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Function and identity in multimodal communication

This lecture will present a two-pronged approach to multimodal analysis which combines ‘functional design analysis’ and ‘identity design analysis’

It will argue:

- that functional design is increasingly global and homogenized, while identity design is increasingly diverse, aesthetic, and oriented towards meanings and values;
- that while functional design analysis relies on de-contextualized generic conventions, identity design analysis requires a context-sensitive, parametric approach and an element of creative interpretation;
- that while in modernity function superseded meaning (Zijderveld, 1979), in postmodernity meaning returned, but as an expressive superstructure which ultimately leaves modernist functionality intact, if invisible.

It will conclude by showing that the combination of functional design and identity design it proposes is fundamental to the structure of contemporary semiotic technologies such as PowerPoint and Word.

Reference

Zijderveld, A.C. (1979) *On Clichés – the supersedure of meaning by function in modernity*. London: Routledge.