid background. The other graphic configurations that might be present in a filmic space are going to be either accessory or decisive to the narrative, as intentional choices to bring information in the movie's graphic dimension. All these decisions are, primarily, a responsibility of the Trinity, who will define the visual identity of the movie. **Defining which type of graphic configurations will be used in a movie, as well as defining the behaviour and structure of the chosen graphic configurations are decisions that will influence a film's visual identity. Identifying these two decisions serve as a means to analyse the graphic strategy of a movie.** This analysis will be done, firstly, by adapting Araújo's system, as shown in Diagram 5.

The new visual scheme focuses primarily on the **(1) main function** that graphic configurations acquire in a filmic narrative, and afterwards unfolds into subcategories that concern the **(2) form** and **(3) content** of the configurations (which are based on her categories). A higher category was included first, which comprises the three possible functions a graphic configuration acquires in a movie, namely: **filmed graphic objects, expository graphics and intertitles, or opening and final credits.** This addition was made so as to more easily and objectively identify the nature of the graphic configuration analysed in a movie, at a first moment. After this, the reader can then identify more specific characteristics of that configuration, regarding its form and content, and comprehend their behaviour and importance in a filmic narrative.

Main function

The addition of the three main functions as a first category in the system of classification was a result of the extensive historical research, where it was identified, based on other authors and theories, the emergence of the graphic language from the beginning of cinema until the days of today. The expository intertitles – originated from the silent film's need to visually organise its narrative – were eventually included together with graphic animations, which emerged as a consequence of the latest digital technology available, with the same objective of conveying additional information in the graphic dimension. The opening and final credits have always been present in film history, although they became significantly more complex with time, in much with the pioneer work of Saul Bass. They remain as the only necessary graphic configurations in movies and their relevance to this research is

Graphic configurations in a filmic narrative

1. [MAIN FUNCTION]

filmed graphic objects – expository graphics and intertitles – opening and final credits

[FORM]

2. graphic symbolisation

verbal – pictorial – schematic – heterogeneous

3. formal nature

physical manual – physical mechanical – virtual static – virtual dynamic

4. method of insertion

inside the scene – in between scenes – superimposed over the scene

[CONTENT]

5. diegesis

intra-diegetic – extra-diegetic – totally extra-diegetic

6. narrative significance

decisive – secondary

7. relation to other filmic signs

redundant – complementary – independent

Diagram 5

Visual scheme based on Araújo's system of classification of graphic configurations, adapted to the needs of this investigation into seven revised categories: (1) main function, (2) graphic symbolisation, (3) formal nature, (4) method of insertion, (5) diegesis, (6) narrative significance and (7) relation to other filmic signs.

[26] There are exceptions: see p. 59 for circumstances where the opening credits are physical, and not virtual. Additionally, expository intertitles can be shown in a physical format as well – however these are not the most common solutions.

particularly in regards to their level of complexity and their association to the other graphic configurations – since they are totally extra-diegetic elements and thus do not function objectively as strategic filmic signs in a narrative.

The other main function a graphic configuration acquires is of a filmed graphic object, inserted inside the scene as an intra-diegetic element. These graphic objects can be found in any film, from the emergence of cinema until today; however, in the early years, they were less relevant, as they did not usually include important information to the narrative. The movie *Citizen Kane* (1941), however, was a major milestone in cinema's history, as it developed a very innovative graphic and visual language, through the use in much of graphic objects, such as the newspaper, to tell its story. Further on, these graphic objects, or props, function in many of the movies as elements of the *mise-en-scène*, composing the backgrounds or being interacted by actors, helping to set the scene and/or time period. The more coherent they are with the chosen aesthetic and time period, the less spectators should notice them, and thus they should be considered 'invisible'. On the other hand, filmed graphic objects can also assume more crucial and explicit roles in a narrative, unfolding the plot as main elements, or even as protagonists of a story – which is exemplified through case study #2.

Form

Therefore, the first step in identifying graphic configurations in a filmic narrative is defining which of the three main functions it acquires. The second step is to analyse the formal structure of the configuration, through the next three categories: **graphic symbolisation, formal nature, and method of insertion**. These were reduced from Aragão's original six categories. The first was maintained, which concerns modes of symbolisation based on Twyman's definition, by **verbal, pictorial, and schematic elements**, or a combination of one or more of these (thus considered **heterogeneous**). Her second and third categories comprised the amount of elements – singular or composite – and whether the composite configurations were homogeneous or heterogeneous. These two categories were eliminated, as they were not important in defining the configuration's relevance to the narrative. Her fourth category is kept, of method of insertion – **inside, in between or superimposed** – however as the third category, accordingly. Her last two formal categories – concerning movement and method of production – were condensed into the second category: formal nature. In this investigation, two major formal natures were identified in expressing the graphic dimension of a movie: **physical and virtual**. Furthermore, the physical formal nature comprises **manual or mechanical** elements – meaning they are made by hand (a written letter, a painted sign), or by a machine/computer (a book, a newspaper) and refer to filmed graphic objects inside a scene. The virtual configurations are necessarily created in a virtual, thus digital, environment (computers), however, they may comprise movement or not, being **static or dynamic**. The static virtual configurations have the same initial and final position, form, colour, opacity and scale (basically, its appearance does not change during the entire shot), whereas the dynamic are animated through some kind of displacement or transformation. For example, intertitles that appear with fade in/fade out can be considered dynamic as their opacity changes. However, intertitles that appear in between scenes but with no transition effect, through a straight cut, are static as they remain exactly the same in the shot. Additionally, the virtual configurations will mostly refer to expository graphics and intertitles or opening and final credits [26]. However, filmed graphic objects can also be created in a virtual form, if the cinematographic image is manipulated through computer software, as is exemplified on case study #3.

[27] For the purpose of this research, opening and final credits do not need to be classified as decisive or secondary elements, as they do not concern the narrative and necessarily need to appear in any film.

Content

After defining the form of the graphic configurations, the third and most important step concerns identifying how the graphic configuration behaves in the filmic narrative, in terms of its relevance and interpretation. Aragão presented four categories, which were narrowed down to three. The first, concerning the diegesis, is extremely important as it classifies configurations as **intra, extra or totally-extra** diegetic elements. Her second category identified specifically if the intra-diegetic elements are intentional or casual – she argues this serves as selection criteria in order to eliminate random graphic objects that might be filmed by the camera, such as a car's license plate or street signs that have no relevance to the narrative. This category was eliminated, as necessarily this research will only consider **intentional** intra-diegetic graphic configurations, therefore, there is no need to distinguish them from the rest. Identifying intentional graphic objects can be a very subjective task, but minimally, spectators are able to infer on an object's influence in the narrative by considering the previously presented concepts of focus, attention, repetition, visibility, legibility and readability.

Further on, the next category, which was kept from Aragão's system, concerns narrative significance, or relevance of information, and is exemplified through **decisive or secondary** elements. "The configurations may only narrate or describe less important facts that happen in the film or they can be decisive points of articulation for the follow-up of the story." (Aragão, 2006, p. 97, free translation) To identify if a graphic configuration is decisive or secondary, thus, one needs to interpret the narrative and infer on its significance to the unfolding of the story. A good exercise is to picture the same scene without the graphic configuration – would it make any difference to the story? Is it essential for the interpretation of that scene or for a specific action that follows as a consequence of the emergence of the graphic configuration? [27]

Finally, the last category concerns the relation of the information displayed by the graphic configuration to other filmic signs – either present in the auditory channel (speech, noise and musical soundtrack) or on the visual channel (the moving image itself) – which is exemplified through three possibilities: **redundant, complementary, or independent**. The redundant graphic configurations will not bring any new information to the scene, as it refers to a message that is already being represented equally through other filmic signs. The redundant configuration will most likely exist in the form of written words which appear at the same time they are being read out loud or sung by someone, thus becoming redundant (but not superfluous). The complementary configuration is usually a visual representation of a message that is spoken or shown through moving images, and thus is complementing the scene by bringing a new graphic dimension to that message. The independent configuration will bring new information that is only present in the graphic form. Generally, independent configurations are the most significant ones, as they give autonomy to the viewer through either subliminal or explicit messages.

Through frames of Spike Lee's movie *BlacKkKlansman* (2018), some of these categories will be exemplified – specifically the ones which might create confusion or be extremely subjective in its identification, in order for the reader to better comprehend the system. In the first frame (image 75.1), a sign is filmed with the intention of being read ("Join the Colorado Springs Police Force", and on the line below "Minorities encouraged to apply"), containing important information to the development of the following actions – the protagonist is looking to apply to the Police and he is black, thus, a minority, contextualised in the cinematic world of 1970's Colorado Springs, USA. He then enters the police headquarters, which makes this graphic configuration **decisive** in unfolding the plot. The second frame (image 75.2) shows a painted sign on a house's backyard, which helps situate

the political position of the family living in that house, however, it is not essential for the unfolding of the scene, and is therefore considered **secondary**. Furthermore, they are both **independent** as they present information that can only be acknowledged through the graphic dimension.

Image 75.1
Filmed graphic object, heterogeneous (verbal and pictorial elements), physical mechanical (printed sign), inside the scene, intra-diegetic, decisive and independent.



Image 75.2
Filmed graphic object, heterogeneous (verbal, pictorial and schematic elements), physical manual (painted sign), inside the scene, intra-diegetic, secondary and independent.

Frames taken from *BlacKkKlansman* (2018).

In the following example, the first frame (image 76.1) shows virtual dynamic, extra-diegetic expository graphics of movie posters superimposed over the scene. They are in a relation of **complementarity** to the cinematographic image, as the characters are talking about these movies specifically, while their posters appear on screen. Therefore, they do not bring information that exists only in the graphic dimension, as it is also present in the speech. On an extra note, they are **secondary**, as they are not crucial for the unfolding of the plot. In the second frame (image 76.2), one can notice the use of a virtual dynamic, extra-diegetic expository graphic, in the form of a **schematic element** (the line) that divides the cinematographic image into two shots of the men speaking on the phone, happening simultaneously. It is considerably more complex to classify this configuration in terms of its narrative interpretation, since it only consists of a line, therefore there is no clear message transmitted – however, one can infer that the line serves as a means to visually split and combine the two shots into one, thus adding a **graphic stylisation** to the sequence. This configuration can be classified as **complementary**, since it will act, together with the cinematographic image, in conveying meaning to the scene. It is not redundant, because the line only exists in the graphic dimension, but it is also not independent, because it does not make sense by itself, and needs to be associated with the cinematographic image. Finally, it is **secondary**, as it is not a decisive element in the comprehension of the scene (the director could choose to show the shots individually, one intercalated with the other, and it would still make sense).

Image 76.1
Expository graphics, heterogeneous (verbal and pictorial), virtual dynamic, superimposed over the scene, extra-diegetic, secondary and complementary.



Image 76.2
Expository graphics, schematic, virtual dynamic, superimposed over the scene, extra-diegetic, secondary and complementary.

Frames taken from *BlacKkKlansman* (2018).

What is important to perceive is how the graphic language can assume different strategies, and therefore responsibilities, inside a filmic narrative. **The approaches are endless, but fundamentally the graphic configurations will assume either (1) more secondary or accessory functions, usually as a way of composing the set design; or (2) as decisive and essential elements, unfolding the narrative and conveying meaningful visual messages.** Betton (1987) discourses about the effect of the director's movie conceptualisation into the viewer's creative imagination, which can be further extended to the two approaches that graphic configurations assume in a film:

The filmic image arouses in the viewer a sense of reality (many people see what they believe they see), resulting in an "active" participation, which leads to the notion of apparent content or explicit (directly readable) and latent or implied content (possible reading, second degree). (Betton, 1987, p. 101, free translation)

[28] Other movies are mentioned throughout this investigation in order to exemplify the use of graphic language in film history, ranging from the emergence of cinema in 1895 to the days of today. See film index.

Perceiving the **apparent or explicit content** of the cinematographic image also includes the graphic configurations which are used as decisive and essential elements in the story, speaking directly and clearly to the viewer, often advancing the narrative – for example, as expository intertitles. The **latent, or implicit**, include the secondary and accessory use of graphic configurations, which might even pass unnoticed by the distracted spectator, however if observed, will transmit a complementary information to the story – for example, a street sign in the background containing subliminal messages. However, since this is a subjective research, these categories cannot be strictly confined, as it may happen that a configuration considered secondary to a narrative is shown through an explicit manner, directly readable.

The case studies of this investigation have the objective of exploring functions of the graphic language which are more focused on the second approach – as decisive and essential elements, which in turn will be apparent and explicit to the viewer – meaning that if they were not present in the narrative, the story would be perceived in a very different way, as they strongly characterise the film's visual style. It is important to observe, in general, that not all movies contain a decisive graphic strategy.

3.2 Methodology for graphic analysis

The chosen filmography for this investigation has as its main selection criteria the presence of significant graphic language throughout its discourse. In addition, other variables delimited the object of study: **(1) narrative fiction feature films (2) produced in Hollywood (3) in the twenty-first century (thus contemporary)**. First and foremost, the feature films are considered fiction (as opposed to documentary) and based on a narrative (as opposed to experimental films, for instance, which are considered non-narrative). Furthermore, animations are not considered in this investigation, as they consist of 100% graphic language, and the objective is to study the use of graphic language in combination with the cinematographic image (movies that mix animation with live-action are included). Next, the chosen movies are all produced in Hollywood, be them commercial or independent, through three distinct industry sectors: the six traditional major studios, the indie and specialty division, and the truly independent producers. Finally, the movies are contemporary in order to update this research – which uses Aragão's work from 2006 as a starting point – to the present day, thirteen years later. Thus, the main filmography consists of movies produced in the last ten years (2009-present), as follows, in chronological order with each director [28]:

(500) Days of Summer – Mark Webb, 2009
Scott Pilgrim vs. the World – Edgar Wright, 2010
The Great Gatsby – Baz Luhrmann, 2013
Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri – Martin McDonagh, 2017

In order to identify the best case studies for this investigation, as well as other examples that are shown throughout the work, countless movies were watched by the author, from beginning to end (always more than once), and analysed in terms of their graphic language, through a **systematic observation and collection of frames** (screenshots) – identifying which type of graphic configurations were used and how. Therefore, the more movies watched, the better the chance of finding pertinent case studies. However, the movie options are endless, and it is impossible to acknowledge all the graphic language used in contemporary films, thus this investigation serves as a guideline for anyone interested in identifying new narrative movies which contain rich graphic language – be them from Hollywood or not. The chosen feature films were seen on TV, on streaming platforms

[29] The chosen frames should represent the most significant moment of a sequence in relation to its graphic configurations – the most eloquent and legible frame(s) which exemplify the pertinence of the graphic language in that scenario. As Aumont & Marie (2004, p. 39, free translation) discourse in their book, "...it is from recognisable elements in the pause of the image [frame] that we can construct the logical and systematic relations which are the aim of any analysis." Additionally, there is not a universal method for analysing films, and these analyses are endless – it is important, therefore, for the analyst to decide which type of interpretation/reading he will conduct, and whether he will consider the movie as a whole or deal with only one excerpt or aspect of it, through a partial analysis. (Aumont, & Marie, 2004)

[30] See Appendix B for the complete graphic analyses.

and on YouTube channels. Next, the process of conducting a graphic analysis of a movie is described step-by-step, divided into two parts. Through qualitative and quantitative methods, the first part aims to identify and count the graphic configurations, and the second to analyse them in relation to the narrative and infer on their significance.

PART 1: Identifying and counting graphic configurations

1. Watch the entire movie for the first time, with a critical look to its form and content – the **different filmic signs** explored and its **thematic focus**.
2. Watch the movie again, and as many times needed, with the focus on the **appearance of graphic configurations**. While watching the movie, take screenshots of the **frames that contain significant and intentional graphic configurations** [29], in the form of filmed graphic objects, expository graphics and intertitles and opening and final credits. Use the updated system of classification presented as a guideline to identify them.
3. After taking a screenshot of a frame, write down the **type of graphic configuration and a small description**, so as to keep track of all of them. Number them (see next step).
4. The method for **numbering** is based on changes in sequences and/or types of configurations (according to the three main functions). For example, if the graphic configurations have the same main function and are present in the same sequence, they should be grouped together as one number. If in the same sequence there is more than one type of graphic configuration, they should be counted separately. And finally, if the graphic configurations are of the same type, however present in different sequences, they should also be counted separately [30]. In this way, some sequences may contain more than one graphic configuration, while others only one.
5. Finally, count the **(1) total number of intentional graphic configurations** present in the movie, as well as how many were **(2) intra-diegetic and extra-diegetic** (based on the three main functions) and **(3) decisive and secondary**. These measurements will help in Part 2.

PART 2: Analysing and interpreting graphic configurations

1. Identify the movie's **cinematic world** (and consequently its historical/social context), in order to later establish associations between the filmic universe and the graphic language portrayed. How are the graphic configurations' style and aesthetic choices influenced by this context? (look for interviews with designers to help in this step)
2. Based on the frames and descriptions collected, interpret the importance of the graphic configurations in relation to the story and group them by **narrative themes**.
3. Based on the classifications and measurements from Part 1, infer on the graphic configurations present in each identified narrative theme: what are the main types present? Are they more decisive or secondary? More complementary, independent, or redundant? Overall, how do they influence in the movie's interpretation (if they do at all)? With this conclusions, the narrative themes can therefore be divided into **secondary or decisive graphic approaches**.
4. Identify if the film tends to be more **realist or formalist** and associate with the interpretation of the graphic configurations.
5. Additionally, identify in the **film credits** the production designer, art directors, graphic designers/artists, title designers, etc. Search for interviews online with these professionals. Also search for movie reviews and critiques to aid in the comprehension.
6. Compile all these conclusions together so as to identify the movie's **graphic strategy**.

The movie *BlacKkKlansman* will once more be used as an example for the identification of its cinematic world and association to the graphic language's aesthetics. *BlacKkKlansman* is a movie from 2018 picturing the racist environment of the 1970's (referencing the Ku Klux Klan) in Colorado Springs, United States. An interview done with the movie's graphic designer, Emma Stensaas, shows that a great deal of research had to be done, especially of Colorado Springs in the 1970's – through historical photos found in libraries, museums and historical organisations – as well as on the choice of fonts used to confirm their historical accuracy. In regards to the influence the historical context has in the construction of the graphics, Emma says: "One thing I enjoyed was incorporating Western styles (like cowboys) into some of the designs for storefronts and flyers. It's a style that is prevalent in areas like Colorado, but not really much at all in New York. Stuff like that helps subtly sell the idea that the characters are in Colorado Springs, and not a small town in New York state - which is where it was filmed." (Conmose)



Images 77.1-77.4
Examples of filmed graphic objects created by graphic designer Emma Stensaas to portray the 1970's "western" style of Colorado Springs and their application in the movie *BlacKkKlansman*.

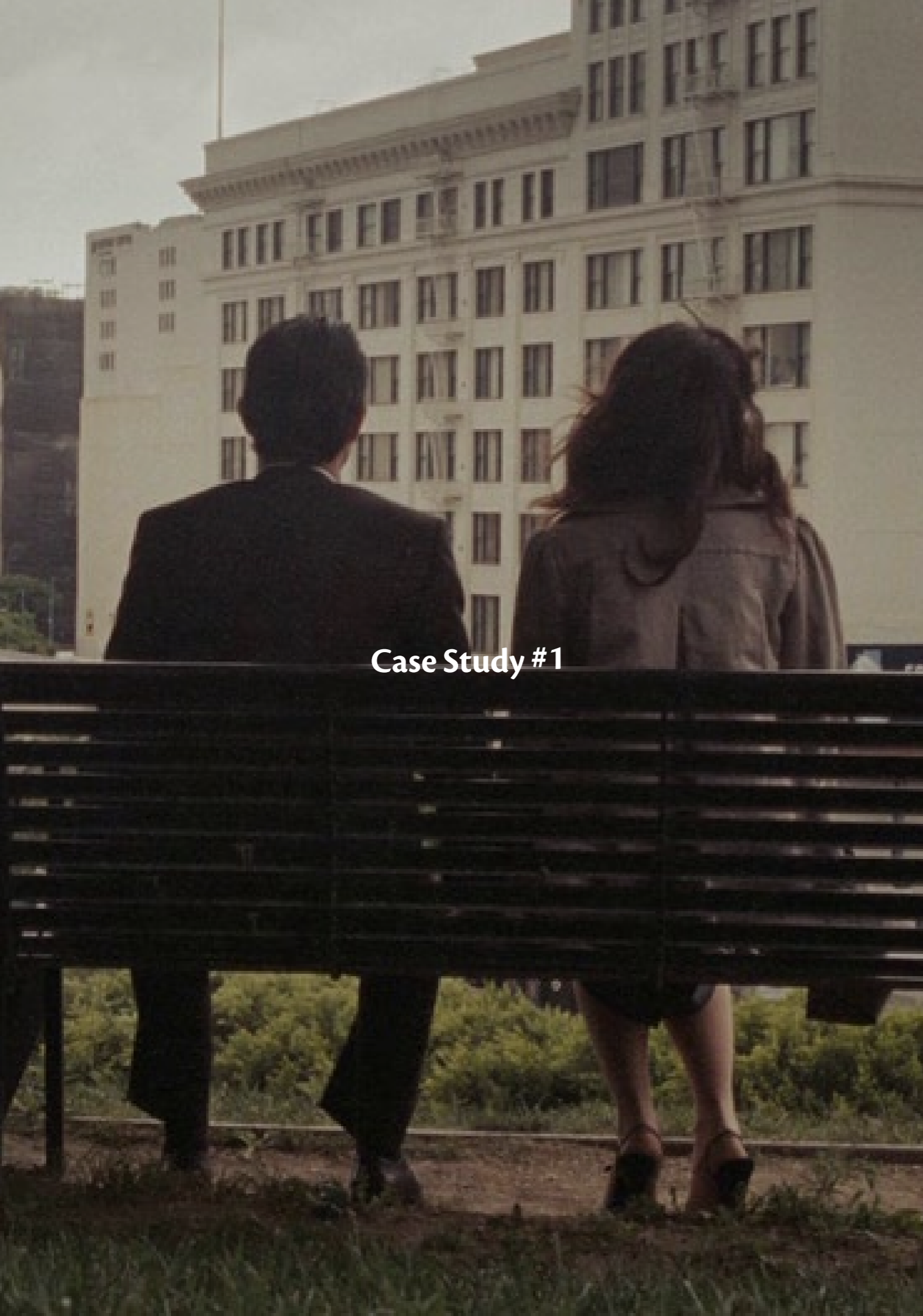
Credits: <http://www.emmastensaas.com>

Furthermore, it is important to note that the type of film analysis described here consists of subjective interpretations, and thus the steps do not need to be followed strictly in this order – these merely serve as guidelines for the interested reader. The person looking to identify the graphic strategy of a movie needs to have a critical eye which allows for inferences in the movie's interpretation. Reading interviews with the production designers and other artists that worked in the movie will help tremendously in understanding the main objectives and challenges of the movie and how they were resolved visually. Essentially, the more practice one has in watching and analysing movies critically, and the more familiarity with the concept of graphic configurations, the clearer it will become to identify and interpret the movie's graphic strategy.

