

Damian Goidich
Professor Diane Zeeuw
New Visual Studies
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Pictograms and Visual Cognition

Pictograms are a unique addition to the history of our pictorial language. Initially devised as a 20th century solution to the complications created by the globalization of mass transit, communication and travel, their effectiveness at transmitting messages, commands and direction through a distinct set of graphic shapes, symbols and colors has revolutionized how we visually interpret images and communicate on an international scale in the 21st century.

Pictograms as a visual form of communication have their roots in ancient civilizations dating back to the fourth millennium BCE. The earliest use of pictograms as a form of communication or “writing” is generally attributed to the Sumerian civilization circa 3500 BCE (Fig. 1). While little is known of the details surrounding their culture, archaeological evidence suggests that their use of cuneiforms was a specialized form of object representation used to record, amongst other things, economic transactions such as the buying and selling of livestock and foodstuffs (Frutiger 119-20). This form of communication through images has continued virtually uninterrupted down through the historical timeline, being well documented in the cultures of Egypt, China, the Middle East, the Mayan and Aztec civilizations of Mesoamerica, and throughout Medieval Europe.

The 20th century brought about a tremendous acceleration in the fields of technology, most evident in the invention and proliferation of the automobile which effected both national and international commerce. This led to the development of an extensive grid of roads and highways necessary for the accommodation of the burgeoning mobile culture.

In 1909 several European countries came together in Paris for what would become known as the first International Road Congress, where it was unilaterally agreed to adopt a simple set of four pictorial symbols to be used as road signs by the assembled countries (Horne, “The History of the Pictogram”). These four original pictographic signs have remained virtually unaltered throughout the 20th century and are still used in Europe today (Fig. 2).

In the United States, roads were maintained by private regional automobile clubs which resulted in an abundance of ad hoc signs and signals with little consistency from state to state. A concerted effort on a national scale to unify the pictographic language of signs was published in 1924 with the first manual of standards which set forth regulations for road signs and pavement markings throughout the United States (“The Shape-and Color-Give Us a Sign”). However, it would take many years of experimentation before a collective pictographic language would be adopted on a worldwide scale.

The precursor to the standardized pictographic image can be attributed to the Austrian philosopher and social scientist Otto Neurath (1882-1945). In 1936 he developed in conjunction with German artist Gerd Arnzt (1900-1988) a new form of ideogram for use with visual statistics such as charts and demographic maps.

As stated in his manual *International Picture Language*, Neurath believed that the irregular and shifting nature of language made it a poor medium for communication (13-16), and sought a simple visual iconography which used symbols as representational substitutions for lengthy descriptive narratives. The resulting system was named the *International System of Typographic Picture Education* or ISOTYPE, and is a common feature of statistical graphs and informational graphics in use today (Fig. 3). Neurath and Arnzt’s pictograms of the human form, however, have had the strongest impact on the

modern pictographic language, evidenced by the development of the Olympic pictogram and the contemporary figurative icons used in traffic and wayfinding signs.

The Olympic pictogram made its debut at the 1936 Berlin Olympics where objects symbolic to each sport were presented in a semi-uniform manner (Fig. 4).

It wasn't until the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo that a standardized set of pictograms was developed by Masaru Katsumie and Yoshiro Yamashita which were largely influenced by Neurath and Arntz's ISOTYPES. What is remarkable about the Tokyo pictograms are their effective simplicity, universality and readability. Being a monochromatic composition of simple shapes which can "represent objects, people, motion and the relationships between all three" (Fraga, "The Rise of Helvetica Man"), they lack specific associations with race, gender or cultural specificity (Fig. 5).

These "charicatures of reality" were modified by the German graphic designer Otl Aicher (1922-1991) for the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, where his designs took the Tokyo pictograms to a further degree of refinement and have since become the inspiration for all figurative variations used on pictographic signs today (Fig. 6).

