

# Pictorial/Verbal Relationship in Calligrammes from Communicative Aspect

캘리그램의 그림/언어 관계를 통해 본 커뮤니케이션 작용

이푸로니

서울대학교 시각디자인학과

양승춘

서울대학교 시각디자인학과

• **Key words:** Calligrammes, Typography, Visual Perception

Pooroni Rhee

Faculty of Craft & Design, Seoul National University

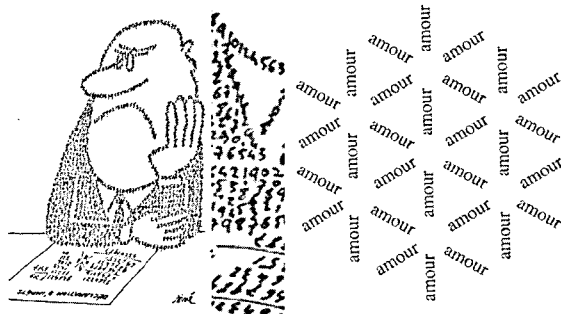
YANG Seung-Choon

Faculty of Craft & Design, Seoul National University

## 1. Introduction

As we live in the information society, the essential competitive power lies in the communication ability. Signs and letters have long been developed by mankind to achieve efficiency in communication. Whether our cognition is realized through the semantic or pictorial representations is a subject of debate and interdisciplinary researches in Cognitive Science have been trying to solve this problem. This also is a subject of great interest for graphic design. Calligrammes combine images with letters to deliver memorable semantic actions. This study attempts to assess the often underestimated calligrammatic communication process for rich and diverse terrain of typographic design.

## 2. Definition and Background



[figure 1.0] examples of a Calligrammes

Calligramme is a coined word of *calli* (beautiful) and *gramma* (letter) invented by the French poet Apollinaire. Letters assemble to form a cluster/s that composite global shapes creating an instant visual impression for the viewer. Apollinaire sought for visual possibilities of text assemblage and the result was named Calligramme, which is regarded as the cornerstone of the contemporary experimental typography. Before Apollinaire, calligrammes were also known as pictorial poetry, Rhoqliques and Pyramid poetry. Works by Simmias from Rhodos are considered to be the first pictorial/concrete poetry. A long history of calligrammes exist in the Arab world however the similar representation system is found throughout the world in various time periods. French Spatialists and contemporary ASCII arts are also the offshoots from Apollinaire's vision.

## 3. Characteristics of Calligrammes

Calligrammes function pictorially and semantically allowing the text to speak what the global picture is representing, and vice versa for pictures. As the image(collection of texts) and elemental texts overlap in their signification, a tautological mirror-effect is resulted. The relationship is not a stationary and descriptive but rather a complementary and dynamic relationship. For lubricated perception and intellectualization, it is essential to combine the elements(texts) into a unified whole to deliver the intended message. Calligrammes use the intuitively deciphered code: the parts(texts) belong to the whole(image). This results in a multi-dimensional and transformative & memorable communication process.

structure	(textual elements)	purpose
a.Simple	(Open / Closed distribution)	a.artistic & literary
b.Complex	(multidimensional / unified composition)	b.commercial

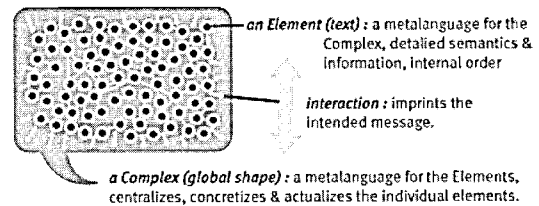
### Characteristics

Repetitious, Textural, Homogeneous, Contrast (simple & complex, small & big), Symbolic, Rhythmic, Animated, Dual, Hierarchical

[table 1] characteristics of calligrammes

## 4. Composition of Calligrammes

Our brain seeks for the most economic way of receiving and processing by simplifying all the incoming visual information. Calligrammes use a simple code to reduce the complexity of perception and cognition process by increasing the orderliness and effectiveness of the perceived visual field (without sacrificing its complex attractiveness). Its internal order (Elements) and external order (Complex) correspond and reduce the noise and interruption in communication. This reduction of noise stimulates the graphic and semantic elements to increase the central focus of the message. The economic simplification of structure in communication structure is known to trigger the experience of pleasure in the course of perception (just like puzzle-solving).



[figure 2.0] composition of a Calligramme

## 5. Communication

According to Shannon & Weaver model, the more transparent with less interruption and restriction, the clearer the intended message may arrive at its destination. Information also signifies giving form and form requires structure. The structure of a calligramme consists of the below elements:

**VERBAL:** includes all conventional symbolic system within the realm of semiotics. It has become instrumentalized for semantic exchanges in the most convenient way, enabling us to synthesize, organize, create, make judgements, memorize, apply, and analyze.

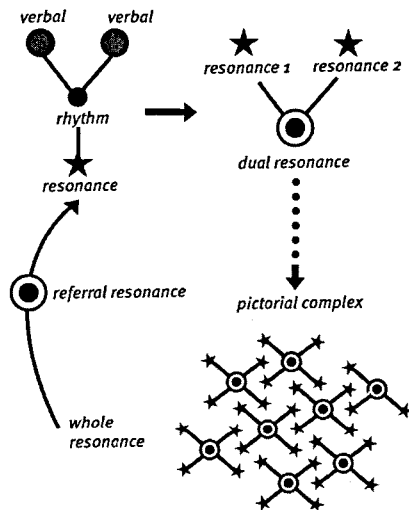
**PICTORIAL:** corresponds to the analog representations of traditional semiotics since it presents an analogy with its referent. Images deliver instant impressions. A picture systematically induce actions with unique visual schemes. Max Bill mentions we store information as picture-image.