In the next section, the case studies are presented in the order which the author found more pertinent to describe the different narrative strategies. Besides, the movies' specifications will be presented in this order: name, year of release, distributor, budget, box office, director, director of photography, production designer, art director, graphic designer/artist and genre, followed by a small summary of the plot. Then, the graphic analysis is divided into **(1) cinematic world**, **(2) secondary graphic approaches**, **(3) decisive graphic approaches** and **(4) final considerations**.

Warning: there are spoilers.

3.3 Case Studies



Case Study #1

(500) Days of Summer

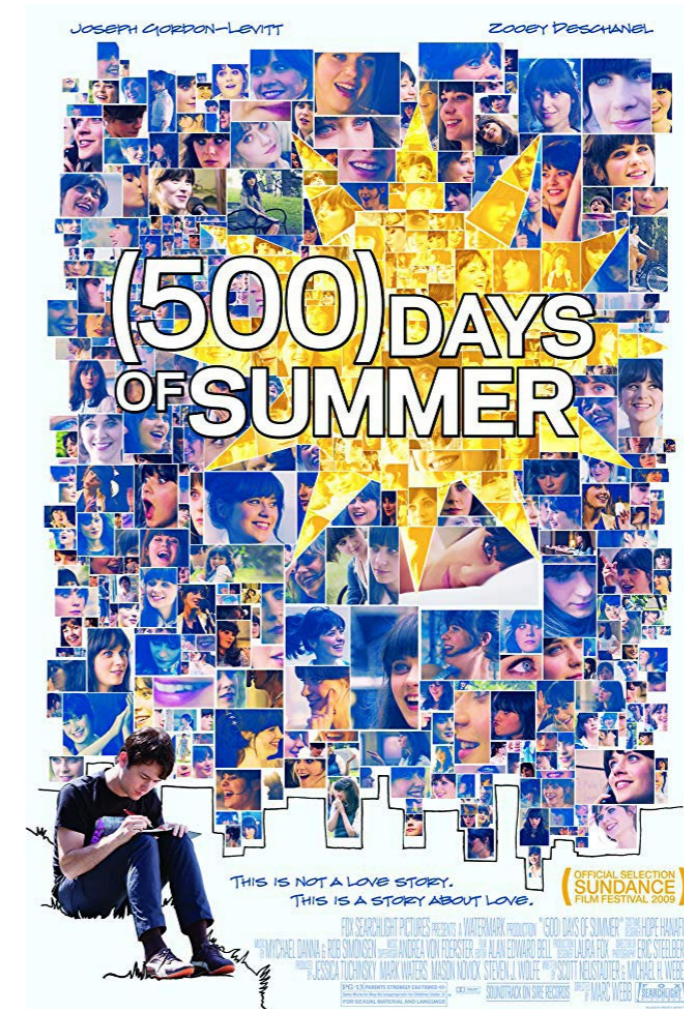


Image 78
Movie's official poster.
Credits: IMDb

Year of release: 2009
Distributor: Fox Searchlight Pictures
Budget: \$7.5 million
Box office: \$60.7 million

Director: Mark Webb
Director of photography: Eric Steelberg
Production designer: Laura Fox
Art director: Charles Varga Jr.
Graphic designer: Uncredited

Genre: Comedy, romance

Tom, greeting card writer and hopeless romantic, is caught completely off-guard when his girlfriend, Summer, suddenly dumps him. He reflects on their 500 days together to try to figure out where their love affair went sour, and in doing so, Tom rediscovers his true passions in life.

The following frames were all taken from (500) Days of Summer (2009).

Graphic analysis

(1) Cinematic world

The movie pictures present day Los Angeles, and has as its main scenarios the city itself, with a strong focus on its skyline (a very important aspect of the movie which will be revisited later on), and the protagonists' work office environment. Tom and Summer both work at a company called New Hampshire Greetings, he as a copywriter creating content for celebratory greeting cards, she as a personal assistant. Although Tom works as a copywriter, he studied to be an architect, but has lost his self-confidence with the years – which Summer constantly tries to bring back in their time together. The movie shows, through a non-linear chronology, 500 days of their relationship.



Image 79
Los Angeles city's skyline.

Image 80
New Hampshire Greetings company.

(2) Secondary graphic approaches

Greeting cards work environment

The company New Hampshire Greetings serves as background for the story to unfold, as it is where the protagonists meet for the first time and start a romance. The graphic language is explored, in this case, through a secondary approach, as a way to compose the set and characterise their work environment – one can notice elements such as the company's logo (a proto-brand) present in the background of many scenes. After repeated appearances composing the sets (images 81.1-81.3), there is a last scene (image 81.4) where the logo appears entirely, framed in the center by the camera, as Tom quits his job.



Images 81.1-81.3
Repeated appearances of the company's logo in the background of scenes as a filmed graphic object: heterogeneous (verbal and pictorial elements), physical mechanical, inserted inside the scene, intra-diegetic, secondary, and independent

Image 81.4 (lower right)
The last time the logo is seen, this time fully centered on screen so as to reinforce the fact that he has just quit his job.

Moreover, since the greeting cards consist of filmed graphic objects (containing verbal, pictorial and schematic elements), they are present constantly throughout the filmic narrative, as part of its cinematic world. However, they do not play a major part in the movie's visuality, as they do not often appear on screen entirely, and their content is mostly read out loud by the characters. There are some minor exceptions, such as the specific greeting card that Tom created thinking of his relationship with Summer ("I

Love Us"), which plays a significant role in the sequence it appears, however, it has a **secondary** significance to the plot as a whole, and functions as a **complementary** graphic configuration, as it shares meaning with the dialogue spoken by the protagonist. (image 82)



Image 82
Greeting card "I Love Us" functioning as a filmed graphic object: a heterogeneous (verbal and schematic elements), physical mechanical, inserted inside the scene, intra-diegetic, secondary and complementary graphic configuration.

[31] Foreshadowing is a literary device in which a writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story. Foreshadowing often appears at the beginning of a story, or a chapter, and it helps the reader develop expectations about the upcoming events.

Music references

Another characteristic aspect of the movie is the constant referencing to music personalities, through the use of intra-diegetic filmed graphic objects. The bands The Smiths and Joy Division are referenced for the first time in the opening scenes of the movie (image 83.1), which show a young Tom in his bedroom, wearing a T-shirt with Joy Division's iconic Unknown Pleasures album cover, as well as a poster of The Smiths in the background. Both graphic configurations act as a subtle foreshadow [30], as later in the movie they will be referenced again and play an important part in shaping the characters' personalities and relationship. For example, The Smiths will be the reason Tom and Summer talk to each other in the first place, in the office's elevator, when Summer hears 'There is a Light that Never Goes Out' song playing on Tom's headphones and says she is a fan of The Smiths. That is the first time he realises he might fall in love with her. He even tries to use The Smiths as an excuse to talk to her again, as he plays a song in his computer hoping she will hear, while we can see the image of their album cover on his computer screen (image 83.2). Furthermore, Tom reappears with his Joy Division T-shirt in a scene where he is with Summer (image 83.3); he also appears, in another scene, with a different T-shirt, which also refers to a Joy Division's song, 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' (image 83.4).

Image 83.1 (upper left)
Opening scenes which show a young Tom in his bedroom wearing a Joy Division T-shirt and a poster of The Smiths in the background. The T-shirt is a pictorial, physical mechanical, inserted inside the scene, intra-diegetic, secondary and independent configuration. The Smiths' poster has the same characteristics, only it is heterogeneous as it contains verbal and pictorial elements.

Image 83.2 (upper right)
Computer screen showing The Smiths' album cover on iTunes: heterogeneous, virtual static, inserted inside the scene, intra-diegetic, secondary and independent. (obs. The actual computer screen is physical, however the image of the album cover is in a virtual and static form).

Images 83.3 & 83.4
Tom wearing T-shirts referring to Joy Division's album and song.



The Smiths and Joy Division, thus, are bands that help portray Tom's music taste and consequently his personality, as the songs are often referring to love (as quoted by the movie's unknown narrator, "sad British pop music"), which reinforces his 'hopeless romantic' trait. The movie is overly focused on Tom's point of view of the relationship – hence it shows much more of his traits, whereas Summer remains idealised into Tom's image of the perfect woman. However, we can still notice some of her individual tastes which shape her personality, such as her unconventional choice of Ringo Starr as her favourite Beatles – reinforced by filmed graphic objects such as Ringo's vinyl disc (image 84.1), as well as an illustrative portrait of Ringo that Summer has in her apartment (image 84.2).

Image 84.1

Tom is showing Summer Ringo Starr's vinyl disc – heterogeneous (verbal, pictorial and schematic), physical mechanical, inserted inside the scene, intra-diegetic, secondary and independent.



Image 84.2

Framed illustration of Ringo Starr that Summer has in her apartment – pictorial, physical manual, inserted inside the scene, intra-diegetic, secondary and independent

Images 85.1 & 85.2

Opening titles with fictitious homemade videos of the protagonists' childhoods, through a graphic stylisation of texture (vintage-grained) and framing (rounded square format with a slight, blurry vignette) as split screen shots. Totally extra-diegetic graphic configurations.

Image 86.1

Expository graphics, superimposed over the scene as extra-diegetic elements, presenting Summer's physical characteristics (height, weight and shoe size) through virtual dynamic verbal and schematic elements (lines and words/numbers), secondary and complementary. There is also a manipulation of the cinematographic image through texture, colour and format.

Image 86.2

Image of Summer's yearbook (intra-diegetic filmed graphic object), with her photo (pictorial element) and a quote from Belle and Sebastian – "color my life with the chaos of trouble" (verbal element), which anticipates some of Summer's personality and how it will influence Tom's life. It is secondary and redundant, as the narrator also says it out loud.

It is important to note that all of these graphic configurations referencing music personalities consist of existing artworks, and therefore were curated by the designers/art directors, as opposed to created (with the exception of Ringo's illustration, in which we cannot really know if it already existed or if it was created for the purpose of the movie). If we were to compare (500) Days of Summer's graphic approach of music referencin, to the one used in the movie Almost Famous, in the first case it functions mostly to characterise Tom and Summer's personalities and traits, as cues to develop conversations and actions among them, whereas in the latter it has a more central importance, as the fictitious band Stillwater gets its own created logo, for the purpose of the narrative. Besides, there are countless references to rock bands from the 1970's, through existing graphic memorabilia (mostly vinyl and magazine covers), in order to help set the time period and cinematic world. Therefore, it is important to first identify why you want to use these filmed graphic objects so as to determine their importance and even necessity in the film's visual project and narrative.

Vintage-grained framing filter style

The last secondary graphic approach in (500) Days of Summer consists of a graphic stylisation of the cinematographic image, which uses the vintage-grained framing texture style of old analogue homemade movies, occasionally in black and white, to portray expository graphics throughout the entire filmic narrative. The first time the viewer can observe this stylisation is in the opening titles, where the protagonists are introduced through small fictitious homemade videos of their childhoods, both in a square format, positioned one next to the other in the screen (sometimes individually), while the main cast and crew's names appear superimposed over the videos (images 85.1 & 85.2). This same style can be observed in other moments of the movie, usually to present extra-diegetic, additional information about the characters, with a strong sense of humour and irony – for example, when presenting some of Summer's characteristics (images 86.1 & 86.2), her ex-partners, and a hypothetical Tom as an actor suffering after his breakup and watching himself in the movies (images 87.1 & 87.2).



Images 87.1 & 87.2

Also in the vintage-grained texture style, showing images that are part of Tom's imagination, where he is suffering post-breakup. The scenes are also very ironic, as they include captions (the original audio is in French) that use informal slangs to bring humour and sarcasm to the portrayal – which only exists in the graphic dimension, as extra-diegetic, virtual dynamic verbal elements, that are secondary and complementary configurations.



Furthermore, the style of the 'split-screen shots', where two sequences are happening at the same time, as if through the lens of an analogue filming camera, is also very characteristic of the movie, as it occurs in frequent moments – such as after a big fight where each one is lying in their bed and cannot sleep (image 88.1), and also portraying Tom and Summer in different moments of their lives, post-breakup (image 88.2). However, it is most importantly used in a sequence that became very iconic in the movie, known as the 'expectation vs. reality' sequence (images 89.1-89.4), where it can be observed, simultaneously, the disappointing reality of Tom going to Summer's party, as opposed to the expectation he had in his head of how it would turn out. It is a very interesting and unconventional way of portraying this situation, which makes the sequence extremely dynamic and very recognisable in representing the movie.

Images 88.1 & 88.2

Split-screen shots style.



Images 89.1-89.4

'Expectations vs. reality' iconic split screen sequence. Throughout the whole sequence there is a graphic configuration in the form of verbal, virtual static, superimposed over the scene, extra-diegetic, secondary and independent elements. The frame functions almost in the same way, however as a schematic and complementary element.



It is important to clarify certain particularities regarding this graphic approach: the vintage-grained filter style is technically a manipulation of the original cinematographic image, which uses graphic design principles such as texture (grain) and colour (black and white) to add meaning to the cinematographic image. The use of a frame (rounded square with blurry vignette) also aids in conveying messages. "A frame differentiates artwork from its surroundings, drawing attention to itself and highlighting it from its environment (...) Emphasised or erased, frames affect the way we perceive information." (Lupton, & Phillips, 2008, p. 101, free translation) By visually identifying the frame, which refers to old vintage camera lenses, and occasionally adding texture and changing colour, the viewer can perceive these sequences as either present in Tom's imagination, or as extra-diegetic elements in order to bring additional information to the story, or even with the simple

[32] Just like the previously mentioned sequence from *BlackKlansman*, which uses a schematic line to visually split the screen into two simultaneous shots (p. 78).

[33] In the manner of Saul Bass's minimalist creations, explained with more detail in the historical investigation.

objective of visually splitting the scene into two simultaneous shots. Furthermore, the addition of grained texture applied onto the moving images conveys the idea of a vintage stylisation, strongly characterising the movie's visual project. "Textures in our environment help us understand the nature of things (...). In design, texture is both concrete and virtual (...). Many of the textures that designers manipulate cannot be physically experienced by the observer, for they exist only as an optical effect, as a representation." (Lupton, & Phillips, 2008, p. 53, free translation) It can be said, therefore, that the use of texture and colour in these sequences is considered a manipulation of the moving image based on graphic design principles, and that the use of a frame is considered a schematic, virtual static, superimposed, extra-diegetic, secondary and complementary graphic configuration [32]. Nevertheless, graphic configurations are also present in these sequences as verbal and additional schematic extra-diegetic elements (text and lines), superimposed over the scenes.

(3) Decisive graphic approaches

Los Angeles' skyline architectural sketches

The movie presents a strong visual reference to Los Angeles' skyline, usually seen from Tom's favourite park in the city (image 90.1), which serve as a basis for the sketches present in the movie's graphic identity. The significance of the city's skyline reinforces Tom's love for architecture, which he apparently gave up to work with greeting cards, due to his lack of self-confidence in his skills as an architect. Throughout the movie, architectural sketches of LA's skyline can be seen, done by Tom, in different physical media: pencil on paper (image 90.2), chalk on blackboard (image 90.3) and even pen on Summer's forearm (image 90.4), as she asks for him to show how he would redesign the city's skyline, when he takes her to his favourite spot. These sketches, thus, become vital in defining the movie's visual 'symbolism'. They are present in the movies' expository intertitles and main titles (described in the next section), as well as in the movie's official promotional poster (however in a subtler manner). It can be said that, if the movie was to be represented by one graphic, pictorial symbol [33], it could easily be the city's skyline sketch. There are even alternate versions to the official movie poster which use the architectural sketches, as well as more generic sketches from the tree and bench (based on image 90.1), as pictorial symbols to create the artwork – which are much more efficient in conveying the movie's visual project (image 91). However, identifying such a symbol requires of the specialist (ideally a graphic designer) to thoroughly analyse the movie's graphic elements/ approaches, so as to identify the most relevant and potentially recognisable. If there are not any, which can be the case, the most obvious solution is to use the cinematographic image itself as the main element of the poster and other graphic pieces.

Image 90.1 (upper left) View of LA's skyline from Tom's favourite spot in the city.

Images 90.2-90.4 Tom's architectural sketches applied to different media, in the form of intra-diegetic filmed graphic objects, physical manual, secondary and complementary.

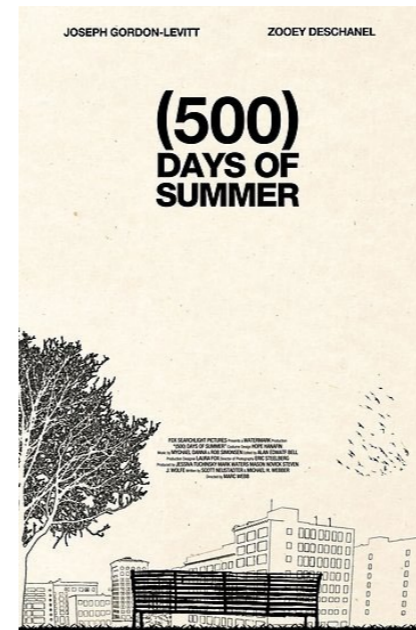


Image 91 Alternate version for the movie's poster, which uses the architectural sketches of LA's skyline, such as the ones done by Tom in the movie, as well as other elements present in his favourite spot, to convey the movie's visual identity.

Day slate sequences

The main graphic strategy of the movie heavily characterises its visual project and narrative, and consists of the day slate sequences, inserted in between scenes, as extra-diegetic, virtual dynamic, decisive and independent expository intertitles. The movie tells the story of how the two protagonists meet, have a relationship, break up, and move on with their lives, during 500 days. However, this story is told in a non-linear chronology, which constantly jumps back and forth in the relationship – there is no apparent pattern or order for the changes in days, as they seem randomly selected. The day slate sequences, thus, appear throughout the whole movie, so as to identify in which day the relationship is. The first moment the spectator encounters this graphic configuration is in the opening scenes, which present the title of the movie (images 92.1 & 92.2), and soon after turns into the expository intertitle (image 93.1). Besides the verbal elements that appear in all sequences, showing which day it is (numbers inserted in between parenthesis), there are other pictorial elements, in the style of Tom's architectural sketches, that help bring information regarding the sequences that will follow: the tree in the foreground becomes more or less leafy and colourful, depending on the moment of the relationship. The background's

colour also changes depending on how Tom is feeling. Additionally, LA's skyline sketch is always present in the background, as a virtual static element (with the exception of the main title, when it is dynamic, as it is presented through an animated sketch). These intertitles are essential in the movie's interpretation and constitute as independent configurations, as they only exist in the graphic dimension of the movie and need to be read and interpreted by the spectator. Without them, the movie's sequences would make little sense followed by each other, as they do not adhere to a linear narrative. Thus, they serve as indicators of the chronology of the story, fluctuating in the 500 days of its duration. They also bring additional information of the relationship's status at that moment (always associated to Tom's point of view), as it uses animated elements like rain, sun and flowers (through image and sound) to anticipate if the subsequent sequence will be happy (pre-breakup, image 93.2), sad (post-breakup, image 93.3), or happy again (after Tom finally gets over Summer and starts day 1 anew, image 93.4).

Images 92.1 & 92.2 Title of the movie in the style of the day slate sequences. This is the first time the viewer sees this sequence, and for the next 95 minutes of movie they will appear again 37 more times.



Images 93.1-93.4 Day slate sequences in the form of expository intertitles, inserted in between scenes, as heterogeneous, virtual dynamic, extra-diegetic, decisive and independent graphic configurations.



