

THE EVALUATION OF MIXED MEDIA IN VISUAL STORYTELLING

Nafiseh Tahari, Faculty of Communication, Master Student at Communication Studies. ARUCAD, Kyrenia, Cyprus, Nafiseh.tr95@gmail.com

Asst. Prof. Dr. Çağdaş Ögüç, Faculty of Communication, Department of New Media and Communications. ARUCAD, Kyrenia, Cyprus, cagdas.oguc@arucad.edu.tr

ABSTRACT: Mixed media has become an increasingly prominent mode of visual expression in contemporary communication, where photographs, illustrations, typography, digital graphics, and other visual forms are frequently combined to construct layered narratives. Despite the growing prevalence of such hybrid practices, relatively limited theoretical attention has been given to how mixed media contributes to the formation of narrative meaning in visual storytelling. This article addresses that gap by proposing a conceptual framework for understanding mixed media visual storytelling through the interaction of three interrelated layers: the material, semiotic, and narrative. Using a qualitative, conceptual-analytical methodology, this research relies on theoretical perspectives from visual communication, semiotics and narrative studies to construct and apply this conceptual framework. The study's original contribution lies in bringing these dimensions together within an integrated interpretive structure, enabling mixed media works to be understood not simply as formal combinations of diverse visual elements, but as complex meaning-making systems. To demonstrate the analytical value of this framework, the article draws on selected works by Uğur Gallenkuş, whose digital collages provide a focused case for examining how material contrasts, symbolic tensions, and implied narratives interact within hybrid visual compositions. By articulating the relationship between form, signification, and narrative organization, the article offers a more structured theoretical basis for interpreting mixed media storytelling in contemporary visual culture.

Keywords: *Mixed Media, Narrative Structure, Uğur Gallenkuş, Visual Storytelling, Visual Communication.*

ÖZ: Karma medya, fotoğrafların, illüstrasyonların, tipografinin, dijital grafiklerin ve diğer görsel biçimlerin katmanlı anlatılar oluşturmak üzere sıklıkla bir araya getirildiği çağdaş iletişimde giderek daha öne çıkan bir görsel ifade biçimi haline gelmiştir. Bu tür melez uygulamaların yaygınlığı artmasına rağmen, karma medyanın görsel hikâye anlatımında anlatı anlamının oluşumuna nasıl katkıda bulunduğu konusuna teorik açıdan nispeten sınırlı bir ilgi gösterilmiştir. Bu makale, malzeme, göstergebilim ve anlatı olmak üzere birbiriyle ilişkili üç katmanın etkileşimi yoluyla karma medya görsel hikaye anlatımını

anlamaya yönelik kavramsal bir çerçeve önererek bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Nitel, kavramsal-analitik bir metodoloji kullanan bu araştırma, söz konusu kavramsal çerçeveyi oluşturmak ve uygulamak için görsel iletişim, göstergebilim ve anlatı çalışmalarından gelen teorik bakış açılarına dayanmaktadır. Çalışmanın özgün katkısı, bu boyutları bütüncül bir yorumlama yapısı içinde bir araya getirerek, karma medya çalışmalarının sadece çeşitli görsel öğelerin biçimsel birleşimleri olarak değil, karmaşık anlam üretme sistemleri olarak anlaşılmasını sağlamaktır. Bu çerçevenin analitik değerini göstermek için makale, Uğur Gallenkuş'un seçilmiş çalışmalarından yararlanmaktadır; sanatçının dijital kolajları, maddesel zıtlıklar, sembolik gerilimler ve ima edilen anlatıların melez görsel kompozisyonlar içinde nasıl etkileşime girdiğini incelemek için odaklanmış bir vaka sunmaktadır. Biçim, anlamlandırma ve anlatı düzeni arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koyarak makale, çağdaş görsel kültürde karma medya hikaye anlatımını yorumlamak için daha yapılandırılmış bir teorik temel sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Karma Medya, Anlatı Yapısı, Uğur Gallenkuş, Görsel Hikâye Anlatımı, Görsel İletişim.*