In order for a person to effectively comprehend the intended message of a pictogram, several components must be addressed pertaining to its design and visual presentation. The function of a pictogram can be broken down into four basic properties: first, a pictogram must be self-explanatory. According to Brockett Horne in his article "The History of the Pictogram", an efficient symbol, image or icon must be created that is characteristic of the broadest possible understanding of the message to be conveyed. Second, the pictogram must be quickly and clearly understood. The symbol or representative image must be simple, universal and associative enough that the information conveyed by the pictogram leaves little room for misinterpretation. This characteristic is

most readily apparent in the *International Symbol of Access* pictogram we encounter in public spaces such as airports or sports stadiums which indicates access for the disabled (Fig. 7). Third, pictograms must be learned and universally acknowledged independent of writing, words, culture and language. Finally, it should point to one clear fact such as information, direction or prohibition. If a pictogram attempts to convey multiple messages in a single sign or post, the messages can't be interpreted quickly enough for an effective response time, a factor critical to certain situations which involve complex decision making such as driving or the operation of machinery (Fig. 8).

Additionally, it must be understood that a pictogram can only be effective in the context of its surroundings. Fig. 9 illustrates how a pictogram used to designate a smoking room relates to its environment. Alternately, Fig. 10 gives an explanation and example of how a NO SMOKING pictogram can be unclear when spatial reference is undefined. Each of these fundamental pictographic components is used on the traffic and information signs that have become an accepted part of our western culture.

As described earlier, the rise of the automobile and the roads created to facilitate the flow of travel necessitated the creation of a singular set of signs to control the increase in traffic. These signal signs are unique to the pictographic language in that their function is not a passive dissemination of information, but that of a command designed to elicit an instantaneous response in the driver. Automobiles carry humans about at a rate of speed that is beyond our natural state, and the amount time required to appropriately recognize and respond to a traffic situation exceeds our natural capacity to react (Frutiger 345). As such, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) created a revised set of standards published as the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD) in 1935, which

ensured consistent sign depiction throughout the United States and is continually updated at least once each decade.

A significant amount of information presented in the MUTCD, beyond the spectacular bureaucratic obsession with minute descriptives, concerns itself with the hierarchy of shape and color used in traffic signs and pictograms. Of the two, color coding is especially important to the visual understanding of traffic signs. Each color denotes an exclusive genre of sign which initiates spontaneous recognition once the color coding system is learned. For example, primary red occupies the top position in the hierarchy of color, as it marks a sharp visual contrast against its environment.

According to Adrian Frutiger in his book *Signs and Symbols*:

Quantitatively speaking, red is present in the landscape only in dots, never in wide areas. The use of red is therefore derived from the fact that this most obtrusive of all the colors of nature exists only in this exceptional way, but always as a primary color, for example, in flowers (347).

Because of its unique standing in nature, the use of red in official U.S. signs is always associated with dangerous situations, being understood as the color of STOP and YIELD signs, as well as DO NOT ENTER and WRONG WAY signs. Subsequent use of various colors descend the hierarchical ladder according to the color's intensity and association with its intended message. Fig. 11 briefly explains each color's use and function when used on official U.S. traffic signs.

In conjunction with color, the shape of a pictographic sign also plays a specific role in the over-all interpretation of the communicated message. In general, the greater number of sides on a sign or pictogram, the more critical a message it conveys (Moeur, "Manual of Traffic Signs"). The circle, with its infinite number of sides, is considered the most important of the shapes used in the pictographic language. It is used for railroad advance

warning and WRONG WAY signs, since the danger message implied by the pictogram forces the driver to be extremely attentive to the situation in order to avoid a collision. Fig. 12, taken from the 2003 edition of the MUTCD, depicts the hierarchy of shape in descending order of importance of the message transmitted. It should be noted that there are exceptions to the shape hierarchy. For example, a pentagonal-shaped pedestrian pictographic sign does not necessarily imply a more critical danger than the inverted triangle of a YIELD sign (Moeur).

With the barrage of multiple signifiers that comprise a pictogram, it is a wonder that the human mind is able to process such intricate information quite literally at the speed of thought. Yet it does, with a naturalness and fluidity indicative of humanity's complex mental development. But how is this possible? An all-encompassing understanding of the inner workings of the brain and its ability to perceive and comprehend detailed images within larger environments is admittedly still beyond our modern science. Yet with each new discovery science has made incremental progress, and it is by examining the theories presented by cognitive scientist Steven Pinker in his book, *How the Mind Works*, that we are offered the most plausible theory of human visual cognition to date.

Pinker has proposed that the mind perceives objects on a multitude of levels that utilize various internal processes. Depending on each stage of cognition, these processes work both in tandem and independently of each other to form a recognizable image upon which a decisive action is taken (135-36). This mass informational processing relies on the use of our conscious mind in present-tense awareness of our surroundings and the objects within our visual field. As Pinker illustrates, the mind actively engages in three levels of visual awareness (Fig. 13).