[34] The movie's non-linear chronology impressed so many fans that one specifically edited a recut of the movie showing the 500 days in linear order, which only reinforces how powerful unconventional methods can be in engaging audiences. (Light, 2019)

(4) Final considerations

After conducting a thorough graphic analysis of (500) Days of Summer, 81 intentional graphic configurations were identified – created specifically for the purpose of the narrative with the intention of conveying a message. From these 82 configurations, 38 consist of the day slate sequences, which serve as expository intertitles throughout the story, identifying which day of the relationship is being portrayed, as well as anticipating its status. They consist of almost half of the graphic configurations present in the filmic narrative, thus the day slate sequence can be clearly identified as the main graphic strategy of the movie. It functions as a vital element in the comprehension of the non-linear narrative presented and its repeated appearance throughout the story helps to fix, or anchor, its meaning to the audience. Besides, it is precisely this displacement of past, present and future that characterises the originality of the story being told. It could have been seen as a common romantic comedy, however, this **unconventional** way of telling the story makes it more **authentic** and **relatable** – it is almost as if the viewer is inside Tom's head, while he associates the events in his mind [34]. Additionally, these sequences include the most recognisable pictorial symbol of the movie – the architectural sketch of the city skyline – present also as intra-diegetic filmed graphic objects. It is interesting to identify a film's main pictorial symbol, besides the obvious verbal one (the movie's name, for instance), so as to make an analogy to the movie as a brand, or as a visual identity. Thus, the pictorial symbol can function as a logo of the film, to be used potentially in any static graphic piece, decontextualized from the filmic discourse, however discernible by the critical audience.

Furthermore, the presence of this frequent graphic configuration in the form of expository intertitles introduces the movie's 'formula', which brings in a **unique** and even **quirky** view to the romance. This allows for the use of other graphic configurations that will help keep the movie's 'vibe', delivering a sense of verisimilitude, inside its own cinematic world. These other graphic configurations function as secondary, or accessory, approaches in conveying messages throughout the filmic narrative. It is the case of the graphic stylisation that is frequently presented in the movie in the form of the vintage-grained filter and split-screen framing, which resulted in one of the most **iconic** sequences of the movie (expectation vs. reality), as well as other expository graphics, which, combined with funny dialogues and dynamic editing help to convey **ironic** and **sarcastic** moods, delivering a **strong sense of humour** to the feature film. It can be said that (500) Days of Summer is a **formalist** movie in its essence, as it plays with the different formal possibilities of the cinematic structure, exploring the visual imagery in its own special way.

The use of expository intertitles is a technique explored in countless movies, as it many times offers an easy and straightforward solution to the passage of time and changes in location. However, this movie took the use of expository intertitles to another level as it presented intricate, animated graphic language, that convey deeper meaning to the sequences and are essential to comprehending the more complex narrative structure of the story. In the credits of the movie, the viewer can acknowledge that these specific day slate sequences, as well as the opening titles, were created by Kyle Cooper's acclaimed digital agency Imaginary Forces, known for creating many other TV and movie titles. Thus, one can infer that the hiring of a specialist (which understands and consistently applies graphic design principles to their work) can positively influence in the creation of a movie's visual project, adding more quality, value and credibility to the narrative.

In summary, besides the secondary approaches, the main, significant graphic strategies one can take from this movie's analysis are:

(1) Use of meaningful expository intertitles in more complex narrative structures, such as non-linear or multi-plot narratives.

(2) Identification of one strong pictorial symbol that is recognisable of the movie, and the further application to other media, such as the movie's poster and other promotional products.

Case Study #2



Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri



Image 94
Movie's official poster.
Credits: IMDb.

Year of release: 2017

Distributor: Fox Searchlight Pictures

Budget: \$12-15 million

Box office: \$159.2 million

Director: Martin McDonagh

Director of photography: Ben Davis

Production designer: Inbal Weinberg

Art director: Jesse Rosenthal

Graphic designer: Lillian Heyward

Genre: Drama

After seven months have passed without a culprit in her daughter's murder case, Mildred Hayes makes a bold move by advertising three billboards leading into her town containing a controversial message directed at Bill Willoughby, the town's revered chief of police. When his second-in-command Officer Jason Dixon, an immature mother's boy with a penchant for violence, gets involved, the battle between Mildred and Ebbing's law enforcement is only exacerbated.

The following frames were all taken from *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (2017).

Graphic analysis

(1) Cinematic world

The movie is set in present day, picturesque mountain town of Ebbing, Missouri, in the interior of the United States. In real life, though, the town used for the shootings is actually named Sylva – located in North Carolina state, with a population of 2,644 inhabitants. The movie has as its main scenarios the abandoned Drinkwater Road, which leads into Ebbing and bears the three billboards, as well as ‘downtown’ Ebbing, with its three main sites: the police department (where Officer Jason Dixon works), the town’s advertising agency (where Mildred rents the billboards) and the gift shop (where she works). There are other sets, however, the major sequences occur in these two scenarios, especially in terms of the graphic language.



Image 95
Drinkwater Road with the three abandoned billboards.

Image 96
Downtown Ebbing.

(2) Secondary approaches

Downtown Ebbing’s signage

The first, very identifiable, secondary graphic approach of the movie consists of set composition, in the form of intra-diegetic signage (filmed graphic objects). As mentioned, Ebbing is a fictitious town and thus needs to become ‘real’ and believable through a strong art direction. The creation of signage, in the form of logos and posters for the town, helps to reinforce its main scenes’ backgrounds: Ebbing’s police department, advertisement company, and Southern Charm gift shop – the latter in the form of signage as well as logo applied to Mildred’s uniform. There is also a poster (“Welcome to Ebbing”, seen on image 96) which appears in a few scenes in order to further characterise the town. Additionally, the police’s car signage and uniform patches had to be produced from scratch, as they should include the name ‘Ebbing’ in it (images 98.1 & 98.2). The constant repetition of these signage and logos throughout the filmic narrative help fix its meaning to the audience, aiding in building a cinematic world with verisimilitude.



Image 97.1
Ebbing Police Department.

Image 97.2
Ebbing Advertising Company.

Image 97.3
Southern Charms Gift Shop.

Image 97.4
Southern Charms logo applied to Mildred’s uniform.

Image 98.1
Ebbing’s police car signage.

Image 98.2
Ebbing’s police uniform patch.

All of the filmed graphic objects present in these frames function as heterogeneous or verbal, physical mechanical, intra-diegetic, secondary and independent configurations.



Graphic designer Lillian Heyward was responsible for creating all of the film’s graphic objects, as she tells in an interview done by Michael Olinger, from *Island Packet*. She emphasizes in her work process the meticulous attention to details, even for artwork that is not filmed by the camera, or that appears for only one second – all to achieve an effect that audiences might not notice, but which makes the world on the screen much more real. “When I designed the police cars, the centre section of the logo, with the county seat, is actually the building at the end of the street in Sylva, because you see the building in the scene,” Heyward said. “That helps the place we’re in become Ebbing, because it includes what a logo would, a county seat or a town hall.”

Moreover, there are two specific sequences, in the beginning of the movie, which introduce in much the narrative through the use of filmed graphic objects that are part of this secondary approach. The first moment Mildred sees the three abandoned billboards on the road, she stops the car to observe something – the audience then sees a zoomed in shot framed during considerable time so as to notice a chipped-off, rusty logo of ‘Ebbing Advertising Company’ (image 99.1). The audience can then observe her thoughtful reaction to it, as if she is considering taking some kind of action, after seeing the logo (image 99.2). The next sequence immediately starts with the same logo that has been observed before, only applied to a glass door, seen from the inside (the logo is flipped horizontally, however it is easily identifiable as the viewer has just seen the original version in the previous sequence). Since it is transparent, in the back, one can also notice an unfocused signage of Ebbing’s police department, overlapping the advertisement company logo (images 99.3 & 99.4). This visual play of **transparency** between the two signage is not arbitrary, as they subtly anticipate future events in the story by connecting these two sites, which will play very important, decisive roles in the narrative, and are directly linked to each other. As Lupton and Phillips mention in their book, transparency is a graphic design principle, and it can be seen as a physical phenomenon (which is the case of this sequence, using glass as a representative of this principle) or a graphic one (where the transparency is reached through the use of overlapping layers, usually in computer-generated images). “Transparency is a fascinating and seductive principle. How can it be used to produce meaningful images? (...) It can add complexity by allowing layers to blend and mix together. It can be used thematically to combine or contrast ideas by connecting different levels of content.” (Lupton, & Phillips, 2008, p. 147, free translation)

The sequence then unfolds to show Mildred entering the advertising company with the intention of renting the three billboards. These scenes show an excellent example of how graphic objects can also function as decisive configurations in building a narrative, where the events happen as a direct reaction to the appearance of the graphic object, therefore meaning that this graphic object contains relevant information to the plot – and in these cases, information that only exists in the graphic dimension and that needs to be read by the spectator (thus considered an **independent** configuration). The fact that Mildred saw the advertisement company’s logo in the first sequence is the reason why on the next scene she is entering the building to rent the billboards, and the viewer associates these events by identifying the same logo in both sequences. Therefore, the filmed graphic objects mentioned in this secondary approach, besides acting as accessory set design, also function as decisive elements in specific sequences – which leads to the next section.

Images 99.1 & 99.2

First sequence which shows a zoomed in frame of Ebbing Advertisement Company, applied to one of the billboards, and Mildred's reaction to it.



Images 99.3 & 99.4

The next sequence shows Mildred entering the advertisement company, as a direct reaction to the logo she saw on the previous sequence. The Ebbing Advertisement company logo functions, in both sequences, as heterogeneous (verbal and pictorial), physical mechanical, intra-diegetic, decisive and independent filmed graphic objects. The Ebbing Police Department signage functions as verbal, physical mechanical, intra-diegetic, secondary and independent filmed graphic object.



Complementary and accessory graphic objects

As mentioned, the filmic narrative also explores the use of graphic objects that are significant to the storytelling, however in a less decisive manner to the plot as a whole. They often function through a relation of **complementarity** to other filmic signs – mostly to speech – and serve to either **transmit additional information to the plot, evolve the action on a specific scene, or help to further symbolise a character from the movie.** Examples include Chief Willoughby's three written letters to his wife Anne, Mildred and Dixon (images 100.1-100.4), which transmit relevant information to the plot. However, the spectator obtains this information in the most part through the speech, when Chief Willoughby's voice-over reads the content of the letters, while the image shows the receiver reading it. The letters are physically shown in the scenes, however the type of camera framing and movement does not allow for the actual reading of the words it contains. This is not necessary though, as the words are heard – therefore, these elements exist in the graphic dimension through a more **symbolical** appearance, so as to visually 'prove' what is being said, and are complementary.



Images 100.1-100.4

Intra-diegetic filmed graphic objects in the form of written letters: verbal, physical manual, secondary and complementary.

Other graphic objects such as a note left by Mildred's friend, Denise, on the door of the gift shop (image 101), or even Angela Hayes' police report files, which appear in a considerable amount of scenes, serve to evolve the action in a specific sequence of events. In the first case, Mildred reads the note left on the door (the spectator reads it at the same time she does), which then leads to the next sequence, where she goes to the police department to confront Officer Dixon. In another moment, during a final scene of the movie after Mildred set fire to the police department and realizes Officer Dixon was in there, she goes out in the

street to see if he is alive, and then sees her daughter's police report on the street (image 102), realising that he saved it from the fire. The appearance of this graphic object causes a reaction in Mildred, who feels for the first time some kind of empathy to Dixon. Even though the information inside cannot be seen (also due to the fact it was partially burned by the fire), by reading her daughter's name on the cover, one knows it symbolises her files (which were already seen in previous scenes and therefore are familiar to the viewer). In these two examples, differently from the previous one, the graphic objects function as independent configurations, as they contain relevant information that only exists in the graphic dimension – giving autonomy for the viewer to read them.

It is important to remark, though, that the second example, of Angela Hayes' police report files, turns out to be more decisive in the plot as a whole, as opposed to the note in the first example, since it causes a major change in the characters' behaviours from that moment on – it is almost like a turning point in the story. However, it was not included in the decisive approach because this object is present throughout the whole narrative as a secondary configuration – it only gains a bit more relevance in this final scene and, therefore, it is mostly considered an accessory object.

Image 101

Intra-diegetic, heterogeneous, physical manual, secondary and independent graphic configuration.

Image 102

Intra-diegetic, heterogeneous, physical mechanical, decisive and independent graphic configuration (in this sequence).



The final example relates to the last function these accessory graphic objects have, of further symbolising a character. This is a common strategy in many movies which consist of representing a character's personality or trait through the use of intra-diegetic graphic objects. It was the case in the movie (500) Days of Summer, where the music references in the form of T-shirts and album covers helped to picture Tom and Summer's selves. In Three Billboards, the character of Officer Dixon is further characterised by comic book novels, namely 'Incorruptible' and 'Robot Comics'. The objective is to transmit traits such as immaturity, 'mama's boy', and even aggressiveness (which can be associated to the action-packed comic book stories he reads). He is many times portrayed in scenes reading or carrying comic books (images 103.1-103.3) or wearing T-shirts of his favourite comics (image 103.4), which are supposedly more childish activities. However, there is an interesting contradiction to the whole thing, as Dixon is a bully – and bullies are not usually the comic book nerds... Furthermore, these configurations act independently, however, they are secondary to the narrative.

Images 103.1-103.3

Officer Dixon reading or carrying the comic books, which function as heterogeneous, physical mechanical, intra-diegetic, independent and secondary configurations.

Image 103.4

Officer Dixon wearing a T-shirt from the graphic novel "Incorruptible", which he also has the comic book. The T-shirt is heterogeneous, physical mechanical, intra-diegetic, independent and secondary.



(3) Decisive approaches

The three billboards on Drinkwater Road

The final, decisive approach of *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* is precisely what gives its title name and guides the whole plot. There would be no narrative if it was not for the existence of the three abandoned billboards, which Mildred spots when she is riding past Drinkwater Road, and decides to rent and advertise during a whole year in an attempt to bring attention to her daughter's unresolved murder. They first appear as partly-wrecked down billboards, with missing parts, therefore the viewer can only acknowledge pieces of the previous advertisement placed on them (images 104.1 & 104.2). It is interesting to notice that these pieces contain subliminal messages, acting as metaphorical foreshadow of the movie's thematic focus – such as images of a baby and the word 'life'. Lillian Heyward's process of creating the abandoned billboards is described in her interview.

Under the guidance of production designer Inbal Weinberg, who oversaw all of her work on the film, Heyward painstakingly created the old billboards in Photoshop before they were actually constructed, building three layers of graphics for each one and then removing pieces to achieve Weinberg's desired effect. The end result is not just artistically stunning, but serves a story purpose as well. (Olinger, 2018, para. 14)

Images 104.1 & 104.2
Intra-diegetic, heterogeneous, physical mechanical, secondary and independent graphic configurations.



After Mildred identifies the logo of Ebbing Advertisement Company in one of the billboards and goes there to rent them, we can then see, in the next sequence, their most important form, containing a very aggressive message directed to Chief Willoughby, divided into three uppercase texts: "RAPED WHILE DYING", "AND STILL NO ARRESTS?", "HOW COME, CHIEF WILLOUGHBY?". Their layout was also created by Lillian Heyward. "I can't tell you how many versions of red and how many typefaces we did on those three billboards. We even printed out a full sized billboard for the director to look at before they went up. They're blood red. That's not an accident."

The viewer can see the billboards repeatedly throughout the filmic narrative, in different angles and framing (images 105.1-105.4), as well as in different physical conditions. It is like they have a life of their own – they are first old and abandoned, then are renovated when Mildred rents them, later are burned down due to an intentional fire (images 105.5 & 105.6), and finally get a 'new life' when she receives a set of duplicates (images 105.7 & 105.8). The content of the billboards is what unfolds the rest of the narrative, serving as the central graphic object of the story – the majority of the dialogues, actions and relationships developed use the billboards as triggers. **The entire story revolves around the three billboards, which act as protagonists.**

Images 105.1-105.4
Different frames of the three billboards, which function as verbal, physical mechanical, intra-diegetic, decisive and independent graphic configurations.

Images 105.5 & 105.6
Billboards on fire and burned down.

Images 105.7 & 105.8
The billboards get a new life as Mildred receives a set of duplicates.



(4) Final considerations

44 intentional graphic configurations were identified in this movie – 13 of them consist of the three billboards, which appear throughout the narrative in different physical conditions. They constitute approximately 30% of the movie's graphic language, which in turn is almost completely composed of **intra-diegetic graphic objects** (94%). The only exceptions are the opening and final credits, which are totally extra-diegetic verbal elements presented in a very short and straightforward manner: white text on solid black background, with a simple fade in/fade out transition (virtual dynamic formal nature). Clearly from this overview, it can be inferred that the credits are not supposed to draw the viewer's attention for too long or break with the movie's visual flow, and therefore, the focus is on the cinematographic image entirely – a characteristic of **realist** movies, which use little to no extra-diegetic elements and are strengthened by compelling dialogues. Deciding whether the movie will be more realist or formalist is responsibility of the Trinity, and one of the fundamental steps in reaching a conclusion is understanding the **target audience** of the feature film, in much through its **genre**. *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* can be acknowledged as an impactful **drama**, which deals with serious issues such as rape, murder and revenge, as well as explores the toxic power of rage – personified in the two main characters, Mildred and Dixon. The severe dark and down-to-earth approach that the drama movie undertakes is also expressed in its visual project, which effectively brings a faithful, lifelike representation of reality. In this way, it would make sense not to present intricate, extra-diegetic expository graphics and intertitles in its narrative, as they might overshadow the movie's cinematographic reality and actors' performances, and abruptly distance the viewer.

With this in mind, the chosen graphic strategy needs to coexist with the ‘corporeal reality’ of the film through a seamless, almost ‘invisible’ manner – which explains the use of overly simplified opening and final titles, and calls for the use of graphic configurations as intra-diegetic physical objects. These will be naturally inserted into the movie’s cinematic world, not interrupting or distancing the viewer from the plot. **The flexibility of the graphic language, therefore, allows for choices that will convey very distinct messages depending on their formal nature.** In this case, it is evident that the movie’s major graphic strategy is exploring **design as visual communication, through signage, print and logos, inserted into the movie’s universe.** In a comparison to the previously mentioned movie *They Live* (1988), which also uses signage and print significantly in its narrative, design as visual communication serves as criticism to the capitalist society, as well as the criticism itself. In *Three Billboards*, it serves as a measure taken to capture people’s attention and keep the criminal case on the public eye. Both movies’ graphic strategies reinforce the importance and power that graphic design can acquire as part of a city’s visual communication, applied to a filmic narrative as a reflection of society. Furthermore, both movies explore the **content or message** conveyed by the graphic objects, which is presented essentially through the use of **verbal elements** – or as Metz once mentioned in defining a film’s language, its written material. Therefore, the **power of the verbal language in conveying meaningful messages in movies** needs to be recognised – in these cases, in the form of graphic objects.

Moreover, three different levels of narrative significance are present in the graphic objects of the movie: they act as secondary, decisive or **protagonist** elements. The system of classification previously presented only shows the first two options, however, in this movie, one group of graphic objects is so decisive it becomes the protagonist of the story. The three billboards make use of the verbal language, through “simple, starkly contrasting black words against a red backdrop, spurred by the rage of a grieving mother” (Olinger, 2018), as the entire narrative unfolds and revolves around them – without the billboards, there would be no movie. Alongside this protagonist graphic object, other graphic objects exist as secondary or less decisive elements – which is the case of Ebbing’s signage (secondary), Willoughby’s letters (secondary), Dixon’s comic books (secondary), Denise’s note (secondary to the plot however decisive in that sequence), and Angela Hayes’ police report files (mostly secondary, however becomes decisive in the final scene). **Depending on the sequence, the graphic objects might acquire more secondary or decisive relevance.**

Finally, the repercussions of the movie’s three billboards were so impactful, that the verbal language and graphic style can be seen reproduced in several existing protests, such as the March for our Lives gun safety rallies across the United States and world around, among many others (image 106.1 & 106.2). Martin McDonagh also mentioned, in a few interviews, how the story was inspired by a real life moment, in 1998, when he passed through a couple of accusatory billboards about an unsolved crime, while travelling in Southern United States.

Image 106.1 & 106.2
Two different protests which used the graphic style and text of the movie as reference: the first, March for Our Lives demonstrators in San Diego – March 24, 2018. The second, in response to the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting that took place on February 14, 2018, in Parkland, Florida, activist group Avaaz had three vans circle Florida senator Marco Rubio’s offices displaying ‘Slaughtered in School’, ‘And Still No Gun Control?’, ‘How Come, Marco Rubio?’

Credits: WikiCommons



The significant graphic strategies one can take from this movie’s analysis are:

- (1) Identification of the movie’s target audience and genre so as to aid in choosing the type of graphic configurations portrayed.**
- (2) Use of design as visual communication (in the form of intra-diegetic graphic objects) to unfold the narrative as protagonists of the story, or as less decisive and secondary elements, with the intention of evolving the action in specific sequences, bringing in additional content to the plot, or further symbolizing a character’s personal traits.**



Case Study #3

The Great Gatsby (remake)



Image 107
Movie's official poster.