1. Introduction

Visual storytelling has grown significantly in the manner in which information and experience are shared across contemporary media environments. While previously, stories were typically told through text alone, today they are more commonly presented by using combinations of images, graphics, animation and/or video. Given the growing number of digital platforms available to share content, the ability to visually tell a story has become an effective method to communicate a narrative to audiences and provide a simple method to explain a complex idea. Typically, designers, journalists and media practitioners will create visual compositions to frame a story and assist the viewer in interpreting the story. The integration of various visual elements (i.e., photographs, illustrations, typography, collages, etc.) into a single composition is becoming increasingly popular. These hybrids; also known as mixed media, allow creators to produce layered images where each visual element interacts with other elements to produce a visual representation of a story. Each of the individual visual elements will

influence the others and together they will contribute to the production and interpretation of the meaning of the story. With increased popularity of mixed media, it would appear that visual storytelling is now created through the interaction of two or more visual languages. Although mixed media are present throughout contemporary visual culture, there is surprisingly little theoretical research regarding how these combinations create narrative meaning. Much of the existing research will approach mixed media as a creative tool and analyze storytelling from a primarily narrative perspective. There appears to be a lack of research focusing on how the interaction of multiple visual media influences the structural elements of a story.

The purpose of this article is to explore the relationship between mixed media and visual storytelling. To address the research question posed below, the article provides a conceptual framework to examine mixed media storytelling through the lens of three analytic layers: the material layer, the semiotic layer and the narrative layer. Through an analysis of the interaction between visual materials, symbolic meaning and audience interpretation of mixed-media compositions, this framework will provide a systematic approach to understanding how visual narratives, constructed from multiple sources, are developed. By emphasizing this relational structure, the article offers a more systematic way of explaining how hybrid visual works communicate meaning across multiple levels at once. In doing so, it contributes to the literature by providing a theoretical basis for interpreting mixed media not only in terms of visual composition, but also in terms of how layered signs, material choices, and narrative organization shape the viewer's understanding.

2. Mixed media in contemporary visual communication

As visual materials are increasingly being blended by artists and designers to provide a wider arrangement of creative options and create richer and more layered visual communications, it is becoming easier to see this trend. The blending of media across various art, design, and digital communication mediums has been rapidly increasing since the development of "mixed media" practices. While mixed media is generally described as the combination of at least two different artistic mediums (such

as painting, photography, collage, or found objects), within one piece of artwork; the resulting composition of the piece cannot be attributed to a single medium. The term “medium” describes all the materials an artist uses to create a piece of artwork, whether those materials include, but are not limited to, traditional drawing tools (graphite pencils and pastels); or materials such as textiles, metal, wood, and cement (Osaigbovo & Izogie, 2018, p. 119). Many modern-day mixed-media pieces visually layer many different visual elements such as photographs, written text fragments, painted color, and three-dimensional objects; thus, creating complex, multi-layered compositions that do not lend themselves to a singular medium-based interpretive process (Maslen & Ross, 2022, p. 1).

An understanding of the complexity of the visual message created in the layered visual composition of mixed-media pieces can be enhanced using theoretical frameworks of visual communication. For example, Barthes' concept of image rhetoric indicates that images are capable of representing the world in a denotative manner (i.e., representational); and in addition to the representational aspect of the image, images also have a connotative quality (i.e., carry symbolic/cultural meaning) (Barthes, 1977, p. 17). Therefore, if photographic images are combined with other visual components such as illustration, typography, and/or graphics, the visual layers of the photograph will be amplified; therefore, making the visual interpretation of the composition increasingly layered. As a result, mixed-media compositions increase the semiotic potential of visual communication by allowing multiple visual codes to coexist in a single structure.