High-level awareness involves a macro-vision of the world, a generalized knowledge of what is in our immediate field of vision and beyond. Low-level awareness involves the detailed levels of the objects we perceive, the characteristics and descriptions of which give an object its unique visual properties. Intermediate-level awareness draws upon elements of both the high and low levels of awareness, carefully filtering only the data of which is relevant to the perception of objects in present-tense consciousness (Pinker 138-39).

This informational access of the conscious mind, or access-consciousness, is made up of four distinct features which Pinker believes “...has a clear role in the adaptive organization of thought and perception to serve rational decision making and action” (139). Each of these elements is experienced in succession beginning with sensory awareness, which takes the form of the colors and shapes of the world in front of us, the sounds and smells that surround us, and the physical sensations we experience.

Secondly, awareness and cognition of the information provided by the senses are rotated into and out of short-term memory and filtered through visual processing. According to the information gathered through the visual processes, the mind experiences a specific emotional reaction which partially directs a determined response to what is observed. Finally, the sentient portion of our being, the will or the “I” of an individual computes the data provided by the previous three stages of awareness and consciously makes an appropriate behavioral reaction (138-45).

Deferring to the research of linguist Ray Jackendoff, Pinker surmises that access-consciousness uses intermediate-level awareness to access the products of vision, the contents of short-term memory and the systems of rational thought and deliberate decision making to comprehend the intended message of visual imagery (139).

Of particular interest to understanding visual cognition as it pertains to pictograms are the features of sensory awareness and focal attention. Each of these attributes house important sub-processors which are critical to the actual perception and cognition of objects in our field of vision.

As articulated in the article “Visual Routines”, by the noted professor of cognitive science Dr. Shimon Ullman of the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel, these sub-processors can be broken down into a two-stage analysis of visual information: the creation of visual base representations, known as stage 1, and the application of visual routines which decipher incrementally information relayed by the optical input of stage 1 (110). In order to illustrate as simply as possible this complex system of visual deduction and interpretation, I will use as an example a typical encounter of an automobile driver and a STOP sign located at an intersection, describing each stage of visual cognition with its corresponding visual process.

As a driver approaches an intersection with a STOP sign in the field of vision, the input of high-level awareness (the intersection, the STOP sign, the buildings in the environment, the pavement markings, etc.) are optically absorbed at their base representations. Ullman describes base representations as the product of the mind’s initial analysis of incoming images and are generally divided into two types:

...the primal sketch, which is a representation of the incoming image, and the 2½-D sketch, which is a representation of the visible surfaces in three-dimensional space...they are essentially local descriptions that represent properties such as depth, orientation, color and direction of motion at a point (111).

Base representations are generally defined at the level of sensory awareness, and at this stage of cognition several parallel neural processors begin the task of individually deciphering each bit of optical input. Pinker supplements this theory by explaining that

each deciphering processor is programmed to translate only its assigned task; base representational processing is incapable of creating conjunctival associations, simply because there are too many combinatorial options that can be processed (141).

Subsequently as our driver comes closer to the intersection, the STOP sign appears as little more than an unarticulated blob of red (Fig. 14). Once the base representations have been established, focal attention begins the laborious task of processing that information in incremental units through established visual routines.

These visual routines are established specifically on what the mind has determined to be the most important object in the field of vision, i.e. the object of focal attention, discarding all other irrelevant data in order to evaluate the STOP sign efficiently and correctly (Ullman 112). We find that as the driver comes closer to the STOP sign, the first stage of visual processing activates by incrementally deducing individual shapes and angles of the STOP sign in a linear rather than parallel method until the over-all shape has been formed.

Once the red octagon has been determined, the mind takes the results of the visual routine and taps into what Ullman defines as “higher level components” (118-19).

These higher-level components involve recognition memory, which utilizes images stored in both long and short-term memory to match the perceived image/object with any correlations in the mind’s memory database. If the mind is able to make an exact or comparable image/object match, it then begins the final stages of cognition involving emotional coloring and reaction.