Credits: IMDb.

Year of release: 2013

Distributor: Warner Bros. Pictures

Budget: \$105 million

Box office: \$353.6 million

Director: Baz Luhrmann

Director of photography: Simon Duggan

Production designer: Catherine Martin

Art directors: Damien Drew and Michael Turner

Graphic designer and artist: Michael Wholley and Craig Mandile

Genre: Period drama, romance

An adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's Long Island-set novel, where Midwesterner Nick Carraway is lured into the lavish world of his neighbour, Jay Gatsby. Soon enough, however, Carraway will see through the cracks of Gatsby's nouveau riche existence, where obsession, madness and tragedy await.

The following frames were all taken from The Great Gatsby (2013).

Graphic analysis

(1) Cinematic world

The movie is narrated from the perspective of Nick Carraway's memoirs, while he is at Perkins Sanitarium (image 108), years after the events occurred – events which are set in 1920's roaring New York (image 109), characterized by the boom of Wall Street, the "American dream" and the newly rich, lavish high society. The story constantly explores the contrast between the wealthy and the poor, symbolized accordingly by Long Island's fictitious East and West Egg on one end, and New York's Valley of Ashes on the other. In Long Island, the main sets consist of Jay Gatsby's castle with his extravagant parties (image 110), Tom and Daisy Buchanan's mansion (image 111), as well as Nick Carraway's humble cottage house (image 112), positioned right next to Gatsby's. In contrast, in the Valley of Ashes (image 113) – described as a grotesque place on the way to New York city – Wilson's Garage serves as the main site (image 114), and Michaelis' Restaurant façade (image 115) as part of the set composition.

The story revolves around the relationship between Daisy Buchanan and Jay Gatsby, whose love story had to be interrupted when Gatsby was recruited to war and led an impatient Daisy to marry millionaire womanizer Tom Buchanan instead. Nick Carraway is the innocent cousin who is caught up in the middle of all the drama.

Image 108

The Perkins Sanitarium, where Nick Carraway is admitted.



Image 109

Vibrant New York city in the 1920's.



Image 110

Jay Gatsby's castle, host to many extravagant parties.

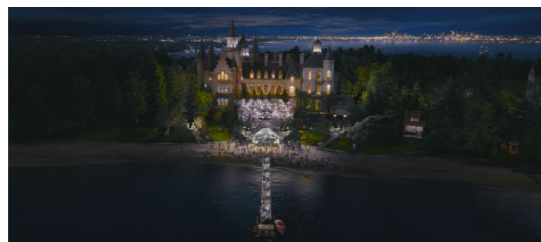


Image 111

Tom and Daisy Buchanan's mansion.

Image 112

Nick Carraway's humble cottage.

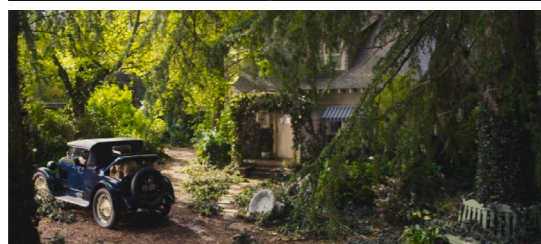


Image 113

The Valley of Ashes, a grotesque place between Long Island and New York City.

Image 114

Wilson's Garage in the Valley of Ashes.



Image 115

Michaelis Restaurant in the Valley of Ashes.

[35] <http://www.likemindedstudio.com/>.

Image 116.1

Vibrant neon signage portraying the roaring 1920's in New York City. The Arrow Collars ads were existing ads produced between 1905 and 1931 in New York and became famous at that time for portraying various male models wearing detachable shirt collars. The presence of the Arrow Collar ad in this scene helps set the time period of the movie. Besides, the neon signs were very popular in America from the 1920's to 1960's, especially the installations in the Times Square.



Image 116.2

Clock in the style of the Art Deco aesthetics, part of the set design in Nick's cottage house.



(2) Secondary approaches

Neon signage and Art Deco aesthetics to set the time period

As in most movies, the graphic language is commonly depicted through set signage and logos, which help to create believable filmic universes. It is no different in The Great Gatsby, especially since it is a period drama, and therefore needs to convey the aesthetics and ambience of the roaring 1920's. The movie received considerable criticism in this matter, as it intends on updating the narrative to our contemporary society by presenting a great deal of 3D and CGI special effects, as well as soundtrack from the twenty-first century (songs from Jay-Z, Beyoncé and Lana Del Rey are part of the film's score). Certainly, these elements distance the movie from its cinematic world of the 1920's, however, there are graphic configurations in the form of vibrant **neon signage and advertisement** that help situate the viewer to its historical context – through a very strong production design, which also includes costumes, hair and make-up, props, among other elements. In an interview given by Catherine Martin – production and costume designer – she says one of Baz Luhrmann's main design directives was he did not want a nostalgic, sepia-toned New York of the 1920's; instead, he wanted it to feel as vibrant, modern and cutting-edge as it would have felt to Fitzgerald at the time. (Yang, 2013) Another interesting fact is that the movie was entirely filmed in Sydney, Australia, and thus the sets were built from scratch so as to depict New York, allowing for a considerable freedom in their creations, but always respecting historical accuracy.

The Art Deco aesthetic is also strongly portrayed in the movie's set design (image 154), as well as in the graphics of the opening and final credits – with geometric shapes, lavish ornamentation and industrial aspects, which help set the time period. The opening and final titles, which was partly created by Sydney-based studio Like Minded, is referred to as the movie's **branding**, in the studio's website [35]. The studio created the title name's lettering (image 117.1 & 117.2), as well as a typeface, based on Art Deco alphabet designs by K. H. Schaefer, called Deco Pinstripe (image 117.4). The final titles and logo were further rendered in 3D by Deva Studio to create the signature Gatsby style (image 117.3).

Image 117.1 & 117.2

Process of creating the logo for The Great Gatsby, by Sydney-based studio Like Minded.



Image 117.3

Final titles with The Great Gatsby logo, rendered in 3D.

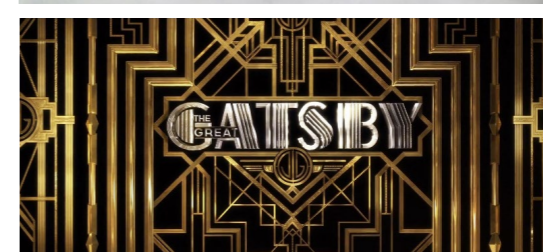


Image 117.4

Typeface Deco Pinstripe created by Like Minded studio.

Literary expository graphics

Although portrayed differently than from Scott Fitzgerald's original novel, the 2013 movie is narrated by a hospitalised Nick Carraway, who suffers from alcoholism, insomnia, anger, anxiety and depression. His psychiatrist suggests he writes about the events which led him to these conditions, as he has always been an aspiring writer. Thus, the narrative unfolds as Nick recounts and writes his memories. He first starts handwriting them in a notebook, and later on shifts to a typewriter. As a secondary approach, the movie portrays configurations in the form of expository graphics, which frequently appear when Nick is writing or typing his memories, either in the sanatorium and/or through voice-over narration. These extra-diegetic, verbal, virtual dynamic graphics consist of the appearance of the exact same words he is narrating, only in the form of handwriting (calligraphy) or through typed letters (monospaced font, commonly used for typewriters), superimposed over the cinematographic image (images 118.1-118.4). They are **redundant** graphic configurations, as they do not include any new information in relation to the auditory channel. Being redundant, it is true that they are not necessary for the understanding of the scene, and even for the plot as a whole, however, they cannot be considered superfluous, as they do bring more dynamism, stylisation, and even lyricism to the scenes, effectively characterising the movie's visual project. The graphics appear throughout the whole narrative, and their repeated presentation emphasize the **literary** aspect of the movie, which is considered an extremely faithful adaptation of Fitzgerald's novel – a classic masterpiece of the American literature. As Jon Reiner mentions in his review of the movie:

The fabled lines fly from his Underwood typewriter's keys as graphics across the movie screen, a consummation between the book and the film. It's a gimmick, and this isn't the first movie to use it, but the invention honours the fact that there is a great novel at the heart of this hard-working but uneven film. (Reiner, 2017, para. 9)

Nick Carraway also serves as a stand-in to Fitzgerald. In the movie's end, when Nick finishes typing the manuscript of a novel entitled The Great Gatsby (images 118.5 & 118.6), his transformation to Fitzgerald is complete. (Reiner, 2017)



Images 118.1-118.4
Verbal, virtual dynamic, extra-diegetic, secondary and redundant expository graphics.

Images 118.5 & 118.6
Final manuscript of the novel and title with the handwritten addition of "The Great", both as an intra-diegetic filmed graphic objects.

[36] See p. 67 for frames of Citizen Kane's newspapers as physical objects.

The use of the newspaper in the style of Citizen Kane

The Great Gatsby and Citizen Kane are both classic stories about the economic upheaval and decadence of mysterious magnates, while pursuing the so-called 'American dream'. Jay Gatsby and Charles Foster Kane do have a lot in common, and perhaps that is why the 2013 movie presents a similar storytelling strategy to the 1941 American masterpiece, directed by Orson Welles. The use of a filmed graphic object – specifically the newspaper – as a significant element in evolving the narrative, serving as substitute to potential scenes, is an approach often used by Welles in his movie. In big part, this is due to the fact that Kane owns a newspaper, the New York Inquirer, and builds his millionaire empire from it. The movie was said to be avant-garde to its time, as it explores unconventional narrative structures. The use of the newspaper as significant graphic language, thus, is also part of this unusual storytelling, as it permeates the whole narrative: the movie starts with a fictitious 'newsreel' footage of Kane's life, besides showing, throughout the movie, a series of newspaper headlines [36] – be them physical objects or expository graphics – that point out major milestones in his life, especially when related to speculative press buzz. This same strategy has been recreated in The Great Gatsby, as a secondary graphic approach, with the intention of recounting Gatsby's eventful ascension and unfortunate death, highlighted by the press' reaction to major happenings in his life – which are told to the audience, as opposed to literally shown. The newspaper's graphic style and layout is explored in distinct ways, either as virtual dynamic intra-diegetic configurations (images 119.1 & 119.2), that are part of the film's diegetic universe – or as extra-diegetic expository graphics, which show exclusively the headlines as animated verbal and schematic elements, superimposed over the cinematographic image (images 120.1-120.4). Furthermore, the intra-diegetic newspapers, although inserted inside the scenes, are in a virtual form, as they appear through dynamic animation (images 119.3 & 119.4).

The extra-diegetic versions do break with the reality of the cinematographic image, however, it is not an issue in this film since many of the moving images consist of virtual 3D compositions and have a more unrealistic feel to them. Besides, there are also other uses of extra-diegetic graphic elements, such as the previously mentioned literary ones, which lay the grounds for the movie's graphic formula. Furthermore, these intra and extra-diegetic newspaper graphics act as **complementary** configurations, conveying additional information to what is being told by the narrator.

The use of the newspaper as a technique in filmic narratives may have become overused (or even overrated) in today's filmmaking business, however, in the case of The Great Gatsby, it serves as a very pertinent and effective allusion to its preceding American cinema masterpiece.

Images 119.1-119.4
Newspapers as heterogeneous, virtual dynamic, intra-diegetic, secondary and complementary graphic configurations. Due to the animated appearance of these newspapers, shown in the last two frames, they can be identified as virtual dynamic configurations. However, they are still intra-diegetic as they are the main elements in the scene – there is no other cinematographic image to look at, they are the cinematographic image per se. This phenomenon will most likely occur in movies that have a strong use of special effects and thus show a virtually-constructed cinematographic image. It becomes a bigger challenge to distinctively categorise each configuration...



Images 120.1-120.4
Newspaper headlines – heterogeneous (in the first two frames) and verbal (in the last two), virtual dynamic, extra-diegetic, superimposed over the scene, secondary and independent.



(3) Decisive approaches

Doctor T. J. Eckleburg eyes billboard

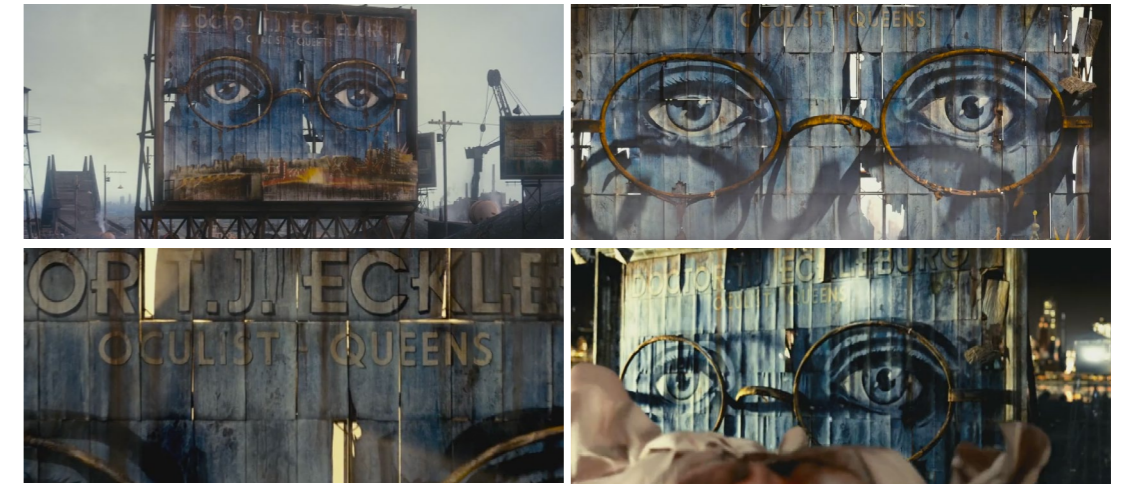
Once again, a billboard plays a decisive role in a movie. In *The Great Gatsby*, the billboard might not be the protagonist as in *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, but it is definitely a character, and a very meaningful one. Located in the Valley of Ashes – “New York’s dumping ground halfway between West Egg and the city” – lies an old and abandoned billboard displaying an illustration of blue eyes with yellow spectacles, without a face. The viewer can hardly read the billboard’s text (“Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, Oculist – Queens”), as it is nearly torn apart and the print is fading away. They are not meant to be read, though, as the pictorial elements speak louder than the words. When the spectator first visualises the billboard, Nick’s words resonate in the background: “This fantastic farm was ever watched by Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, a forgotten oculist whose eyes brooded over it all, like the eyes of God.” The personification of the billboard’s judgemental eyes into a divine-like character of the movie is very symbolic throughout the narrative, as it is constantly aware of all the drama, lies, cheating, corruption and even tragedy portrayed in the movie. The eyes serve as a displeasing reminder of the lack of morality and ethics present among the empty, superficial high society. Furthermore, Eckleburg’s eyes can be compared to Nick Carraway’s character himself, as he also watches and guards everyone’s secrets, however powerless in their outcome, which is what ends up driving him crazy.

The billboard appears in a considerate amount of scenes, through different camera angles and framing, including the heartbreaking scene of Myrtle’s (Tom’s mistress) death (image 121.4), where, through image manipulation, her corpse appears floating in front of “God’s eyes”. It is not by chance that the gigantic blue eyes are also part of the movie’s official poster, displayed in the background, as if watching them all. Moreover, in the first time the audience sees the billboard, it functions in a relation of complementarity to Nick’s narration. However, in the following scenes, it acts as an independent graphic configuration, as it speaks for itself, acting as both an independent and complementary configuration, depending on the scene. Additionally, it is decisive as it is considered a meaningful character in the movie, starring or supporting many scenes.

Jay Gatsby as a brand

Finally, the last and most important decisive approach in the movie refers to the graphic representation of Jay Gatsby’s enigmatic main character. He is Nick Carraway’s mysterious neighbour who throws the most extravagant parties, where all of New York shows up uninvited. There are rumours and speculations about his past and how he acquired such a fortune, however no one seems to have met him. The only connection Nick has to Gatsby

Images 121.1-121.4
The billboard as a heterogeneous, physical mechanical, intra-diegetic, decisive and independent graphic configuration. Even though the billboard might be created through image manipulation and compositing, it’s ultimate objective is to be inserted inside the scene as an intra-diegetic object, as part of the cinematographic image.



[37] A monogram is a motif made by overlapping or combining two or more letters to form one symbol. Monograms are often made by combining the initials of an individual or a company, used as recognisable logos.

is through an unprecedented invitation he receives to Gatsby’s party, which contains his handwriting, together with a graphic symbol – a coat of arms – and the words “J. Gatsby” printed underneath (images 122.1 & 122.2). This coat of arms contains Jay Gatsby’s monogram [37] logo (although we can only see a small part of it from the frame), which is present throughout the entire filmic narrative, including the opening and final titles, functioning in much as an **extension of Jay Gatsby’s character**. We first see JG’s logo in the opening titles (image 122.3), which introduces the graphic symbol to the spectator, using the Art Deco aesthetics. Its repeated appearances throughout the movie, as expository graphics (image 122.4), or as filmed graphic objects (images 122.5-122.10), help to reinforce Gatsby’s ubiquitous image of power and wealth – which the viewer later finds out was all for Daisy’s love. It is interesting to notice though, that as the story reaches its tragic ending, the attentive spectator can detect JG’s logo in the abandoned house and backyard floors, covered by dirt and dust (frames 122.9 & 122.10) – which pertinently serve as a metaphor to Gatsby’s death and the fall of his empire.

Images 122.1 & 122.2 (top)
Filmed graphic object of a letter containing Gatsby’s handwriting and coat of arms – heterogeneous, physical mechanical and manual, intra-diegetic, decisive and complementary.

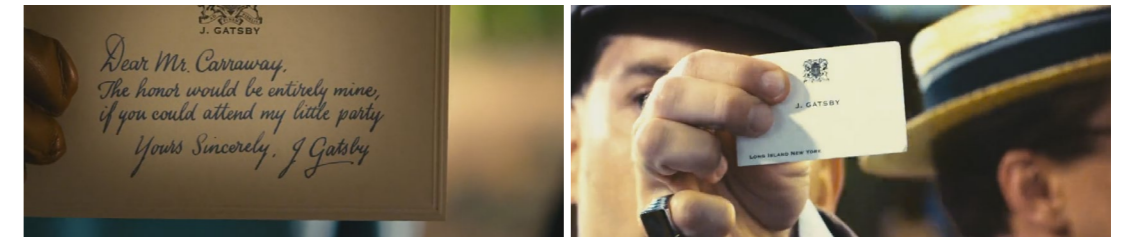


Image 122.3 (mid-left)
Totally extra-diegetic opening titles showing JG’s logo in Art Deco aesthetics.

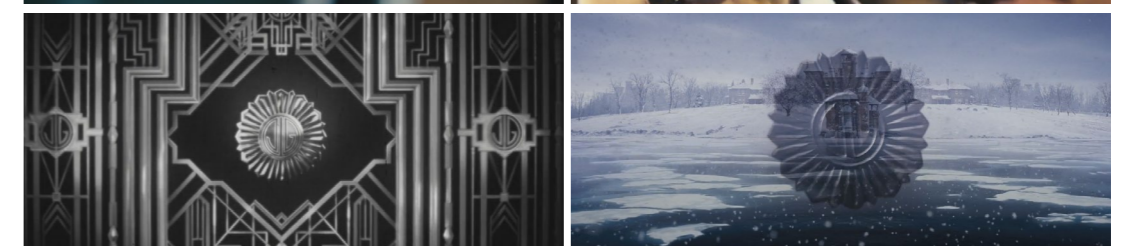
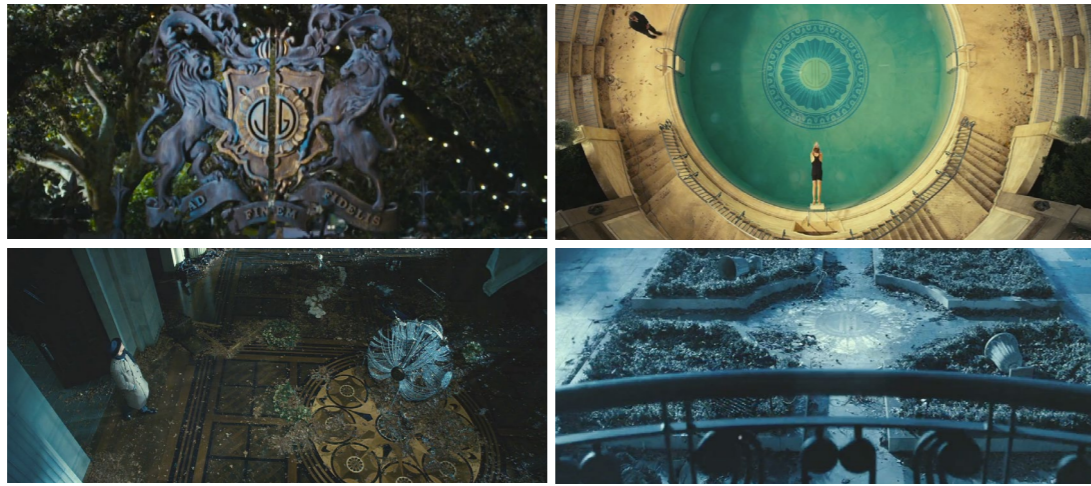


Image 122.4 (mid-right)
JG’s logo as a heterogeneous, virtual dynamic, extra-diegetic, decisive and independent expository graphic.