The history of the use of mixed-media is closely tied to the experimental nature of the early twenty-first century's artistic movements. Artists were attempting to redefine what could constitute painting, and what materials could be used in artistic endeavors. Yu (2025) states that Cubist artists such as Pablo Picasso and George Braque were among the first to introduce everyday items, i.e., newspaper clippings and fabric, into their compositions. By introducing these items into their compositions, these artists challenged the long-standing definitions of pictorial representation; and consequently, created new ways for artists to incorporate multiple types of materials into a single

visual structure (Yu, 2025: 69-70). Yu (2025) further states that the work of these early artists led to later experimental movements such as Dadaism and Surrealism; and ultimately influenced artists to explore the relationships between different artistic mediums. This relationship between different artistic mediums was further explored in the mid-twentieth century, through artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, who produced hybrid pieces that incorporated elements of painting, sculpture, and photography; thus, further blurring the lines between artistic disciplines (Yu, 2025: 69-70).

To be able to consider the theoretical basis for the creation of mixed-media art works, Yu (2025: 69-70) has described several theoretical views that will help us to understand how the components of mixed-media work together. For example, materiality, layering and intermediality are all theoretical ways that we may better understand the visual interactions between each component of the overall composition. Materiality (the physical properties) of the materials chosen for an artwork can affect the way that the artwork communicates its intended message and emotional response. Layering (embedding multiple conceptual or temporal aspects into a single visual surface) is another way that artists can add multiple levels of meaning into their artwork. Yu (2025: 70) describes intermediality as “the interplay between different media” that “further expands the possibilities of artistic expression in mixed media”.

As technology continues to evolve, so too does the way in which artists create and present their artwork. Mixed media is becoming increasingly common in contemporary design practices as well as in the transformation of visual culture. Visual cultures are being transformed by digital technology, creating new fluidities between media formats, thus providing new opportunities for designers to integrate photographs, illustrations, motion graphics and interactive elements into a single visual composition.

Mixed-media in graphic design and digital media allows for balancing of realism with interpretation in visual narratives. Photographs offer documentational evidence and authenticity, whereas illustrations or graphical elements allow designers to convey abstract ideas, metaphors and conceptual emphases (Bateman, 2014: 181). The combination of the visual elements in a composition produces a way of communicating

both factual and emotionally/interpretively based perspectives. Mixed media is a flexible visual language that provides designers with a means to meet the increasing complexities of communicating visually in today's world (O'Halloran, 2008: 445).

In conclusion, the views presented above indicate that when designers use multiple visual languages in a composition, they function as communication structures enabling interaction between visual languages. By combining visual forms (such as photography, illustration and typography), designers are able to organize and interpret visual information. As such, mixed media is best understood as a narrative tool that enables designers to develop structured visual storytelling.

3. Visual storytelling as a narrative system

Storytelling has been a vital way to pass on knowledge, values, and experiences from person to person, group to group, and culture to culture for thousands of years. Media is another field where storytelling can be used to organize the way we present information while connecting emotionally with our audience. Emotional connection with the audience occurs when they see what you're showing them and feel the same feelings you did when creating your work. This approach to media allows people to interact on a deeper level in today's complex digital world of information (Amangeldiyeva et al., 2020, p. 3163). Storytelling can take many forms: spoken word, written word, film, etc. Regardless of the form, the goal is always the same: to structure information so it can be interpreted meaningfully by the audience (Baharuddin et al., 2023: 1946). Visual storytelling, therefore, is the process of using visual components to build and tell stories. Photographs, illustrations, graphic design, video, and animation are all types of visual elements that create a story through visual representations. Studies have shown that visual imagery will enhance narrative communication by adding clues for interpretation to assist the audience in understanding the meaning better than if it were presented in words (Baharuddin et al., 2023: 1946). Furthermore, both visual and verbal forms of storytelling are designed to connect with the audience on a meaningful level and to elicit an emotional response to the message (Baharuddin et al., 2023: 1946).

With the rapid development of new media technologies and the increasing popularity of visually oriented media platforms like social media, online news sources and multimedia storytelling, the importance of visual storytelling has increased exponentially. Visual narratives are now most often created using multiple visual elements such as photographs, graphics, video and animation, which are combined to direct the viewer's attention and to quickly convey the idea. Segel and Heer (2010) found that, because visualizations can provide multiple paths to understanding the data, many of the visualizations they studied relied heavily upon compositional strategies such as emphasizing certain parts of the image, annotating parts of the image, and creating a sequence of images that show the relationship between the various elements of the visualization (Segel & Heer, 2010: 1143-1145). These compositional strategies enable viewers to move through complex visualizations and make meaningful connections with the narrative.