**SCHEMATIC(diagrammatic):** any graphic mark which is neither word, a number, nor figure.

**INTERACTION:** Verbal language supports the visual concepts to stabilize with separations and differentiations of similarities and differences of information. We can then form genera. However understanding images are much quicker than oral languages.

When verbal and pictorial images cooperate they reduce interfering noise successfully. The mixture of the verbal and pictorial arrangement transforms the linearity of the verbal into a multidimensional phenomenon to amplify the strength of message. It is acknowledged that we have a separate direct visual route in the language system of in the brain independent from the verbal sector.

## 6. Calligrammatic Communication



[figure 3.0] amplification of resonance in a Calligramme

Calligrammes transform the visible language of the verbal into a rich visual language by going through multitudes of resonances and multiplying the power of the intended message. The plastic elements of visual field form tension then go through organization and interaction toward resonance of lively messages. We compare the proportionate relationship to process when visual language and calligrammes just show how the composition of contrast of big(Whole) vs. small(Elemental) simplify and clarify the communication process.

Birkhoff provided a formula,  $M=O/C$  ( $M$ =aesthetic measure,  $O$ =order,  $C$ =complexity), that aesthetic information depend on its proportions of complexity(pictorial) and order(semantic information). Since the calligramme is equipped with a unique and continuous see-saw like process of complexity to order, it simultaneously performs to give aesthetic pleasure as well as semantic information.

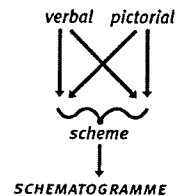
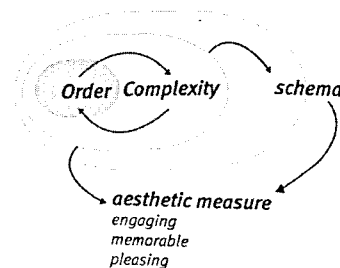
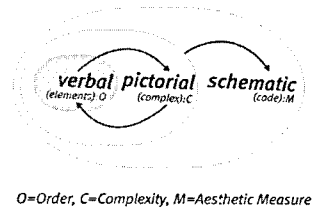
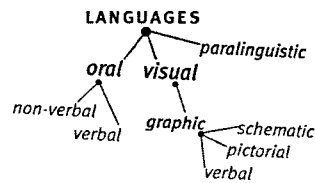
The most interesting and unique characteristic of calligrammatic communication is the creation of *schematic code*. After Bassy, we could call it a *calligrammatic - schematogrammatic transformation*. Basically it is many components of visual language compositing the whole under a schematic system. The schematic system itself becomes the code(or a *schematic language*), which is commonly and universally understood. (We could deduce to apply the same scheme for verbal+verbal or pictorial+pictorial).

## 7. Conclusion

The poets of concrete poetry eagerly yearned for the concurrency of expression and perception. Calligrammes show the pictorialization of signs and signification of pictures, as pictures(icons) are more universal and signs are more precise. Calligrammes enable the fusion of the semantic language and images functioning as a powerful messenger.

As PAVIO declared that images play a positive role for understanding memories and reasoning. And he also mentioned

[figure 4.0] schematic communication model of a calligramme



the 3rd sign, 'Proposition' is required, and calligrammes, transforming into a schematogramme, function just as that. It is an effective structure with a clear hierarchical proportional relationship. There is a whole ocean of graphic possibilities waiting for the calligrammatic model to be tested.

Calligrammes are also visually seductive, lively and poetic. communication model derived from calligrammes may be used in variety of ways to represent a wide spectrum of uses. Further considerations include adopting calligrammatic model to Korean alphabets, testing actual feasibility, usage in various media and environments and contextual elements such as viewing distance. Since this research is hypothetical, further surveys on more concrete evidences must be gathered.

Since its most characteristic communicative advantage lies in conveying the intended messages instantly by compressing the complex information into a single impression, it is better suited for graphic expressions that require a global and focused message providing a strong staying power in memory with symbolic qualities. Advertisements, posters, illustrations, certificates, and various moving images seem to be suitable choice.

## Reference

- FLOCH, J.M (Korean trans. PARK In-Chul), *Petites Mythologies de l'œil et de l'esprit*, Hangilsa, 1994
- PEIGNOT, Jérôme, *Typoèmes*, SEUIL, 2004
- SWANN, C (Korean trans. SONG Sung Jae), *Language & Typography*, Communication Books, 2003
- MASSIN, R (Korean trans. & ed. KIM Chang shik), *Letter and Image*, Mijinsa, 1994
- ARNHEIM, R (Korean trans. CHUNG Yongdo) *the Power of the Center*, Noonbit, 1995
- KANDINSKY, W (Korean trans. CHA Bonghee), *Point to Line and Plane*, Yulhwadang, 2004
- Gombrich, E.H. (Korean trans. CHA Mire) *Art and Illusion*, Yulhwadang, 2003
- OH, Byungwon, *Design and the order of Image*, 1999, Ehwa Women's Univ. Press