Images 122.5 & 122.6 (bottom)
JG’s logo applied to the house’s main hall floor.

Images 122.7-122.10
JG's logo applied to different physical representations – the house's and backyard's floor, opening gates, swimming pool tiles. They are all heterogeneous, physical mechanical, intra-diegetic, decisive and independent configurations.



As the final titles emerge, JG's logo is once more portrayed, in the exact same style as the opening titles. Shortly after, the three-dimensional metallic logo is reduced into its outline, through a simple, white stroke (image 123.1). The simplification of the logo into vector lines occurs as an anticipation of the subsequent final credits, which will unroll through simple, two-dimensional white text – in this way, both languages connect. JG's logo is even adapted into other initials, such as CM (for Catherine Martin, the production and costume designer), signalling the beginning of the art department credit section (image 123.2).

Images 123.1 & 123.2
Final titles containing JG's logo and a further adaptation to Catherine Martin's, the production and costume designer, initials.



The creation of Jay Gatsby's monogram logo is part of the movie's diegetic visual identity, and further on, consists of **character branding** – it characterises Gatsby in the graphic dimension and follows his life journey up until the end. Gatsby's physical appearance (distinctively played by Leonardo di Caprio) is only shown half an hour into the movie; before that, the only visual image the characters and spectators have of Gatsby is of his 'brand' – personified through his letters and monogram logo. This graphic strategy helps to spark the imagination of the viewer, in much as if he or she was reading the book. Even after Gatsby's person is acknowledged, his graphic representation is already anchored in the audience's minds, building up value and credibility to his character. The logo is also part of the movie's extra-diegetic visual identity, as it is portrayed in the opening and final titles, adapted to the needs of the credits, as well as present in other merchandising artwork.

Even though this decisive approach might appear less obvious than the other decisive approaches presented in the case studies, it is still considered utterly significant to the movie's graphic strategy. The fact that it is present throughout the entire narrative, fixing its visual meaning to the audience, makes it distinguishable as the main graphic pictorial symbol of the movie. Just like the city skyline sketches from (500) Days of Summer can be seen as the movie's 'logo', JG's monogram can efficiently represent The Great Gatsby's movie.

(4) Final considerations

In total, 46 intentional graphic configurations were identified in the movie. The two main decisive approaches – JG's logo and Dr. Eckleburg's billboard – constitute 16 of the 46 configurations, or 35%. Their repeated appearances throughout the narrative reinforce their significance to the critical interpretation of the movie's symbolisms. They are both approaches which explore **graphic representations of characters**, as an extension of their personalities. In the first case, a human character acquires a graphic dimension, in the second, a graphic object is personified as a divine-like character. These graphic explorations help to anchor the visual metaphors of the movie and to build The Great Gatsby's branding – which should be further applied to other merchandising products, as seen in the official poster. A great example of the movie's branding application is of the clothing store Brooks Brothers, who developed an entire collection inspired by Baz Luhrmann's film, in collaboration with Catherine Martin (image 124). In the present application, JG's original logo is adapted into Brook Brothers' initials, which gives a special touch to the project.



Additionally, the period movie efficiently explores the Art Deco style and aesthetics of the 1920's, both in the set composition as in the graphics of the opening and final titles, in order to help **set the time period**. Together with the popular neon signage and advertisements present in the United States in the 1920's, these secondary graphic approaches assist in creating believable cinematic worlds. Alongside, the allusion to Citizen Kane's newspaper storytelling method is also effectively recreated in the movie, however acquiring a more contemporary look and feel to it, through the use of virtual dynamic intra and extra-diegetic elements.

Images 124
Collection developed by Brooks Brothers in collaboration with Catherine Martin, inspired the The Great Gatsby. In the four corners, we can notice the BB's initials in the style of Jay Gatsby's monogram logo. (Credit: Like Minded Studio official website)

It is worth mentioning that the movie received strong criticism for its excessive use of special effects in 3D, CGI set compositions. Many film critics judged director Baz Luhrmann for prioritizing 'style over substance', which might have overshadowed the actors' performances and emotional outcomes. However, Baz Luhrmann is well known for his energetic and vivid visual stylisations, as can be seen in his previous movies Moulin Rouge (2001) and Romeo + Juliet (1996), and is considered by many a visionary director. Even though it might not be of everyone's taste, there is purpose behind his work in The Great Gatsby, as he intended to bring a contemporary view to the novel – almost as if Fitzgerald was writing it today. Besides, the story does deal with the excessive, lavish and empty lifestyle of the newly rich. The movie's extreme visuality, thus, can be interpreted as a metaphor to the extravagant high society of the roaring 1920's – which seem unrealistic and fake.

When deciding a movie's graphic strategy, it is of utter importance to consider the **director's style and vision** in order to consistently combine both languages. In The Great Gatsby, the many extra-diegetic graphic configurations, as well as the physical and computer-generated intra-diegetic objects assist in building Luhrmann's fantastical and overly stylised cinematic world. The movie had an exceedingly budget of \$105 million, typical of Hollywood's commercial and mainstream blockbusters, which probably justifies the exorbitant use of special effects in creating virtual 3D sets and imageries with very rich production design – reinforcing the movie's diegetic universe of the wealthy lifestyle. All of these aspects bring a dream-like flow to the movie, almost as if it were a fairy tale. By defining these attributes as part of the movie's visual project, and further identifying the target audience (they did seek to appeal to younger audiences, hence the twenty-first

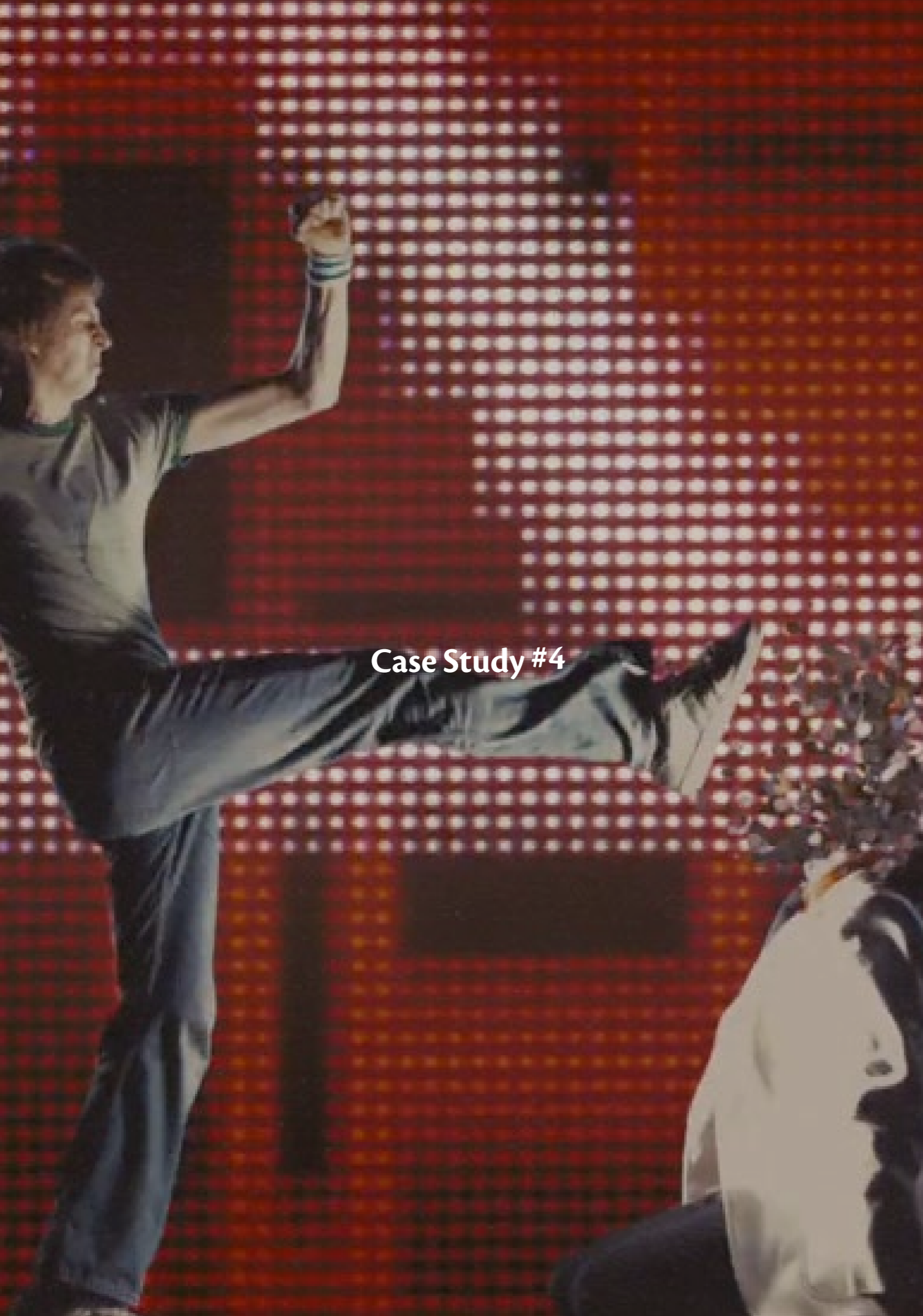
century Jay-Z music), the graphic strategy needs to incorporate the same characteristics. Therefore, setting aside personal opinions of the movie, the graphic approaches function consistently in conveying the director's identity, as part of a holistic audiovisual project.

With this in mind, the movie is positioned in the far right end of the filmmaking spectrum, considered extremely **formalist**, for all of the reasons mentioned above – thus distancing it from a realistic cinematographic approach. The Great Gatsby's visual project is the exact opposite of Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri, even though the two belong the drama genre. By acknowledging this fact, it becomes clear that the graphic language can adapt to fairly any circumstance, serving as a significant element in building narratives for contrasting types of cinema.

Portraying a big screen adaptation of Fitzgerald's profound and eloquent literary novel is definitely a challenge, and many have failed to do so in the past (the four previous remakes flopped, including the 1974 version with Robert Redford and Mia Farrow). Knowing this, Baz Luhrmann tried to bring in an altogether fresh outlook to the movie, by adding a thick layer of exaggerated stylisation and a contemporary look and feel to it – which many criticise as being unrealistic. However, his boldness in presenting such a controversial solution has to be recognised – whether one personally likes the movie or not, The Great Gatsby should be seen for its visual project.

The significant graphic strategies one can take from this movie's analysis are:

- (1) Creation of brands as an extension of characters, through a graphic representation.**
- (2) Use of signage and historical aesthetics to create believable cinematic worlds and set the time period.**
- (3) Combination of the director's style and vision to the movie's graphic strategy.**



Case Study #4

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World

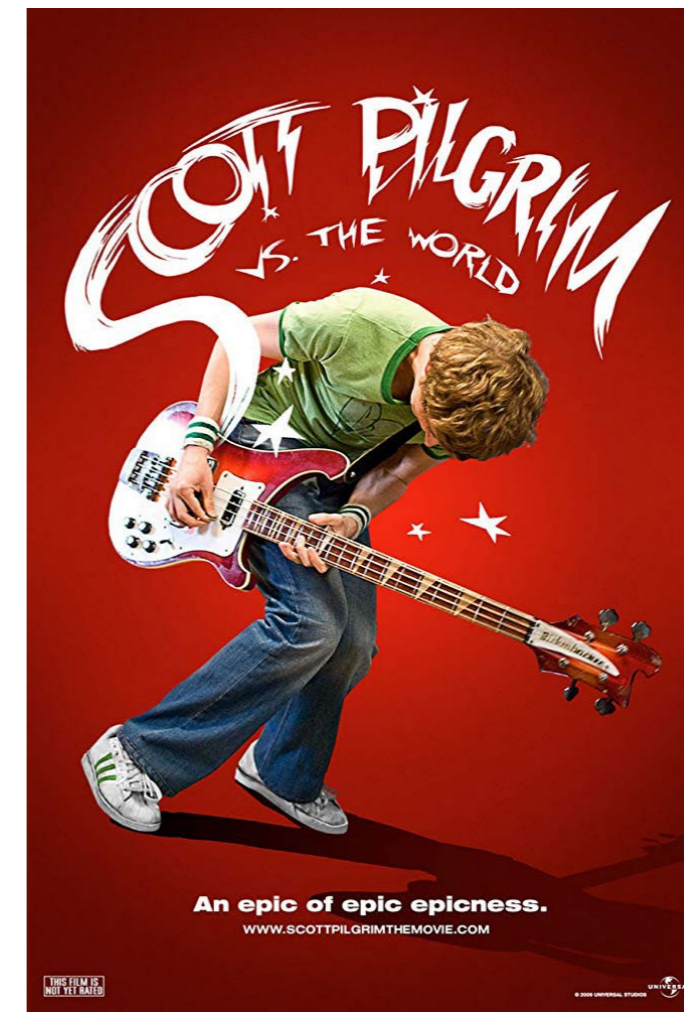


Image 125
Movie's official poster.
Credits: IMDb.

Year of release: 2010
Distributor: Universal Pictures
Budget: \$85-90 million
Box office: \$47.7 million

Director: Edgar Wright
Director of photography: Bill Pope
Production designer: Marcus Rowland
Art director: Nigel Churcher
Graphic designers: David Best and Lucy Newman

Genre: Action, comedy

Scott Pilgrim is a 22-year-old Canadian gamer and wannabe rock star who falls in love with an American delivery girl, Ramona Flowers, and must defeat her seven evil exes to be able to date her.

The following frames were all taken from Scott Pilgrim vs. the World (2010).

Image 126
Scott Pilgrim's band, Sex Bob-omb rehearsing at home. We can observe lightning bolts as virtual dynamic pictorial expository graphics, aiding in portraying the movie's musical cinematic world.

Image 127
Scott and Knives playing videogames at the arcade – more specifically, the “Ninja Ninja Revolution” dance game. The videogame's designed interface will play a major part in the movie's graphic language.

Graphic analysis

(1) Cinematic world

The story is set in freezing cold Toronto, Canada, probably in a near past (around 2000's), before smart phones and laptops existed. The cinematic world revolves around Scott Pilgrim's geeky hobbies, which include being a bassist in the band Sex Bob-omb (image 126) – they participate in the Toronto International Battle of the Bands – and playing videogames with his friends and 17-year-old high school girlfriend, Knives Chau (image 127). The references to music and videogame are part of the movie's diegetic world and portrayed in much through the graphic language. Moreover, the filmic narrative is based on the original six-volume graphic novel created by Bryan Lee O'Malley, also entitled Scott Pilgrim. The comic book aesthetics is therefore a major influence in the movie's visual project, however as part of the extra-diegetic world.



Images 128.1-128.4
Verbal, virtual dynamic, extra-diegetic, secondary and complementary expository graphics and intertitles.

Images 128.5 & 128.6
The same graphic configurations also functioning as dynamic intertitles.



(2) Secondary approaches

Sound and graphics as complementary filmic signs

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World presents a very consistent and holistic visual project, where every graphic choice is purposeful and part of a broader visual unity. As mentioned, the extra-diegetic source material of the **comic book** serves as major inspiration to develop the movie's visual identity – therefore, significant choices in the use of the graphic language derive from their use in the comic book print medium. The concept of **synesthesia** [38] is fully explored in graphic novels, in an attempt to connect different sensory channels – mainly vision and hearing – so as to bring more expression and meaning to the images. It is the case of the **onomatopoeias**, such as “ding dong” and “ring” – which are words that imitate the natural sound associated with an action or object. The onomatopoeias are considered a **figure of speech** [39], and are commonly used in comic books to visually express a specific type of sound, inciting **sensory** and **synesthetic** features. These words “augment the emotions felt by the characters and depict the intensity of the character's state or the situation in general” Usually, they appear “beside the character or floating within the scenery. They have a more distinct graphic design, emitting another sphere or layer of expression”. (Busch, 2017) As an analogy to the increasingly digital society, it can be said that onomatopoeias characterise comic book language just as emojis (emoticons) characterise social media language – they are part of the medium-specific vocabulary. Thus, throughout the whole movie, onomatopoeias appear in the form of verbal, virtual dynamic, extra-diegetic expository graphics, superimposed over the cinematographic image – always combined with their sound effect in order to transmit its synesthetic feature. Therefore, they always function in a relation of **complementarity** to the moving images and auditory components, since they exist as a direct consequence of the established action. Besides, they also function as dynamic expository intertitles (images 126.5 & 126.6), which serve as **transition hooks** leading to a new sequence. These expository graphics and intertitles conveying onomatopoeias help to reinforce the movie's extra-diegetic source material, which serve as basis for developing much of the visual style of the motion picture. They are **secondary** to the plot as they do not contain new information nor is their content significantly decisive in the unfolding of the narrative.

[38] In literature, synesthesia refers to a technique adopted by writers to present ideas, characters, or places in such a manner that they appeal to more than one sense, like hearing, sight, smell, and touch at a given time. The term comes from the neuropsychological phenomenon in which a person perceives a sensory stimulus through another sense, such as seeing colors when hearing music or sensing the personalities of numbers, days, months, etc. (Literary Devices)

[39] Figure of speech is a word or phrase used in a non-literal sense for rhetorical or vivid effect (Oxford Dictionary).

Furthermore, another synesthetic feature seen in the movie relates to one of its major intra-diegetic thematic focuses: the music universe. Scott Pilgrim is part of a rock band with his friends, called Sex Bob-omb. In order to visually depict this atmosphere of increased beats, verbal and pictorial dynamic expository graphics emerge (images 129.1-129.4), usually during band performances so as to emphasise the beats' markings and thus dictating an accelerated and almost hyperactive rhythm to the story. These graphic configurations are extra-diegetic, secondary and complementary. It is interesting to notice how one of the pictorial graphics – the lightning bolt (image 129.3) – is portrayed graphically as part of the movie's main title lettering style (image 129.4), characterising it as a major pictorial symbol in the movie.

Images 129.1-129.4
Synesthetic expository graphics in the opening scenes of the movie.



Additionally, this secondary approach is also depicted in the movie's **opening titles**, which consist of a ‘small movie inside a movie’, anticipating and setting the mood of the motion picture. The graphics present colourful conceptual/abstract elements, which explore different textures and are animated following the music's **upbeat rhythm**. Therefore, they are extremely **synesthetic**, intrinsically connecting the graphic and auditory dimensions of the movie, and anticipating this aspect of the movie's ‘formula’ (images 130.1-130.4).

Images 130.1-130.4
Opening titles as a totally extra-diegetic motion graphics sequence, transporting the viewer into the movie's cinematic world of upbeat rhythm and synesthetic features.



[40] Tone of voice is a term commonly used in the marketing field area, to describe "how the character of your business comes through in your words, both written and spoken. It's not about what you say, but rather the way that you say it, and the impression it makes on everyone who reads or hears you." (Acrolinx) As previously mentioned in this investigation, a film can be compared to a brand, and thus the "tone of voice" of a movie is referred to in the same way as if it were for a brand.

Graphic language to set the tone of voice

Another particularly interesting secondary approach of the movie consists of the use of graphic language to convey the film's **witty tone of voice** [40]. In much through **irony** and **sarcasm**, expository graphics and intertitles bring additional information which, although not usually decisive, deliver a strong sense of humour to the story. By exploring the combination of verbal, pictorial and schematic elements, these graphic configurations serve as 'loopholes' where the movie speaks directly to the viewer – while the characters remain unaware of them. They are most often **independent** configurations, as they bring additional information that exist solely in the graphic dimension. However, they are also presented as **complementary** configurations, whenever the narrator (which is the voice of the videogame) speaks as well. In summary, they effectively aid in building the tone of voice of the movie through explicit messages to the audience. They also pertinently belong to the cinematic world as a manifestation of the movie's **comedy genre**. The funny introduction of characters (images 131.1 & 131.2), unconventional expository intertitles (images 131.3 & 131.4), and witty comments and drawings (images 131.5-131.8), contain a lot of the movie's personality, which is clearly not neutral and impersonal, and help establish its visual identity.



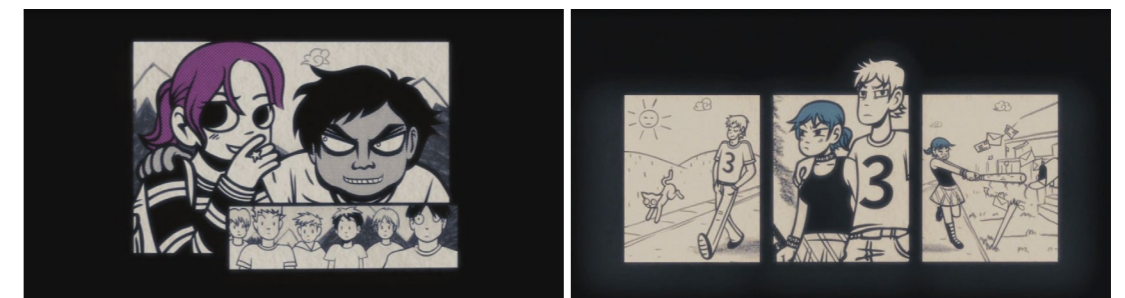
Images 131.1-131.4
Expository graphics and intertitles, as extra-diegetic, heterogeneous, virtual dynamic, secondary and independent configurations.