This study argues that digital artists are demonstrating how visual storytelling works in its ability to combine many different visual elements into one visual statement. For example, Turkish artist Uğur Gallenkuş uses the technique of combining two or more disparate photographic images in his digital collages to represent contrasted social realities. Many of Gallenkuş' digital collages juxtapose photographs of conflict, poverty and displacement with images that represent comfort, stability and prosperity. By using the visual juxtaposition of these disparate images, Gallenkuş is able to create visually compelling compositions that inspire viewers to think about global inequality and humanitarian issues. Gallenkuş demonstrates how using a variety of media approaches can be a powerful tool for both visual storytelling and social commentary. Rather than discussing these works only in general terms, this study uses selected examples from Gallenkuş's collages as a focused case to demonstrate how the proposed three-layer framework (material, semiotic, and narrative) operates in practice. The following sections apply this framework to specific works, showing how meaning is formed through the interaction of visual materials, symbolic contrasts, and implied narrative relationships.

Before applying this framework in detail, it is necessary to further clarify how visual narratives are structurally organized within visual communication. Storytelling can be seen from a structural point of view as organizing information in an organized manner to create meaningful relationships among pieces of information. Sequences are created by an audience when they organize visual information in order to create connections among the events and/or ideas in a particular order (Segel & Heer, 2010: 1140). In addition, these relationships can be visually created using spatial organization, visual hierarchies, and emphasis within visual media; however, they cannot solely be defined through the use of chronology for creating narratives.

Visual narrative development has led researchers to study how visual narratives are developed through design strategies that assist the audience in developing their own interpretations of visual narratives. In this sense, narrative visualization combines graphical representations of data/information with the structure of storytelling so that visual components of the narrative will convey the information while at the same time influence the direction and interpretation of the unfolding of the narrative by the viewer. “Instead of displaying isolated visualizations/data or images, visual narratives are organized and directed so that they provide the necessary direction and progression of the narrative” (Segel & Heer, 2010: 1139-1140). Building on these understandings of visual narrative structure and interpretation, the following section introduces the conceptual framework of this study, which examines mixed media storytelling through the interaction of material, semiotic, and narrative layers.

4. Methodology: the three layers of mixed media storytelling

This section outlines the methodological framework guiding the analysis, detailing the three analytical layers, that are subsequently applied to selected works by Uğur Gallenkuş in the findings section. To better understand how mixed media contribute to visual storytelling, this paper will present a conceptual framework that examines mixed media narratives with respect to three interdependent analytical layers: the material layer, the semiotic layer, and the narrative layer. Although each layer is

focused on a separate dimension of visual communication, they work together to develop a complex system of visual narrative expression.

Mixed media compositions typically include multiple layers of visual information that are active at the same time. Therefore, analyzing such works using one analytical lens may overlook significant connections among the visual components. As a result, conceptual frameworks have become valuable tools for organizing and analyzing complex visual phenomenon. As Bateman (2014) observes, “analysis has been deprived of effective methodologies for approaching visual artefacts” and it remains “unclear what units of analysis should be selected and how they can be combined,” highlighting the need for structured analytical frameworks in visual communication research (Bateman, 2014: 181).

The proposed framework in this study uses theoretical models from visual communication, multimodal communication, and narrative studies. Visual communication theory emphasizes that meaning in visual media does not emerge from a single visual element. As O'Halloran (2008) explains, meaning in visual communication arises through “an integrating platform for theorizing how semiotic resources interact to create meaning”, suggesting that no single visual element can be understood in isolation from the others (O'Halloran, 2008: 444). The framework organizes the three components into three distinct analytical layers and thus facilitates an analysis of both the structural and interpretational features of visual storytelling. The material layer considers the physical aggregation of media forms, the semiotic layer addresses the symbolic meanings generated by the visual signs, and the narrative layer addresses how these meanings are organized into a cohesive visual story. Together, the three layers provide a comprehensive model for understanding how mixed-media compositions function as narrative structures in contemporary visual communication. To further clarify how this framework operates in practice, selected works by Uğur Gallenkuş are used in the following sections as illustrative examples.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Material Layer

The first level of the framework is the material layer. It is because of the interaction among the individual visual forms that create the hybrid visual form that can't be reduced to one visual form alone.

Understanding this from an intermedia perspective means looking at the concept of intermediality. Intermediality is a term used to describe the relationship/interaction between two different media systems. Rajewski defines intermedial configurations as "the crossing of borders between media" and therefore are the way new forms of cultural production develop out of the interaction of different medial structures (Rajewsky, 2005: 46). In other words, mixed media compositions work by combining multiple forms of material into a single visual expression.

Each media does not function independently of each other; they all add their own visual affordance to the composition. For example, photography may be introduced as providing a realistic or documentary quality, whereas illustrations may demonstrate symbolic or interpretive dimensions. This interaction of material properties can be observed in Uğur Gallenkuş's collage *Hair and Chain*, where contrasting elements are combined within a single composition. The juxtaposition of soft human hair and a rigid metallic chain highlight the difference between organic and mechanical textures, creating a strong visual tension. This contrast demonstrates how material choices are not neutral, but actively contribute to the construction of meaning by shaping how the viewer perceives and interprets the image. In this way, the material layer establishes the structural foundation upon which further symbolic and narrative meanings are built (Image 1).

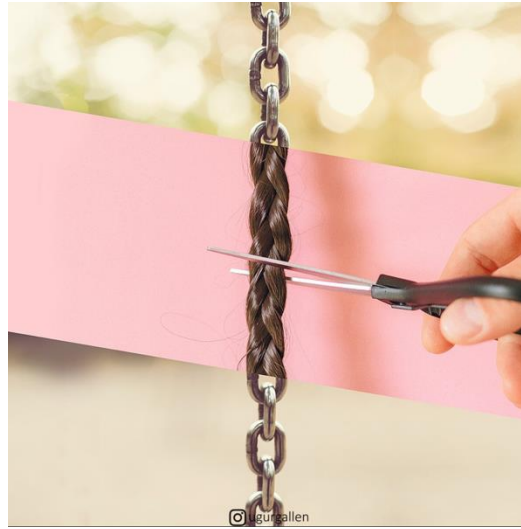


Image 1: Hair and Chain, by Uğur Gallenkuş. (27 September 2022).

5.2 Semiotic Layer

The semiotic layer of the mixed media framework examines how meaning is created in an image through the visual sign and symbolic elements used by the artist to create an image. As stated in O'Halloran (2008) multimodal communications often use several modes of expression. Each mode produces a unique type of information and each contributes a symbolic value to the total meaning. Visual modes such as images, graphics and text, provide different information to the viewer based on their ability to communicate different types of information. For example, images provide a visual representation of concrete objects, events and emotions; whereas text provides direction for interpreting the content and provides structural organization to the information. Together with graphics and images, they allow artists and designers to create complex symbolic meanings and ideas that cannot be communicated through a single medium. The semiotic layer demonstrates how images composed from multiple forms of visual media function as a system of signs. Each element of the visual media interacts to create metaphor, symbolism and conceptual meaning to the narrative.

While Gallenkuş's works broadly demonstrate all three layers of the proposed framework, different examples can be used to highlight specific aspects more clearly. At the semiotic level, this process of meaning-making can be observed in his collage that

combines healthcare professionals with superhero figures. In this composition, the visual pairing functions symbolically, where medical workers are associated with qualities traditionally attributed to fictional heroes, such as strength, sacrifice, and protection. The meaning does not emerge from either element alone, but from their interaction within the same visual space. This demonstrates how mixed media compositions operate as systems of signs, where symbolic meaning is constructed through the relationship between visual elements rather than through isolated representations (Image 2).