Images 131.5-131.8
Expository graphics and intertitles, as extra-diegetic, heterogeneous, virtual dynamic, secondary and independent configurations (with the exception of image 131.6, which is complementary, as a narrator also speaks at the same time)



Animation sequences

The last secondary graphic approach consists of 100% animated sequences that are inserted in between scenes, immediately breaking with the live-action cinematographic image. The animated sequences clearly refer to the comic book aesthetics, and appear when Ramona Flowers describes how she has met a specific evil ex. They exist as complementary graphic configurations, since Ramona's overt narration accompanies the graphic images. They are not decisive at all to the plot, in fact they are extremely secondary, and not even presented for all of the seven exes (only two get their own animated sequence) – which might raise the question of whether they are really useful in conveying the movie's visual style. However, they are coherent to the overall comic book aesthetics.



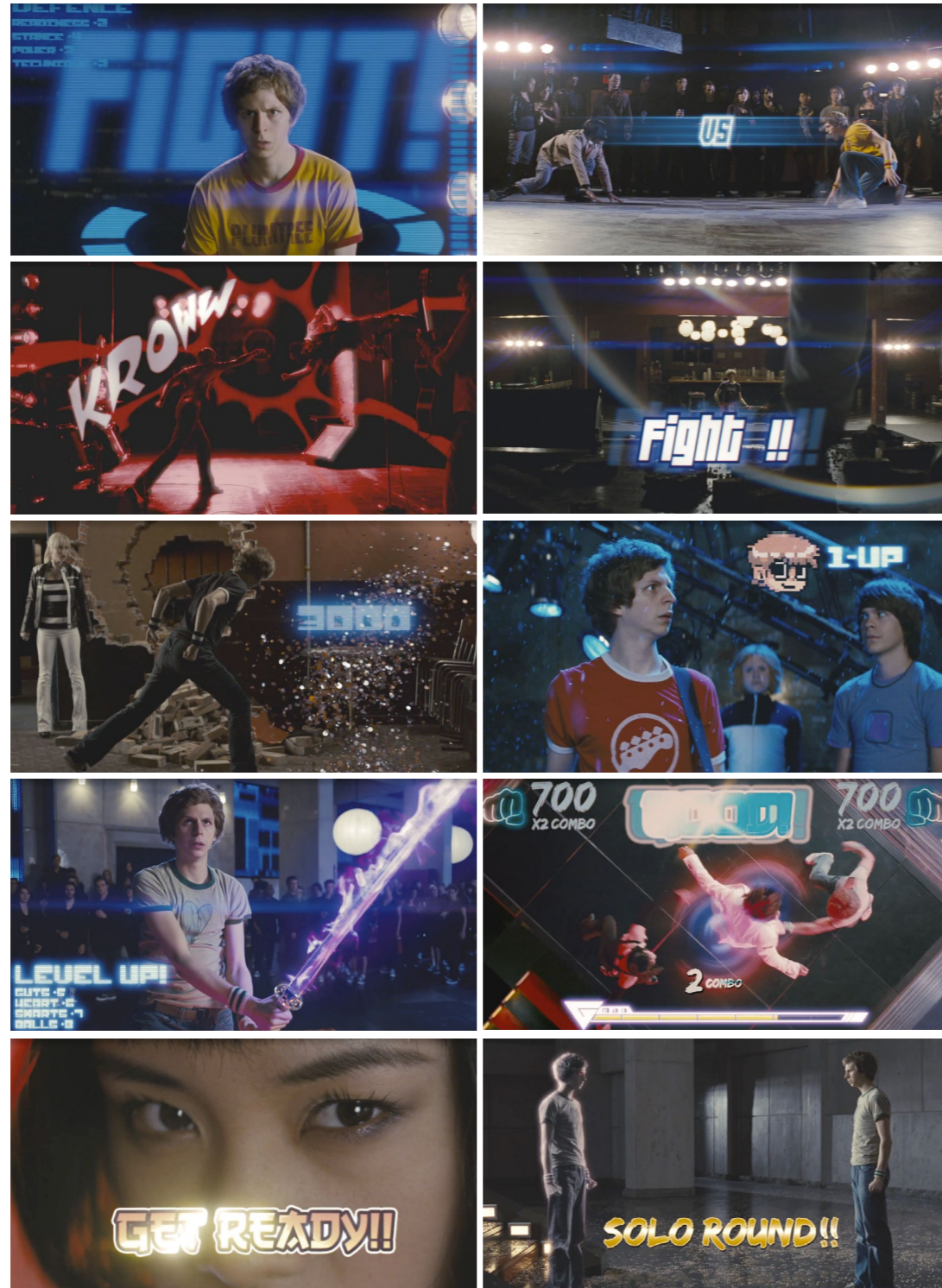
Images 132.1 & 132.2
Animated sequences as extra-diegetic expository graphics inserted in between scenes – heterogeneous, virtual dynamic, secondary and complementary.

(3) Decisive approaches

The Seven Evil Exes fight game

Last but not least, the movie's decisive approach consists of an exploration of another medium-specific aesthetic, which does not concern the comic book: the **videogame graphic language**. It is considered decisive because of its function in conducting the narrative, serving as an anchor to the whole plot. After Scott Pilgrim meets Ramona Flowers, literally the girl of his dreams, he will do anything to date her – including defeating her seven evil ex-boyfriends. This notion, therefore, is what evolves the narrative, which is more closely comparable to a videogame structure (with successive game levels) than to a conventional filmic narrative structure. Together with a strong use of visual effects in the style of videogames, as well as synesthetic comic book onomatopoeias, the fighting scenes are crucial in unfolding Scott Pilgrim's narrative. Most importantly, it is the use of

videogame-specific graphic language (images 133.1-133.10) which allows for the spectator to identify the movie's fantastical representation of its plot as levels in a videogame – seen as a metaphor to real life relationships, as Scott's clever roommate, Wallace, tells him: "If you want something bad, you have to fight for it. If she really is the girl of your dreams, you have to let her know. You have to overcome any and all obstacles that lie in your path". The fights with the seven evil exes, therefore, relate to Scott's ability to overcome Ramona's past in order to move forward with their relationship and let go of his insecurities. The fights connect among each other and tell a story together, as Scott accumulates points with each victory (image 133.6). They need to be viewed in a sequence and are what "sews" together the plot, as narrative anchors. They are seen as **complementary** configurations, however, since the moving images, sound effects and video-game narration are equally important in conveying the final message.

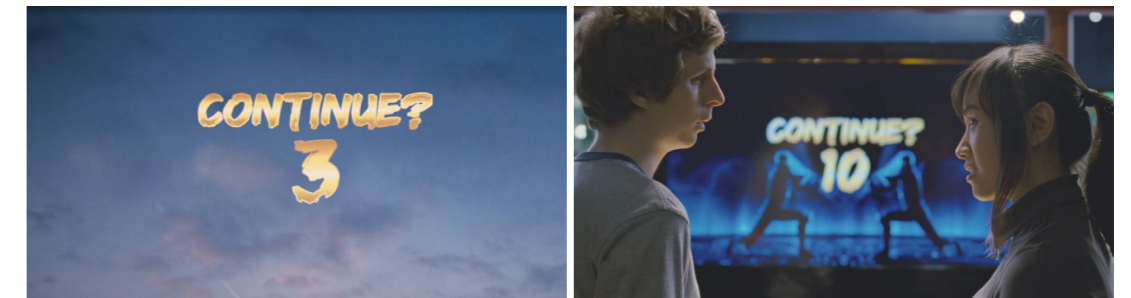


Images 133.1-133.10
Expository graphics in the style of videogame language – heterogeneous, virtual dynamic, extra-diegetic, superimposed over the cinematographic image, decisive and complementary.

Interestingly, the final titles of the movie emerge through another visual play of the videogame's graphic language – they portray the 'continue?' and countdown final screen after completing an arcade game, as an expository graphic (image 134.1). This type of language is also explored in other scenes, such as when Scott Pilgrim is playing with Knives Chau, and is not sure whether he wants to continue with their relationship – while in the background the same videogame screen is portrayed, as a filmed graphic object (image 134.2).

Image 134.1
Expository graphic – verbal, virtual dynamic, extra-diegetic, superimposed over the cinematographic image, decisive and complementary.

Image 134.2
Filmed graphic object (videogame's physical screen) – heterogeneous, physical mechanical, intra-diegetic, inserted inside the scene, secondary and complementary.



(4) Final considerations

The movie presents 90 intentional graphic configurations throughout 112 minutes of film – almost one configuration per minute – which clearly shows the movie's rich and intense use of graphic language. They can be further divided into 24 intra-diegetic filmed graphic objects, as opposed to 61 extra-diegetic virtual dynamic expository graphics and titles (which includes intertitles, as well as the opening and final titles). The fact that the movie focuses considerably on extra-diegetic graphic configurations, together with the constant use of other extra-diegetic elements such as sound effects, music and optical transitions, reinforces the movie's **magical realism** – a stylised and fantastical world, however set in real, snowy Toronto – which seems as if it came right out of a gamer's computer screen. The entire film, thus, effectively mixes the real world with fantasy by combining the cinematographic image (live-action) – often manipulated with special effects – with extra-diegetic graphic configurations and even 100% animated sequences.

Furthermore, the graphic language helps to establish some visual concepts that strongly characterise the movie's identity, or branding. For example, the use of **synesthesia** – a figure of speech – as an attribute/concept of the movie's visual identity, indicates an interdependent relation between the graphic and auditory dimensions, meaning that the graphic configurations follow the beat of the music and sound effects accurately, delivering an accelerated **rhythm** to the story (almost hyperactive). Therefore, in Scott Pilgrim vs. the World, sound and graphics are equally and extremely important, and are intrinsically connected, while the basis is the cinematographic image. The opening titles introduce this 'formula' through an energetic and upbeat animation mixing colours, abstract shapes and textures, followed by intense rock music. Additionally, these synesthetic features can be identified throughout the entire filmic narrative, as expository graphics and intertitles – also linked to their accompanying music and sound effects. They consist of mainly **onomatopoeias** – also a figure of speech – in the style of comic book language, as well as other pictorial and verbal dynamic graphics that are associated to the music universe and appear during the bands' performances. The movie's witty **tone of voice**, often spoken directly to the viewer, is also portrayed in the graphic language, in much through **irony** – another figure of speech, which characterise an aspect of the movie's personality.

[41] All the box office data from the case studies was taken from their official Wikipedia page.

Moreover, not only the graphic, but all of the film's language contribute in conveying this 'hyperactive' rhythm, through extremely dynamic editing and shot cuts and quick camera movements and transitions, where the passage of time is not followed respectfully as in real life. The scenes mix together through clever transitions (occasionally making use of the graphic language) and dialogue hooks that play with the movie's time-space dislocation. With this in mind, *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* can be easily identified as a **formalist** movie, positioned in the right end of the filmmaking spectrum – following the style and structure of a videogame rather than a movie. This idea is reinforced by the main graphic strategy of the movie – the Seven Evil Exes fighting game – which function as anchors in the story, connecting the different narrative blocks together. After the cinematic world is introduced (the first half hour of the movie), the fighting scenes are what unfolds the actions in the movie, as if they were levels in a videogame – Scott has to reach the final 'boss', personified by music producer and evil ex-boyfriend Gideon, so as to finally complete the game and win Ramona's heart over. The graphic language is portrayed as an **digital interface**, in the style of videogame language, where the viewer can follow up Scott Pilgrim's level of achievement in the game.

Another important point to consider is the movie's **source material** – Bryan Lee O'Malley's six-volume graphic novel also entitled *Scott Pilgrim*. The movie is actually a compilation of the six volumes into one concise narrative. The original comic books serve as reference to create the visual identity of the movie, influencing in the aesthetic choices portrayed in the graphic language. As a matter of fact, *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* presents an extremely consistent mix of aesthetics that come from different backgrounds – comics, videogame, music, and even anime (especially in portraying Knives Chau, Scott's high school girlfriend, with disproportionately big eyes and overly dramatic reactions). It is precisely this visual blending that further characterizes the movie as a successful **pastiche** – a work of art which imitates the style or character of other art sources. Additionally, at the time of the movies' debut, a videogame of the same name was launched by PlayStation, also based in the graphic novel and sharing the same style of graphic language.

"Despite being a box office bomb, grossing \$47.7 million against its production budget of \$85-90 million, *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* received positive reviews from critics, who particularly noted the film's visual style and humour, and eventually garnered a cult following" [41], with a passionate fan-based community. It was said that one of the reasons for it being a box office bomb was due to its young and technological target audience, who favoured illegal downloads over buying tickets to the movies. Furthermore, the movie's considerably high production budget allowed for the hiring of many specialists to create the film's high quality, complex graphic language – namely the art directors, conceptual designer, storyboard artists, graphic designers, graphic coordinators and animators, title designer and illustrators, besides the head of the department, the production designer.

In summary, the movie explores the **figurative potential** of the graphic language, with the objective of conveying more expressive and meaningful, less literal messages through figures of speech, imagery and sound devices. They also bring the appropriate upbeat rhythm and comedic tone to the story. Besides, the whole videogame fight is a metaphor to overcoming the obstacles and ghosts in a relationship, which consists of one more figure of speech. In this case study it was notably harder to identify the graphic approaches as separate and individual strategies, as they all function together in a holistic visual project. Perhaps that is a strong indicator of the effectiveness of the movie's graphic strategy, where all of the approaches connect among each other, being clearly part of the same visual unity. However, on the other hand, the fact that the main graphic configurations are always in a relation of complementarity to the moving image, as opposed to independent, might make them less decisive, and thus less recognisable if decontextualized from the filmic narrative.

Final main graphic strategies that can be taken from this movie:

- (1) **Use of sound and graphics as interdependent and equally significant filmic signs, bringing synesthetic features and rhythm to the movie.**
- (2) **Adaptation of other visual aesthetics, such as of videogames and comic books, into the cinematographic language – in the form of a pastiche.**
- (3) **Exploration of the graphic language's figurative potential, through the use of imageries and figures of speech conveying more expressive and meaningful messages, and setting the film's tone of voice.**

3.4 Results and discussion

The four case studies presented in this investigation, in the form of a **graphic analysis**, demonstrate a systematic observation of graphic configurations in movies, following the previously presented methodology. The main objective was to identify the use of graphic language as a **decisive** narrative strategy – unravelling the plot through different approaches – however, identifying the **secondary or accessory** functions of the graphic language is also of utter importance in conducting an integrated analysis of the movie's visual project. The assorted sample of movies – respecting the delimitations of this investigation – ranged from realist to formalist in the filmmaking spectrum, and represented different film genres, such as drama, comedy, and romance. In this way, the analyses become more effective, as reinforcements of the **flexibility and adaptability** of the graphic language in distinct filmic narratives. Also, identifying the movie's genre is significant in defining its **target audience**, which, in turn, help shape the movie's graphic strategy too. In the following table, the main information regarding the graphic strategies for each case study is presented, which serve as confirmation and further reference to the conclusions made in this chapter.



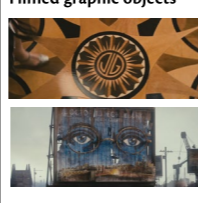

movie (year)	genre	realist	formalist	n° of intentional graphic configurations	intra-diegetic	totally or extra-diegetic	main decisive graphic configuration(s)
500 Days of Summer (2009)	Romantic comedy		X	81	30	51	Expository intertitles 
Scott Pilgrim vs. the World (2010)	Action comedy		X	90	24	61	Expository graphics 
The Great Gatsby (2013)	Period drama, romance		X	46	31	15	Filmed graphic objects 
Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri (2017)	Drama	X		44	41	3	Filmed graphic objects 

Table 6
Main information regarding the four detailed case studies presented in the third chapter.

The only case study which can be positioned as a **realist** movie is Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri, belonging to the drama genre. The movie focuses explicitly on the photographic essence of the moving images, in much related to André Bazin's belief that movies should be a faithful representation of reality and a reflection of life. In movies which follow this approach, the graphic language has a limited aspect, in the sense that it is constrained into a realistic representation – therefore, the use of **intra-diegetic, physical (mechanical or manual) graphic props** is what essentially characterises the movie's graphic identity (apart from the totally extra-diegetic opening and final credits). These graphic props can be represented by **signage, print and logos** – which portray design as a form of visual communication. Through a decisive approach, graphic props can exist as crucial elements in unfolding the narrative, containing significant information which will be explicitly transmitted to the viewer through camera framing and duration on screen, as

well as visibility/legibility/readability factors. The actors might interact closely with these props, adding more value to their presence. Besides, they often function as **independent** graphic configurations, containing information solely on the graphic dimension, making it more relevant as a decisive graphic approach and giving more autonomy to the viewer. The content conveyed by these graphic props can be more explicit and straightforward – which is the case of the three protagonist billboard's verbal language – or they can present rather subliminal or symbolical messages, such as Dr. T. J. Eckleburg's eyes billboard in The Great Gatsby, which consist of a **visual metaphor**.

It is important to notice though, that movies which contain graphic configurations as part of their thematic focus – such as the greeting card work environment from (500) Days of Summer – will clearly use these configurations as part of their language, however they are not necessarily significant to the narrative, as they are merely being portrayed in their original form. Therefore, **graphic configurations have more value as significant elements when they are chosen to be portrayed and made visible/legible/readable in the graphic form**. For example, the choice of using a newspaper headline to convey information instead of a dialogue or an actual scene, adds value to the graphic prop. Additionally, it is important to reinforce that graphic configurations in the form of filmed graphic objects such as signage, print and logos are not a specificity of realist movies, as they can be portrayed in any type of film.

In much, a movie's **graphic language exists in order to deliver verisimilitude to a filmic narrative** – transporting the audience into a certain believable cinematic world, be it realist or formalist. The movie The Great Gatsby uses intra-diegetic graphic objects decisively to create its universe, adapted from the literary masterpiece of the same name; however, differently than from Three Billboards, they exist as either physical or **virtual** graphic objects, since they also appear as computer-generated imagery, as a consequence of the movie's stylistic choices. Furthermore, the movie also makes frequent use of **extra-diegetic expository graphics and titles** to convey secondary approaches which reinforce its dreamy and overly stylised visual project. In the action-comedy film Scott Pilgrim vs. the World, the media-specific graphic languages of music, videogames and comic books are what connects the viewer to the movie's cinematic world, together with a strong use of sound effects and music – which effectively identifies the movie as a pastiche. Although there are intra-diegetic graphic objects in Scott Pilgrim, most of the graphic language exists as extra-diegetic expository graphics and titles, which intentionally break with the realism of the cinematographic image in an attempt to portray its fantastical and unrealistic cinematic world. Finally, the movie (500) Days of Summer also makes use of extra-diegetic expository intertitles to convey a decisive approach which reinforces its complex and unconventional non-linear narrative structure.

An interesting observation is how Scott Pilgrim's graphic configurations exist mainly in a relation of **complementarity** to the other filmic signs, making it significantly harder to portray the graphic configurations as isolated elements, since they are always somehow integrated to the actors superimposed over the cinematographic image. This matter is exemplified through the frames presented in table 1: for the other three movies, the main graphic configuration can be found **independently** inside a frame, however, for Scott Pilgrim, the main type of configuration is always seen alongside the actors. It was also a bigger challenge to choose only one frame to represent the main type of configuration, since they appear repeatedly throughout the narrative – in this case, their decisiveness is verified through the excessive and intense use, more than in its ability to evolve the actions. With this in mind, one can also conclude that **independent graphic configurations can be more recognisable in symbolising a movie's graphic identity than complementary ones, as they are visually autonomous**.

[42] A sleeper hit is a film that plays successfully for a long period and becomes a big success, despite having relatively little promotion or lacking a successful opening.

Apart from *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, the other movies are considered **formalists** as they play with the formal structure of their language and effectively combine their stylisations with the content, or narrative. As mentioned in the investigation, the formalist movie does serve as the best scenario for exploring the graphic language, since there are less constraints and rules for creating its visuals. Therefore, it was clearly easier to identify decisive graphic strategies in formalist movies. In regards to the films' genres, the only major conclusion made is how the target audience might shape the graphic strategy – for example, in *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, the young and technological 'gamer' target audience pertinently calls for the use of extra-diegetic graphics and vibrant, upbeat titles; whereas in *Three Billboards*, the down-to-earth, serious and dramatic thematic focus appeals to more mature audiences, and calls for a more realistic representation of graphic objects and straight-forward opening titles. On another note, the independent production of *(500) Days of Summer* accordingly targeted an engaged 'indie' audience, through a more unconventional, quirky and retro-styled romantic comedy (as opposed to mainstream and commercial). The film even earned the title of 'sleeper hit' [42] and further engaged its fans to create alternate chronological versions of the movie. The choices made based on target audiences, though, refer to the movie's project as a whole – which includes not only the graphic strategy but also cinematography techniques, art direction, screenplay, etc. However, the interpretations made here cannot serve as final conclusions for all movies from these genres, since each filmic project is unique in its conception and will depend on a series of factors and personal decisions of the Trinity in order to convey its message. It is the case of *The Great Gatsby*, which based its visual project strongly on director Baz Luhrmann's personal vision, however targeted to a younger demographic – hence the use of twenty-first century pop and hip-hop in its score and strong use of special effects. From these observations, it seems that **appealing to younger target audiences calls for more dynamic and accelerated/upbeat movies, and the use of graphic configurations aid in conveying these messages.**

Predictably, the three formalist movies contain the highest amount of intentional graphic configurations, led by *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*. Additionally, *Scott Pilgrim* and *(500) Days of Summer* present the highest use of extra-diegetic expository graphics and intertitles, which distance them more from a realistic approach – however, the fact that *(500) Days of Summer* uses the intertitles **in between scenes** as opposed to *Scott Pilgrim*'s **superimposed graphics over the scenes**, aids in making the first movie less fantastical or distant from reality than the second, as the graphics do not overshadow the cinematographic image. Therefore, **the 'in between scenes' method of insertion can also work for realist movies as it is less disruptive to the movie's realism.** In fact, *(500) Days of Summer* portrays a very balanced and consistent mix of moving images with graphic language throughout its narrative. *The Great Gatsby* and *Three Billboards*, on the other hand, present a higher use of intra-diegetic physical or virtual graphic objects, which convey similar functions as decisive characters in the plot. Furthermore, the Appendix B of this investigation shows the detailed graphic analysis of the four case studies, containing all of the intentional graphic configurations found, in order for the reader to perceive the rich diversity of the graphic language present in films.

Moving on, usually movies with higher production budgets present a stronger use of special effects and digital image compositing (ex. *The Great Gatsby*, \$105 million, and *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, \$85-90 million), however, it does not mean that the movie will have a better use of the graphic language. *(500) Days of Summer*, for example, had a lower budget of \$7 million and presented a successful and intense use of graphic configurations – which even included the hiring of well-known digital agency Imaginary Forces for the expository intertitles and main titles. This only reinforces how **the production budget should not be an obstacle for the strategic use of graphic language in movies.** It is

true that certain consequences will derive from a limited budget, however, it should not prevent a production designer from hiring graphic design specialists to perform punctual functions in a movie. Additionally, the four movies exemplified show in their credits the different types of specialists hired to create the graphic configurations, which range from art directors, graphic designers/artists, conceptual artists, motion designers, digital image compositors, title designers, among others. Appendix A includes an interview done via e-mail with Canadian graphic designer for film Ashley Toste, who has worked in a number of films and television series and gives a brief overview of her functions in a film production as well as her major challenges – such as limited budget and very short deadlines, specially for television series.

Moreover, it has been concluded from this extensive research that the majority of movies use the graphic language in their narrative primarily in **three different levels of representation.** The first consists of the only necessary graphic configuration a movie presents, which are the **(1) totally extra-diegetic opening and final titles** – these can range from simple and straightforward verbal language to a complex animated 'small movie inside a movie', inspired by Saul Bass's pioneer contribution. Although the opening and final credits are not technically part of the movie's narrative, since they are elements exterior to the story which contain information solely about the cast and crew, they are important in understanding a movie's graphic strategy. The choice of how these titles are portrayed helps define the graphic approach chosen by the Trinity, and needs to be in consistency with the other graphic configurations present along the narrative. The second level of graphic language used in movies consists of the **(2) secondary or accessory** use of graphic design elements, mostly with the objective of composing the sets, as *mise-en-scène*, and therefore associated to the movie's **art direction.** These elements exist mainly as intra-diegetic filmed graphic objects that aid in delivering verisimilitude to a cinematic world, even though they might not receive direct attention from the camera or actors – which, as Annie Atkins mentions regarding her work, are often seen as 'invisible'. Additionally, if it is a **period film**, reflecting either the past (ex. Historical drama) or the future (ex. Science fiction), the graphic objects need to **set the time period**, respecting historical accuracy and technology – for instance, one will not use a contemporary font in a 16th century-set movie signage; whereas a movie set in a futuristic world will probably use an invented innovative technology (through a digital interface designed by a specialist, for example) as opposed to an existing technology. If the movie makes use of extra-diegetic expository graphics and intertitles in this second level, they will contain additional information that is not necessarily relevant to the understanding of the plot. Thirdly and most importantly, a movie may use the graphic language as **(3) decisive elements in unfolding a narrative**, usually receiving direct focus from the camera and actors and crucial in comprehending the plot. The ultimate focus of this investigation, exemplified through the four case studies, is on movies that portray the three different levels of graphic language in their filmic narrative. However, throughout the investigation, there are other examples of movies which use only one or two levels of the graphic language.

It is true, though, that the vast majority of movies uses the graphic language as an accessory or secondary element, complementing the film's language, but not central to it. Therefore, it is a bigger challenge to identify movies which use the graphic language as decisive elements in their storytelling – mainly because a film's language is hybrid and composed of different filmic signs which work together in conveying the movie's broader message. This also goes for the movie's graphic dimension, which cannot be seen as individual elements. With this in mind, **for a graphic strategy to be considered decisive, it has to be significant either through a more intense use of graphic configurations, with repeated appearances, and/or by representing elements that are crucial in the interpretation and development of the narrative.**

The concept of **the movie as a brand** is also important in characterising a film's graphic identity. By comparing the movie's visual project to a brand project, and concisely applying the creative process of branding to film, designers working with movies can build unified design systems, through the use of coherent graphic configurations which effectively symbolise a movie's project. **A movie that has a visually recognisable graphic symbol, portrayed through repeated appearances in one or more of the three levels of representation, might be fixed or anchored in the viewer's imaginary more strongly than one which does not.** Furthermore, defining a movie's graphic symbol can aid in creating other graphic work, in contexts besides the actual film – such as in promotional advertisings and products, as well as the movie poster itself, thus reinforcing the movie's unified branding. The four case studies successfully present a rich graphic language which is further adapted to other contexts, as shown in the final considerations of each analysis.

To finalise this discussion, the following bullet points present summarised major conclusions taken from each case study, which consist of a series of **possible narrative strategies** – be them decisive or secondary – for the use of the graphic language in movies. They are based on the two or three main points identified in the end of each case study, taken from the movie's overall graphic strategy, and further generalised so as to be applied to the construction of any filmic narrative, as **guidelines or conventions**. These strategies relate to aspects of a film's **form and content**, which should be combined together to bring purposeful movies with rich graphic language.

Guidelines/conventions for the strategic use of the graphic language in the construction of a filmic narrative

- (1) **Structuring complex non-linear or multi-plot narratives to establish continuity, through expository intertitles;**
- (2) **Representing a film through one or two strong graphic symbols which serve as the movie's 'logo' and can be further applied to other media, decontextualised from the filmic space;**
- (3) **Crafting cinematic worlds as a reflection of real or hypothetical societies, with graphic objects that represent design as visual communication in the form of print, signage and logos;**
- (4) **Unfolding the narrative through cause and effect, where an action in a scene is directly related to the emergence of a graphic configuration;**
- (5) **Setting the time period through accurate historical aesthetics or futurist technological interfaces;**
- (6) **Creating brands/logos as an extension of characters, through a symbolic or metaphorical graphic representation;**
- (7) **Thickening the plot and giving more autonomy to the spectator by adding explicit or subliminal messages that only exist in the graphic dimension;**
- (8) **Establishing rhythm and synesthetic features to the movie through an interdependent relation to the auditory filmic signs, helping to evoke or intensify emotions;**
- (9) **Adaptating other visual aesthetics – such as of videogames, comic books, or social media – into the cinematographic language;**
- (10) **Setting the film's tone of voice and mood through verbal, pictorial and schematic language that convey figurative potential (figures of speech, sound devices, imagery).**



—
Design can be art,
design can be aesthetics,
design is so simple,
that is why it is
so complicated.

Paul Rand



Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the functions and strategic approaches of the graphic language – manifested as graphic configurations – in filmic narratives, serving as a system for analysing a movie's graphic identity, always as part of a grander visual project. The essential qualitative and subjective methods of this investigation, combined with a quantitative approach for counting and measuring the configurations, were applied in order to conduct meticulous graphic analyses of the four case studies. Major conclusions were reached in regards to the use of graphic configurations in movies – firstly, **they exist inside a filmic narrative with three possible main functions, as filmed graphic objects, expository graphics and intertitles, and/or opening and final credits.** They include additional structural and behavioural aspects which were updated from the system of classification proposed by Aragão, in the form of six categories, namely: graphic symbolisation, formal nature, method of insertion, diegesis, narrative significance and relation to other filmic signs. Secondly, **they exist through three different levels of representation** – either limited to totally extra-diegetic, simple or complex, opening and final titles, which is minimally the only necessary level of graphic representation in a movie; as secondary or accessory elements, composing the sets, delivering verisimilitude and presenting complementary information; or as decisive elements in unfolding the narrative. The case studies analysed in this research necessarily displayed the three levels of representation, in order to focus on the decisive aspect of graphic configurations. Lastly, **ten major narrative strategies were identified** – generalised from each of the four movies' specific results – **as conventions or guidelines for the future use and identification of graphic configurations in the construction of any type of narrative film.**

The project's focus of study derived from the broader investigation of the fundamental relationship between the fields of design and cinema as visual forms of communication. In order to reach major conclusions, it was compulsory to conduct extensive historical and theoretical researches, displayed in the Review of Literature. The **historical timeline of graphic design in film** allowed for the understanding of how graphic design elements have always co-existed with other components of film language since the beginning of silent cinema, initially through intertitles which further on developed to become the three main functions identified in this research. The advent of digital technology and computer graphics allowed for graphic configurations to become more complex, as well as easily manipulated into a contemporary filmic narrative, which approximated the graphic and cinematographic languages. Finally, the historical investigation also allowed for the acknowledgment of the role of the designer in film productions, mentioning the shift from art direction to production design, however with a focus on the possible vertical insertions of specialists in creating the graphic configurations.

Next, the theoretical framework explored **film theories that condition the graphic language** and bring significant inferences. The application of semiotics to film allowed for the identification of graphic configurations as one of the five fundamental signs which compose a movie, as a manner of cinematic expression; the interpretation of the terms narrative and diegesis suggest that graphic configurations can be applied as intra or extra-diegetic elements; and the definition of a filmmaking spectrum represented by realist and formalist

movies show their influence in the type of graphic configurations portrayed. In regards to the field of design, theoretical aspects of design as visual communication were identified, as well as how they are reflected in movies in the form of signage, print and logos – applied into physical and virtual worlds. Furthermore, the definition of the graphic language's scope as verbal, pictorial and schematic elements, based on Michael Twyman's research (1982), clarified the definition and identification of graphic configurations. Besides, by understanding how both fields derive from the same principles, filmmakers and designers can ally strengths so as to create more meaningful, visually-driven motion pictures with rich graphic language.

These studies allowed for the further correlation between theories so as to reach the following conclusions, which were verified through the four case studies: **the formalist movie serves as the best scenario for the exploration of a film's graphic language**, due to its substantial freedom in portraying any kind of configuration, whereas **the realist movie is constrained to a realistic representation of its graphic design elements**, mainly through intra-diegetic graphic objects. In contrast, extra-diegetic expository graphics and intertitles will most likely break with the realism of the cinematographic image and are often portrayed in movies which show fantastical, dreamy, or highly stylised cinematic worlds. However, straightforward, verbal intertitles inserted in between scenes or statically superimposed over the moving image are less disruptive to the movie's realism – in much as a development of the silent films' intertitles. In summary, **whether a movie intends on solely recreating reality or presenting a stylised visual interpretation of reality, the graphic language works through flexible approaches with the objective of reinforcing the movie's own concept of reality, conveying meaning and triggering emotions**. On another note, it was also concluded that independent graphic configurations can be fixed in the audience's mind more strongly than complementary ones, thus becoming more effective in symbolising a movie's graphic identity as a 'logo'.

Another main objective of this investigation was to identify the role of the designer in the different production stages of a movie. Based on Moura's (2004) identification of the horizontal and vertical insertions of a designer in a filmic narrative, it was verified that the production designer, as part of the Trinity, becomes essential in the entire process of conceptualising and producing a movie, through a horizontal insertion. He or she is responsible for all of the movie's visuals, look and feel, as well as the organisational skills which allows for positive communication among the Trinity and different departments. However, the main focus of this investigation is not on the horizontal insertion of the production designer, but on the vertical insertions of other designers, such as graphic, motion, title, UX/UI, among others – who will specifically create the graphic configurations. The objective is to emphasise the importance these specialists have in conveying meaningful and expressive motion pictures. They participate in the filmic process from pre-production stages (ex. creating graphic props, conceptual drawings, storyboards, etc.), shootings (application of the graphic props), to post-production (titles, virtual expository graphics, visual effect in general), as distinct professionals working together inside larger departments. Additionally, the interview included in Appendix A, with Canadian graphic designer for film Ashley Toste, further exemplifies a vertical insertion of graphic designers in a movie production and the type of challenges they face, such as short deadlines and limited budget.

Due to the lack of academic research in this specific field area – which is mainly represented by Aragão's Master dissertation – the investigation aims to bring awareness and visibility to the use of graphic language in contemporary narrative films, as an important cinematic component, which should be consciously and strategically applied by the Trinity and specialists in order to convey more purposeful messages. Although this investigation was filtered to Hollywood's contemporary films, identified as the most pertinent scenario, it

is important to reinforce that the graphic language can be present not only in Hollywood but in any type of cinema around the globe – it is precisely due to its flexible behaviour that it can function as a powerful component, with decisive or secondary importance, in the construction of any filmic narrative. Furthermore, the research aims to promote and encourage the hiring of graphic design specialists in movie productions through a vertical insertion, as well as establish guidelines and conventions for future applications or analyses of a movie's graphic identity. On a final note, the graphic analysis suggested in this work considers the entire, integrated visual project of a movie – since film language is hybrid and consists of different filmic signs, the graphic configurations are only one manner of cinematic expression, which need to consistently co-exist with all components of a film's language.

Limitations and future recommendations of this investigation

The choice to conduct qualitative case studies allowed for an in-depth understanding of the chosen movies' specific context, however its generalisation to a wider sample is limited to initial guidelines and conventions, as the majority of movies present very unique visual projects, which will be based on individual choices. Therefore, the more movies one analyses, the more possibilities and conclusions one will find. The interpretation of the graphic analyses is open to a considerate level of subjectivity, which might compromise the reliability and validity of results. Finally, conducting a thorough graphic analysis is time consuming, as one needs to take screenshots of hundreds of frames, as well as take descriptive notes of each type of graphic configuration, organising them into different folders, counting and measuring them. It is an exhaustive manual work which is not easy to be automated, therefore it will serve mostly for specialists in the academic area, or will serve as suggestions, but not to be followed strictly.

It is also important to note that, due to the limited amount of sample from each genre, it was not possible to draw significant systematic conclusions which differentiate the use of graphic language in one genre from the other. The only conclusion made was in understanding the movie's target audience, in relation to its genre, and how it may influence in the choice of the graphic language portrayed – for example, appealing to a younger demographic can positively result in a stronger use of graphic configurations in order to bring dynamism and upbeat rhythm to the movies. As a future suggestion, however, researchers can focus on specific genres so as to reach more conclusive and detailed answers. To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could also address the use of graphic language in other types of cinema from around the globe, apart from Hollywood productions, or even focus on only one type of graphic configuration – such as graphic props or extra-diegetic graphics, delving deeper on their meaning. In this way, new conventions or guidelines can be added and adapted to the ones identified in this investigation.

Moreover, this investigation took a particularly theoretical and reflective approach, as opposed to a practical outcome. Therefore, a recommendation for future researchers includes exploring ways in which to visualise all the data collected in the form of graphic configurations, using graphic design as a tool to communicate them. Is there a way to represent movies only through their graphic identity? The challenges with this approach includes understanding the best way to portray the graphic configurations decontextualised from the filmic narrative: can they be recreated graphically? This implicates in having very high image quality and resolution, or having access to the original work/files created by the designers. In conclusion, I hope that this body of work can somehow contribute in extending the academic research related to the fields of graphic design and cinema and continue to lay the grounds for other researchers to develop the theoretical study of a film's graphic language as a manner of cinematic expression and narrative strategy.

References

- Aragão, I. (2006). *A Dimensão Gráfica do Cinema: uma proposta de classificação de suas configurações*. Master's dissertation. Universidade Federal de Pernambuco. Recife, Pernambuco.
- Aragão, I. (2006). *Palavras escritas: do cinema mudo ao falado*. Intercom – Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação. XXIX Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação.
- Arnheim, R. (1974). *Art and Visual Perception: a Psychology of the Creative Eye*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Aumont, J. Marie, Michel. (2004). *A análise do filme*. Lisboa: Edições Texto e Grafia, Lda.
- Aumont, J. (1992). *Aesthetics of Film*. Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Aumont, J. Marie, Michel. (2003). *Dicionário Teórico e Crítico do Cinema*. Campinas: Papirus Editora.
- Baptista, M. (2008). *A pesquisa sobre design e cinema: o design de produção*. Revista Galáxia, 15.
- Baptista, M. (2007). *Design e cinema: caminhos possíveis de pesquisa*. Estudos em design. v. 15, n. 2.
- Barbosa, P. (2002). *Arte, Comunicação & Semiótica*. Porto: Universidade Fernando Pessoa.
- Barnwell, Jane. (2004). *Production design: architects of the screen*. London, New York: Wallflower.
- Bazin, A. (1967). *What is Cinema? Volume 1*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bestley, R. Noble, I. (2005). *Visual Research: An Introduction to Research Methodologies in Graphic Design*. Switzerland: Lausanne: AVA Publishing SA.
- Betton, G. (1987). *Estética do Cinema*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- Bordwell, D. (2006). *The Way Hollywood Tells It*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Brown W. (2009). *Man Without a Movie Camera – Movies Without Men: towards a post-humanist cinema?* In Buckland, W. *Film Theory and Contemporary Hollywood Movies* (pp. 66-85). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Cardoso, R. (2011). *Design para um mundo complexo*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.

- Carroll, N. (1996). *Theorizing the Moving Image*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Chisholm, B. (1987). Reading Intertitles. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. 15, 3. 137-142
- Dondis, D. (1973). *A Primer of Visual Literacy*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Dupré La Tour, C. (1995). The Written Word and Memory in Griffith's *Intolerance* and Dreyer's *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. *Iris: A Journal of Theory on Image and Sound*. 19.
- Grodal, T. (2000). *Moving Pictures: A new theory of film genres, feelings, and cognition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Gunning, T. (2006). The Cinema of Attraction: Early Cinema, its Spectator and the Avant-Garde. In Strauven, W. (ed.) *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (pp. 381-388). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Haskin, Pamela. (1996). "Saul, can you make me a title?" Interview with Saul Bass. *Film Quarterly (ARCHIVE)*. 50, 1. 10-17.
- Heller, S. (2004). *Design Literacy: Understanding Graphic Design*. New York: Allworth Press.
- Jardi, E. (2007). Twenty-two tips on typography (that some designers will never reveal) and twenty-two things that you should never do with typefaces (that some typographers will never tell you). Barcelona/New York: Actar.
- Jeanne, R. Ford, C. (1966). *História Ilustrada do Cinema 1 – o cinema mudo*. Lisboa: Enciclopédia de Bolso Bertrand.
- Kepes, G. (1969). *Language of Vision*. Chicago: Paul Theobald and Company.
- Las-Casas, L. (2007). *Cinedesign: Typography and Graphic Design in Motion Pictures*. InfoDesign, n.1
- LoBrutto, V. (2002). *The Filmmaker's Guide to Production Design*. New York: Allworth Press.
- Lupton, E. Phillips, J. (2008). *Novos Fundamentos do Design*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.
- Lupton, E. Miller, A. (1996). *Design Writing Research: Writing on Graphic Design*. London: Phaidon Press Limited.
- Machado, L. (2011). *Design e Linguagem Cinematográfica: Narrativa visual e projeto*. São Paulo: Blücher.
- Manovich, L. (2001). *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Metz, C. (1974) *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mollerup, P. (1997). *Marks of Excellence: the history and taxonomy of trademarks*. London: Phaidon Press Limited.
- Monaco, J. (2000). *How to Read a Film*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moura, P. (2004). *Microcinema: o impacto das novas tecnologias digitais sobre a produção audiovisual*. Master's dissertation. PUC-Rio, Rio de Janeiro.
- Musser, C. (1990). *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Muzellec, L. & Lynn, T. & Lambkin, M. (2012). Branding in Fictional and Virtual Environments: Introducing a New Conceptual Domain and Research Agenda. *European Journal of Marketing*. 46, 811.
- Nesteriuk, S., Oliveira, M., Taú, M. (2015). Design gráfico no cinema: Saul Bass. *Educação Gráfica*. 19, 3.
- Nichols, B. (2010). *Engaging Cinema: An Introduction to Film Studies*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Nowell-Smith, G. (1996). *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pearson, R. (1996). Transitional Cinema. In Nowell-Smith, G. (org.). *The Oxford History of World Cinema* (pp. 23-42). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Potter, N. (2002). *What is a designer*. London: Hyphen Press.
- Schatz, T. (2009). New Hollywood, New Millenium. In Buckland, W. *Film Theory and Contemporary Hollywood Movies* (pp. 19-46). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- St. John Marner, T, & Stringer, M. (1974). *Film design*. New York: A. S. Barnes and Co.
- Tietzmann, R. (2007). Como falava a tipografia do cinema mudo. *E-Compós*, 10.
- Tietzmann, R. (2007). Uma proposta de taxonomia de créditos de abertura cinematográficos. *InfoDesign*. 4, 1. 29-35
- Twyman, M. (1982). The graphic presentation of language. *Information Design Journal*. 3,1. 2-22.
- Varzim, M. (2014). *Antropologia Cinética: Relações interpenetrantes entre a vida e a imagem*. Doctoral thesis. Universidade de Aveiro, Aveiro.