Image 2: Healthcare Workers and Superheroes, by Uğur Gallenkuş. (30 December 2020).

5.3 Narrative Layer

The third level of the model is the Narrative Level; it is about the way visual elements are arranged in order to tell an interpretation-based story to the viewer. Visual Storytelling is built upon the use of Compositional Strategies that will lead the viewer's focus, create connections between elements and show the sequence of the events or ideas.

According to Segel and Heer (2010), the Oxford English Dictionary defines narrative as “an account of a series of events, facts, etc., given in order and with the

establishing of connections between them” (Segel & Heer, 2010: 1139). In the case of visual media, these connections can be made through the spatial placement of visual elements, the use of visual emphasis, by using annotation, or by using sequential design.

Visual Narratives commonly employ techniques of visual emphasis, annotation and compositional hierarchy to guide the viewer to what they should pay attention to and how they should interpret the visual elements. These techniques assist the viewer to identify the key elements in the composition and understand the relationships between the different elements in the visual. Therefore, the meaning of the narrative does not come solely from the individual visual elements, but also from the ways in which those elements have been structured to develop a relationship with each other.

In the case of mixed media compositions, the narrative layer is responsible for integrating the Material Dimension and the Semiotic Dimension of the composition in a coherent visual narrative. The narrative layer determines the way the viewer engages with the layers of the visual elements and therefore concludes the process of telling a story and allows the viewer to interpret the visual message as a meaningful narrative.

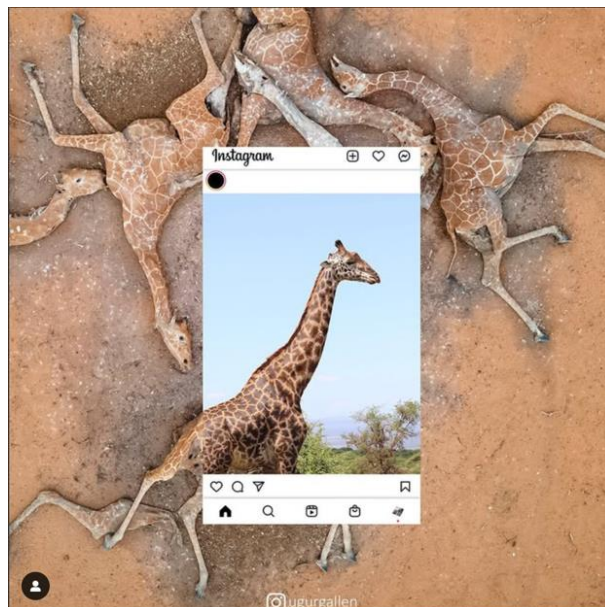


Image 3: Living Giraffe and Dead Giraffes, by Uğur Gallenkuş. (26 January 2022).

To synthesize the analytical value of the proposed framework, Table 1 summarizes how selected works by Uğur Gallenkuş illustrate the interaction of the material, semiotic, and narrative layers. Rather than functioning as isolated examples, these works demonstrate how the three-layer model can be applied as an integrated interpretive structure for analysing mixed media visual storytelling.

It is important to note that the interpretations discussed in this analysis are not definitive or fixed meaning in the images. Instead, they reflect from the researcher's own analytical perspective, shaped by interaction with the visual material and theoretical framework. Therefore, the semiotic and narrative readings presented here should be viewed as one among many possible interpretations.

Artwork	Material Layer	Semiotic Layer	Narrative Layer	Analytical Value
Hair and Chain	Combines contrasting visual textures and material qualities within a single collage, juxtaposing organic softness with metallic rigidity. The composition emphasizes the physical tension created by the	The contrast between hair and chain can signifies a symbolic opposition between fragility and restraint, or humanity and control. Meaning emerges through the collision of these elements	The juxtaposition can encourage the viewer to infer an implied story of restriction, vulnerability, or imposed constraint. Although static, the image suggests a condition of tension and possible struggle.	Suggests how material contrast can function as the structural basis for symbolic and narrative interpretation.