Online references

- (500) Days of Summer. (n.d.) In Wikipedia. Retrieved September 5, 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/500_Days_of_Summer.
- Acrolinx. What is Tone of Voice and Why Does It Matter? Retrieved November 7, 2019, from <https://www.acrolinx.com/blog/what-is-tone-of-voice/>.
- Busch, L. (2017). Onomatopoeia in Comics. Retrieved November 6, 2019, from <http://www.theater-wissenschaft.de/miszellen-onomatopoeia-in-comics/>.

Conmose. (2019). Interview Emma Stensaas – Graphic Design. Retrieved October 13, 2019, from <https://www.conmose.com/interview-emma-stensaas/>.

Fairs, M. (2015). Minority Report made today's technology possible, says production designer Alex McDowell. Retrieved July 30, 2019, from <https://www.dezeen.com/2015/11/06/minority-report-sci-fi-movie-steven-spielberg-future-of-technology-predictions-possible-production-designer-alex-mcdowell/>.

Fuller, J. (2017). Windsor: An Ode to a Forgotten Typeface. Retrieved July 28, 2019, from <https://jarrettfuller.com/projects/windsor>.

Fusco, J. (2017). Watch: Forget Realism, Embrace Formalism. Retrieved July 20, 2019, from <https://nofilmschool.com/2017/06/watch-forget-realism-embrace-formalism>.

Giardina, C. (2017). How Loving Vincent Created the Animated Film in Van Gogh's Iconic Style. Retrieved August 17, 2019, from <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/behind-screen/how-loving-vincent-created-animated-film-van-goghs-iconic-style-1067364>.

Kondo, G. (2016). Cinelayer: Explorando as Camadas do Design Gráfico no Cinema. Retrieved January 25, 2019, from https://issuu.com/guskondo/docs/gustavokondo_tcc2_cinelayer_digital.

Landekic, L. (2013) Moonrise Kingdom – Art of the Title. Retrieved July 17, 2019, from <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/moonrise-kingdom/>.

Landekic, L. (2016). Tank Girl – Art of the Title. Retrieved July 23, 2019, from <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/tank-girl/>.

Laskin, N. (2016). Movie Review: “La La Land” is a joyous reminder of why we go to movies in the first place. Retrieved September 17, 2019, from <https://medium.com/@nicklaskin/movie-review-la-la-land-is-a-joyous-reminder-of-why-we-go-to-movies-in-the-first-place-ec127d2396a9>.

Light, J. (2019). Now You Can Watch ‘(500) Days of Summer’ in Chronological Order [Video]. Retrieved October 7, 2019, from <https://nofilmschool.com/500-days-summer-chronological>.

Literary Devices. Synesthesia. Retrieved November 6, 2019, from <http://www.literarydevices.com/synesthesia/>.

Manovich, L. (1995). What is Digital Cinema?. Retrieved from <http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/what-is-digital-cinema>.

Mars, R. (2017) Hero Props: Graphic Design in Film & Television. Retrieved February 5, 2019, from <https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/hero-props-graphic-design-film-television/>.

May, J. (2010). The Art of Film Title Design Throughout Cinema History. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/10/the-art-of-the-film-title-throughout-cinema-history>.

Melani, L. (2011). The formalist-realistic scale. Retrieved September 9, 2019, from <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/film-and-lit/formalism-realism-hnd.pdf>.

Ministry of Cinema. (n.d.). Cinema's Birth to Modern Day – A Timeline of World Cinema [YouTube Channel]. Retrieved April 15, 2019, from <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRtd5eoxQ17k7Z7J6aMxY9Rzk4J1L3Cq>.

Olinger, M. (2018). This Bluffton woman had a hand in making a 2018 Oscar nominee for best picture. Retrieved October 25, 2019, from <https://www.islandpacket.com/entertainment/movies-news-reviews/article196102514.html>.

Perkins, W. (2015). The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari – Art of the Title. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/the-cabinet-of-dr-caligari/>.

Petit, Z. (2014). When Saul Bass Met Hitchcock. Retrieved July 20, 2019, from <https://www.printmag.com/imprint/saul-bass-hitchcock/>.

Reiner, J. (2017). The Great Gatsby: Book Versus Movie. Retrieved November 4, 2019, from <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-great-gatsby-book-versus-movie>.

Rhodes, M. (2016). How Arrival's Designers Crafted a Mesmerizing Alien Alphabet. Retrieved November 5, 2019, from <https://www.wired.com/2016/11/arrivals-designers-crafted-mesmerizing-alien-alphabet/>.

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World. (n.d.) In Wikipedia. Retrieved November 7, 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scott_Pilgrim_vs._the_World.

Spoto, D. (1977). Hitchcock The Designer. Print: America's Graphic Design Magazine. XXXI:IV. Retrieved from <https://www.printmag.com/featured/alfred-hitchcock-designer/>.

The Great Gatsby (2013 film). (n.d.) In Wikipedia. Retrieved October 25, 2019, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Gatsby_\(2013_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Gatsby_(2013_film)).

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri. (n.d.) In Wikipedia. Retrieved October 12, 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Billboards_Outside_Ebbing_Missouri.

Willems, P. (2017). Realism: How Much Does It Really Matter? (video essay) [YouTube]. Retrieved July 20, 2019, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxuK4NQ2NHk&t=1s>.

Yang, S. (2013). A Look at the Set of The Great Gatsby with Production and Costume Designer Catherine Martin. Retrieved November 1, 2019, from <https://www.housebeautiful.com/design-inspiration/celebrity-homes/interviews/a1100/catherine-martin-interview/>.

Film Index

Case studies

Luhrmann, B. (director/producer). Fisher, L., Knapman, C., Martin, C., Wick, D. (producers). (2013). *The Great Gatsby* [Motion Picture]. United States/Australia: Warner Bros. Pictures/Roadshow Entertainment. [p. 44; 87; 113-122; 134-138]

McDonagh, M. (director/producer). Broadbent, G., Czernin, P. (producers). (2017) *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* [Motion Picture]. United Kingdom/United States: Fox Searchlight Pictures. [p. 87; 103-111; 118; 122; 134-138]

Webb, M. (director). Novick, M., Tuchinsky, J., Waters, M., Wolfe, S. J. (producers). (2009). (500) *Days of Summer* [Motion Picture]. United States: Fox Searchlight Pictures. [p. 87; 93-101; 107; 120; 134-138]

Wright, E. (director/producer). Gitter, E., Park, N., Platt, M. (producers). (2010). *Scott Pilgrim Vs. the World* [Motion Picture]. United States/United Kingdom/Japan: Universal Pictures. [p. 87; 125-133; 134-138]

Mentioned or exemplified through frames

Allen, W. (director). Joffe, C. H. (producer). (1977). *Annie Hall* [Motion Picture]. United States: United Artists. [p. 36]

Almodóvar, P. (director/producer). (2019). *Dolor y Gloria* [Motion Picture]. Spain: Sony Pictures Releasing International. [p. 64]

Anderson, W. (director/producer). Rudin, S., Rales, S., Dawson, J. (producers). (2012). *Moonrise Kingdom* [Motion Picture]. United States: Focus Features. [p. 42-43]

Anderson, W. (director/producer). Rudin, S., Rales, S., Dawson, J. (2014). *The Grand Budapest Hotel* [Motion Picture]. United States/Germany: Fox Searchlight Pictures. [p. 41; 43; 76; 159]

Besson, L. (director). Besson-Silla, V. (producer). (2014). *Lucy* [Motion Picture]. France: EuropaCorp Distribution/Universal Studios. [p. 74]

Blomkamp, N. (director). Jackson, P., Cunningham, C. (producers). (2009). *District 9* [Motion Picture]. New Zealand/United States/South Africa: Sony Pictures Releasing. [p. 66]

Boyle, D. (director/producer). Bevan, T., Fellner, E., Bellew, B., Wilkinson, M. J., Curtis, R. (producers). (2019). *Yesterday* [Motion Picture]. United Kingdom: Universal Pictures. [p. 45-46; 74-73]

Carpenter, J. (director). Franco, L. (producer). (1988). *They Live* [Motion Picture]. United States: Universal Pictures/Carolco Pictures. [p. 69-70; 110]

Chabrol, C. (director). Génovès, A. (producer). (1969). *La Femme Infidèle* [Motion Picture]. France: Compagnie Française de Distribution Cinématographique. [p. 42-43]

Chazelle, D. (director). Berger, F., Horowitz, J., Gilbert, G., Platt, M. (producers). (2016). *La La Land* [Motion Picture]. United States: Lionsgate. [p. 50; 61-63; 67; 71-72]

Columbus, C., Cuarón, A., Newell, M., Yates, D. (directors). (2011-2011). *Harry Potter* film series [Motion Pictures]. United Kingdom/United States: Warner Bros. Pictures. [p. 43; 48]

Crosland, A. (director). Zanuck, D. F. (producer). (1927). *The Jazz Singer* [Motion Picture]. United States: Warner Bros. Pictures. [p. 27]

Crowe, C. (director/producer). Bryce, I. (producer). (2000). *Almost Famous* [Motion Picture]. United States: DreamWorks Pictures. [p. 31-32; 36; 59; 68-69; 96; 141-140]

De Palma, B. (director). Linson, A. (producer). (1987). *The Untouchables* [Motion Picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures. [p. 33]

Dreyer, C. (director). (1928). *La Passion de Jeanne D'Arc* [Motion Picture]. France: Société Générale des Films. [p. 24]

Eisenstein, S. (director). (1925). *Battleship Potemkin* [Motion Picture]. Soviet Union: Goskino. [p. 29]

Favreau, J. (director/producer). Bepalov, S. (producer). (2014). *Chef* [Motion Picture]. United States: Open Road Films. [p. 45-46]

Fleming, V. (director). Selznick, D. (producer). (1939). *Gone with The Wind* [Motion Picture]. United States: Loew's Inc. [p. 30]

Fincher, D. (director). Kopelson, A., Carlyle, P. (producers). (1995) *Seven* [Motion Picture]. United States: New Line Cinema. [p. 31]

Forster, M. (director). Doran, L. (producer). (2003) *Stranger than Fiction* [Motion Picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures. [p. 45-46; 75-76]

Gluck, W. (director/producer). Glotzer, L., Shafer, M., Zucker, J. (producers). (2011). *Friends With Benefits* [Motion Picture]. United States: Screen Gems. [p. 59]

Griffith, D. W. (director/producer). (1915). *The Birth of a Nation* [Motion Picture]. United States: Epoch Producing Co. [p. 24; 28]

Griffith, D. W. (director/producer). (1916). *Intolerance* [Motion Picture]. United States: Triangle Distributing Corporation. [p. 24-26]

Hitchcock, A. (director/producer). (1958). *Vertigo* [Motion Picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures. [p. 35]

Hitchcock, A. (director/producer). (1976). *Family Plot* [Motion Picture]. United States: Universal Pictures. [p. 33]

Hooper, T. (director). Bevan, T., Fellner, E., Hayward, D., Mackintosh, C. (producers). (2012). Les Misérables [Motion Picture]. United Kingdom/United States: Universal Pictures.

[p. 52]

Jonze, S. (director/producer). Ellison, M., Landay, V. (producers). (2013). Her [Motion Picture]. United States: Warner Bros. Pictures/Sony Pictures Releasing International/State 6 Films. [p. 44-45]

Kobiela, D., Welchman, H. (directors). Welchman, H., Mactaggart, I., Bobbitt, S. (producers). (2017). Loving Vincent [Motion Picture]. Poland/United Kingdom/United States: Altitude Film Distribution/Next Film. [p. 38-39]

Lee, S. (director/producer). Blum, J., Mansfield, R., McKittrick, S., Peele, J., Redick, S. (producers). (2018). BlacKkKlansman [Motion Picture]. United States: Focus Features. [p. 76; 85; 89; 98; 78-79]

Lucas, G. (director). Kurtz, G. (producer). (1977). Star Wars [Motion Picture]. United States: 20th Century Fox. [p. 37]

Luhrmann, B. (director/producer). Martinelli, G. (producers) (2001). Romeo + Juliet [Motion Picture]. United States: 20th Century Fox. [p. 121]

Luhrmann, B. (director/producer). Brown, M., Baron, F. (producers) (2001). Moulin Rouge! [Motion Picture]. United States/Australia: 20th Century Fox. [p. 121]

Lumière Brothers (directors/producers). (1896). L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat [Motion Picture]. France. [p. 22]

Méliés, G. (director/producer). (1902). Le Voyage dans la Lune [Motion Picture]. France. [p. 22]

Preminger, O. (director/producer). (1955). The Man with the Golden Arm [Motion Picture]. United States: United Artists. [p. 35]

Preminger, O. (director/producer). (1959). Anatomy of a Murder [Motion Picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures Corporation. [p. 34]

Ramsay, L. (director). Fox, J., Roeg, L., Salerno, B. (producers). (2011). We Need to Talk About Kevin [Motion Picture]. United Kingdom/United States: Oscilloscope Laboratories. [p. 72]

Spielberg, S. (director). Zanuck, R. D., Brown, D. (producers). (1975). Jaws [Motion Picture]. United States: Universal Pictures. [p. 37]

Spielberg, S. (director). Molen, G., Curtis, B., Parkes, W. F., de Bont, J. (producers). (2002). Minority Report [Motion Picture]. United States: 20th Century Fox/DreamWorks Pictures. [p. 44-45]

Spielberg, S. (director/producer). Parkes, W. F. (producer). (2002). Catch Me If You Can [Motion Picture]. United States: DreamWorks Pictures. [p. 76]

Spielberg, S. (director/producer). Parkes, W. F., MacDonald, L. (producers). (2004). The Terminal [Motion Picture]. United States: DreamWorks Pictures. [p. 65-66; 68]

Spielberg, S. (director/producer). Platt, M., Krieger, K. M. (producers). (2015). Bridge of Spies [Motion Picture]. United States/Germany: Walt Disney Studios/Motion Pictures/20th Century Fox. [p. 42]

Talalay, R. (director). Lewis, R., Densham, P., Watson, J. (producers). (1995). Tank Girl [Motion Picture]. United States: United Artists. [p. 35-36]

Tarantino, Q. (director). Bender, L. (producer). (1992). Reservoir Dogs [Motion Picture]. United States: Miramax Films. [p. 75-76]

Tarantino, Q. (director). Sher, S., Hudlin, R., Savone, P. (producers). (2012). Django Unchained [Motion Picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures. [p. 6-7; 59-60]

Taymor, J. (director). Gross, M., Todd, J., Todd, S. (producers). (2007). Across the Universe [Motion Picture]. United Kingdom/United States: Columbia Pictures. [p. 56-58; 60; 63]

Villeneuve, D. (director). Levy, S., Levine, D., Ryder, A., Linde, D. (producers). (2016). Arrival [Motion Picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures/Sony Pictures Releasing International/Stage 6 Films. [p. 75]

Weir, P. (director). Rudin, S., Niccol, A., Feldman, E., Schoreder, A. (producers) (1998). The Truman Show [Motion Picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures. [p. 36]

Welles, O. (director/producer). (1941). Citizen Kane [Motion Picture]. United States: RKO Radio Pictures. [p. 18-19 28; 67; 75-76; 84; 117; 121]

Wiene, R. (director). (1920). The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari [Motion Picture]. Germany: Decla-Bioscop. [p. 26]

Wright, J. (director). Bevan, T., Fellner, E., Webster, P. (2012). Anna Karenina [Motion Picture]. United Kingdom/United States: Focus Features. [p. 52]

Zemeckis, R. (director). Finerman, W., Starkey, S. P., Tisch, S. (producers). (1994). Forrest Gump [Motion Picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures. [p. 36; 69]

[Appendix A]

Interview with graphic designer for film/TV Ashley Toste

H: Can you describe in more detail exactly what it is that you do and the main projects you have worked on?

A: I work as a graphic designer for film and television in Toronto, Canada. I design all graphics for production so essentially if we are filming in a restaurant I could design everything from the brand identity of the restaurant to the bottle of wine sitting on a table. There are many instances where we will make Toronto look like NYC and so often we find ourselves creating street signs, bus advertisements, graphics for license plates, logos for NY Taxis, branding for metro stops etc. Most of the projects I typically work on are American network TV shows...I have worked on a number of different projects like: Suits, Designated Survivor, My Spy, Tales from the Loop etc. Currently, I'm working on What We Do in the Shadows – a vampire comedy.

H: How would you describe your typical day at work? What are your main functions and where do you usually work?

A: My typical day at work involves working on graphics for the current and upcoming episodes, the odd meeting but typically I am at my computer for 12-14 hours a day. I rarely go to set, there is the odd time where I will make my way to set to measure something that requires a graphic but usually I am at the computer.

H: Can you describe the process of identifying which graphic props are going to be needed for a specific TV series or film? In which stage of production do you come in?

A: I come in usually 4-6 weeks before we go to camera in the "prep" stage but of course, that depends on the intensity/budget of the show. The first thing I do when I start a show is read the scripts and start a graphics breakdown. I work in the order of the script and list anything I see that could require a graphic. If we were looking at Sc 1 and the location was Int. Cafe I would make a list of questions like will we require menus, interior signage, branding on coffee cups (some of these questions would be answered when we survey that location). If Sc 1 says Jenny pulls out a CIA briefing document then I would list that as a prop.

H: How would you describe your research process in creating the graphic props? How does your research change from project to project?

A: Typically I make a folder with inspiration brands/products/designs for each episode, I really just use Google for research on most shows. When I worked on Tales from the Loop I used a fair amount of books some featuring old ghost signs which gave me an idea as to what fonts I should be looking for. My research from project to project typically stays the same because I am a minimalist designer for the most part so that's what I gravitate towards. Sometimes I will work with designers who really like traditional looking products which means I usually do more research.

H: As an average, how many graphic props do you create per project? Do you think there is a certain style or genre that uses more graphic props than other?

A: This is a tough question to answer because it really does depend on the project but also from episode to episode. Sometimes your first few episodes will be packed to get the audience engaged and then you'll find it slows for a couple of episodes, only to pick up again at the end of the season or last couple of episodes. Shows like Designated Survivor had a number of props per episode but some of those props are briefing documents and CIA documents, surveillance photos, newspapers, bottles of wine/liquor etc.

H: What is your relationship with the other film crew? Does the director's style influence in your creations?

A: My closest relationships are usually the ones within my department, plus props and set decoration. I usually work closely with the production designer as they usually work to provide the overall vision for the show, sometimes the director will make requests for certain props but typically it's the designer I work closest with when it comes to a creative vision. I do work closely with the art director when it comes to putting forward costs for certain graphics etc. I wouldn't say the director's style influences my work, perhaps if I was working on a big Guillermo Del Toro feature I might feel differently.

H: What are the main challenges and limitations you face when working with graphic design for film and TV?

A: The main challenge most of us face is the lack of time, things move really quickly in film and there are lots of times when we get script late or maybe we start a show without enough prep time. Sometimes you have to be okay with handing off graphics/props that aren't your best work because maybe you only had 30 minutes to an hour to complete that beer label, sometimes you get a last-minute request.

H: What do you think of the visibility that graphic design for film/TV has in the audiovisual and design industries in Canada? And in relation to the rest of the world, do you see any difference?

A: I'm not really sure how to answer the first part because I have only ever worked as a graphic designer in film/TV, I kind of feel like we're a little more segregated from the real world of design when it comes to design firms/collectives. When it's busy in Toronto for the film industry everyone is busy, in times where we are slammed there are usually ample opportunities for set designers and graphic designers in the Directors Guild of Canada (kind of a union). I can't really speak about the rest of the world because my experience has only been in Canada.

H: What about your relationship with other designers working in the film/series, such as motion designers and animators?

A: My relationships with other designers I work with are usually great as we work long hours together in a collaborative environment. Typically post-production for the shows I work on is usually done in LA so I don't have any experience working with post or motion graphics for post. I have the odd email request looking for something they'd like to burn in but that's really it.

H: What was your favourite project to work on and why? Can you tell us some story or happening that marked you somehow?

A: In some ways, I think the project I liked most was actually the most taxing on me emotionally and physically – I worked 6 and 7 days a week for a handful of weeks with a designer who treated his team poorly... Working on The Tales from the Loop Pilot was quite spectacular because it blended with my love for sign painting. It was a period show and everything I was working on needed to be handpainted and it meant that I had to do a fair amount of research looking at a variety of period fonts and design styles.

H: What would be a tip you would give future graphic designers who want to enter the world of television and cinema? How would you suggest they approach this?

A: This one is a little difficult to answer since I really only work here in Toronto so I don't really know how the rest of the world works in film. If there are unions for film workers then I would suggest getting in touch with them because they can advise you on how to apply. Otherwise, it can be very much a who you know type of business.

H: Finally, are there any graphic designers for film/TV that you admire specifically?

A: I suppose Annie Atkins would be at the top of the list and mostly because she's worked on movies like The Grand Budapest Hotel by Wes Anderson which is stunning and has a number of unique handmade props.

The End

IANOMAMA

MADE IN HOLLYWOOD, U.S.A.



Typography

Cronos Pro

Brill

**Print and
binding**

Norcopia