	interaction of unlike visual elements.	rather than through either image alone.		
Healthcare Workers and Superheroes	Uses photographic and popular visual references within the same composition to create a hybrid visual field. The collage format allows otherwise separate representational worlds to coexist.	Medical workers become associated with heroism, sacrifice, strength, and protection through symbolic visual pairing. The meaning is relational and metaphorical rather than literal.	The composition can imply a broader social narrative in which frontline workers are reimagined as heroic figures within a moment of crisis.	Suggests how symbolic meaning in mixed media is produced through juxtaposition and metaphorical association.
Living Giraffe and Dead Giraffes	Constructs visual tension through the juxtaposition of living and dead animal imagery within a single frame.	The image can signify environmental destruction, loss, vulnerability, and human	The viewer is invited to construct an implied narrative of before/after, survival/destruction, or presence/absence	Suggests how mixed media can generate narrative implication through a

	The composition depends on contrast in visual state, spatial arrangement, and emotional tone.	impact on nature. The opposition between life and death carries strong conceptual weight.	. Narrative emerges through conceptual contrast rather than chronological sequence.	single static composition.
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Table 1. Application of the Three-Layer Conceptual Framework to Selected Works by Uğur Gallenkuş (Taheri, 2026).

As Table 1 shows, the three layers are analytically distinguishable but closely interdependent in practice. The selected works reveal that material composition, symbolic meaning, and narrative implication do not operate separately; rather, they interact to produce the layered meaning characteristic of mixed media storytelling.

6. Discussion

6.1. Interactions between the layers

Although, we can separate the material, semiotic and narrative layers theoretically, mixed media storytelling is made possible by the interaction among the layers. In practice, the vast majority of visual narratives do not derive from a single visual element, or a single visual medium. They are constructed through the relationships that exist between visual materials, the symbolic meanings that they represent and the way that viewers engage with those materials. Studying how the layers interact will help explain why mixed-media compositions are especially well-suited to tell complex visual stories.

The interaction begins with the material layer. Here, different media forms like photography, illustration, collage, typography and/or digital graphics are used together in one composition. The physical characteristics of the different media types define how

the viewer perceives the image. When different visual materials are combined, designers create contrasting visual textures and visual relationships that provide the structural base of the visual narrative.

Those visual relationships determine the meaning in the semiotic layer, where the visual elements serve as signs to convey symbolic or conceptual ideas. Since multiple media are interacting together in one composition, they can produce layers of meaning that go beyond what is literally depicted in the individual visual elements. The juxtaposition of photographic imagery and illustrative forms, for example, can indicate a connection between reality and interpretation, while layered visual textures can evoke associations with memory, transformation or historical continuity. The visual properties of color, composition, line and texture lead the viewer in understanding the message of the work.

Finally, the symbolic cues in the semiotic layer provide the base for the narrative layer, where the viewer takes the visual elements and puts them together into a cohesive interpretation and builds upon the meaning of the composition. Drawing on Segel and Heer's framework, it can be understood that narratives occur when the audience connects visual information into meaningful sequences or conceptual relationships. (Segel & Heer, 2010: 1139) The layout structure, visual hierarchy, and compositional emphasis of visual storytelling, generally directs the viewer's attention and guides their understanding of the story.

Through this layered interaction, mixed-media compositions have the ability to convey messages visually, symbolically, and emotionally simultaneously, demonstrating the power of mixed media as a viable methodology for creating visual narratives today. As demonstrated through the analysis of selected works, these layered interactions are not theoretical abstractions but can be observed in contemporary mixed media practices.

6.2 Implications for visual communication and design

There are a number of ways the conceptual model proposed here can inform both the practice of visual communication and the study of it. First, by understanding mixed media stories as a layered (material, semiotic and narrative) system, designers and researchers will have a more organized way of thinking about the relationship between all of the different visual elements that go into constructing meaning in contemporary media. Second, the model will provide a structure for examining how different visual elements work together to create the various levels of narrative found in hybrid media forms.

Contemporary visual communication is characterized by the use of many different media forms. For example, in addition to photography, illustration, animation, typography and video, each of which can stand alone as a visual element, designers increasingly find themselves using combinations of these media forms to convey layered meanings and emotional narratives.

In the past decade there has been a significant amount of research demonstrating that the combination of multiple visual elements and presentation techniques can result in compelling narrative experiences that enable audiences to better interpret complex information (Segel & Heer, 2010, p. 1141). In addition to photographs and moving images, color, texture and composition play a key role in establishing a mood in visual narratives. Photographs and moving images add a sense of realism and documentary authenticity to the narrative.

This layering of visual elements enables designers to engage audiences in the creation of meaning by creating interactive and dynamic visual narratives. In addition to assisting researchers, the model can also serve as a guide for designers who wish to intentionally structure the visual narratives they create for professional communication purposes. The use of visual storytelling has increased dramatically in recent years. Fields such as digital journalism, advertising, editorial design and multimedia communication rely heavily on visual storytelling. There is substantial evidence from

studies on visual storytelling that indicate that the inclusion of images, graphics and audiovisual elements results in greater audience comprehension of complex information and the creation of engaging narrative experiences (Hullman & Diakopoulos, 2011: 2233).

One of the most compelling examples of the effectiveness of visual storytelling in creating engaging narrative experiences can be seen in digital media. When photographs, video and graphic elements are combined in a visual narrative, it has the potential to increase audience engagement and enhance retention of the information being communicated.

Ultimately, by taking into account the multi-layered nature of the stories told through mixed media, designers are able to develop an intentionality with regards to their use of multiple visual elements. Therefore, rather than using various media forms solely for aesthetics, designers should be aware of how each type of medium will contribute to the story's structure. By utilizing the three layers of material, symbolic and narrative, designers are able to create more meaningful representations of their idea, and thus engage their audience on a deeper level through more extensive interpretative processes.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that mixed media storytelling is more than just a style or fashion of presentation of information; it is a systematic method of communication. As a result of recognizing the relationship between how an artist creates his/her work (material), what the artist wants to say (symbolic) and how the artist wants the viewer to experience the work (narrative), both designers and researchers are able to gain a greater understanding of how to utilize mixed media presentations as a tool for storytelling in today's visually rich culture.

7. Conclusion

The increasing use of Mixed-media visual compositions throughout contemporary media has transformed how we communicate through images. Since designers and artists now create visual compositions by combining photography, illustration,

typography, and animation (and other visual elements) into one composition, visual storytelling is no longer conveyed solely through a single medium; rather, it occurs as an interplay among multiple visual forms. Therefore, studying how the various components of these forms interact with each other is becoming more and more relevant to both the field of visual communication research, and to the creative practice of designing and creating visual communications.

Thus, multi-media becomes viewed as a communicative system composed of multiple visual elements that provide separate modes of expression while also influencing how the overall composition is interpreted by its viewer(s).

Understanding the inter-relationships between these layers provides value to both designers and researchers. Designers benefit from understanding the interactions between different media formats when developing their own visual communication strategies. Integrating multiple visual languages into a composition enables designers to convey complex ideas, elicit emotional responses, and direct how audiences interpret the message being conveyed. Scholars of visual communication have a model upon which they can analyze hybrid visual cultures, and the changing roles of multi-media in contemporary media environments.

Furthermore, the application of this framework to selected works, such as those of Uğur Gallenkuş, demonstrates how mixed media compositions can be examined as integrated meaning-making systems rather than as simple combinations of visual elements. By analyzing the interaction between material construction, symbolic meaning, and narrative implication, the study shows how layered visual structures contribute to the development of complex visual narratives. This reinforces the value of the proposed framework as a tool for systematically interpreting mixed media storytelling in contemporary visual communication.

Because digital technologies continue to advance the possible ways in which visuals can be created and experienced, the development of multi-media visual storytelling will most likely have an even larger role in how visual narratives are created and experienced. Therefore, future research may examine how multi-media visual storytelling functions in new visual environments (e.g., interactive media, virtual reality,

social media), where the distinctions between different media types are continually evolving.

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