Having recognized the approaching STOP sign as an image from memory and equating it with a learned behavior pattern, the brain experiences an emotional reaction or “coloring” to the object, which then allows the will, ego, or “I” of the driver to make a

decision as to the course of action to be taken. Emotional coloring is the primal reaction to visual input, and usually takes on a “pleasure or pain” aspect which effects decision making (Pinker143). The color red, its connotations of danger and its directive of immediate awareness is a learned behavior which forces the driver to weigh the consequences of either obeying or disregarding the STOP sign. One hopes the instinct of self-preservation or “pleasure” will be experienced to motivate the will and direct the body through the motions of coming to a stop.

Having established how the mind perceives and reacts to pictographic images, the importance of presentation and design become paramount if the function of a pictogram if it is to fulfill its purpose. As discussed earlier, a key component of pictograms is that they must be learned and universally acknowledged independent of writing, words, culture and language. These elements are critical if pictograms are used in situations which require warnings, travel directions and wayfinding information in public spaces.

Therefore, the graphic symbol or icon used in a pictographic sign must support its message as efficiently and coherently as possible in order for quick interpretation.

I had the opportunity to speak with Michael Carnevale, the owner and lead designer of Carnevale Interactive, a design firm which specializes in web design, software development, company branding and identification. During the course of the interview about the design process of web icons and graphics used to navigate websites, he discussed the importance of good design and how clarity of form determines the success of a pictographic image. When designing a web icon, Carnevale and his team stress simplicity to achieve a purposeful image:

When we work on these types of projects, our goal is to always figure out how to simplify the system. Remove elements for less clutter. Identify the core message/instruction, and emphasize those,

de-emphasizing irrelevant details (“An Interview with Michael Carnevale”).

Color also plays a key role in an icon/pictogram’s legibility outside of its use in traffic and directional road signs. According to Carnevale:

Color should always be used to support the icon’s communication. Communication includes meaning (What does the icon mean?), purpose (What does the icon do...should I click on it? Drag it? Just look at it?), legibility (Is it easy to read? How small or big should it be?), and family (Is it a part of a family of icons? Does it feel like it *belongs* on the site?). To accomplish all of the above, we use all the visual tools at our disposal: color, form, effects (Drop shadow, dimension, shininess, matte, etc.), size (big/small, important/not important), and state (Does the icon turn color or hover? Does it get bigger or smaller when something happens?). (“An Interview with Michael Carnevale”)

To better illustrate how clarity of form, color and design determine the success of a pictographic image, I will use a common example of how pictograms are used in public spaces as a tool for navigation.

Anyone who has visited a zoo is familiar with navigational or “wayfinding” signs which direct visitors to the various animal environments. In response to the ever-growing and interactive global community which no longer relies exclusively on an agreed primary international language (such as English, French or Chinese), zoos have incorporated a combinatorial use of pictograms and directional icons (such as arrows) to direct visitors throughout the zoo environment. Figs. 15 and 16 offer typical examples of a standardized zoological alphabet used at some zoos in the United States.

The success of these pictograms can be attributed to several design factors which assist the visitor in the visual cognitive process. The homogenized presentation of simplified animal silhouettes against a single flat color field allows the visitor’s visual processors and routines to make higher level component associations based on memory

recognition quickly and clearly. However, once an unrestricted element of artistic license is introduced into the graphic portion of the zoo pictograms (Figs. 17-18), the images lose their conjunctive features of unification for the sake of stylization. This causes the visitor's visual routines to work harder at processing the incoming information, creating anxiety and disorientation before arriving at a recognizable image culled from the mind's memory data banks.

The use of pictograms has evolved over the past century to meet the increasing globalization of travel and commerce, and has become an important tool for the distribution of information in areas beyond their original scope. Today, pictograms are an integral part of the world's visual language and are used to transmit information across a broad range of applications, from pharmaceutical instructions to wayfinding signs in bus terminals and airports.

Through the power of the visual medium, designers are now finding new uses for pictograms by experimenting in such broadly defined areas as web-based icon buttons (Fig. 19) and political messages (Figs. 20-21). If in the past the pictogram had as its primary characteristic a sober functionality, Brockett Horne has insightfully observed that "...there is now increasing emphasis on suggestive (emotional) influence. Pictograms must be fun, or they must make people think" ("The History of Pictograms").

As a representation of the current direction of our new visual language, pictograms offer an exciting new field of exploration and application within our evolving cultural landscape.

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IMAGES



Fig 1 *Sumerian Cuneiforms* circa 3500 B.C.E.

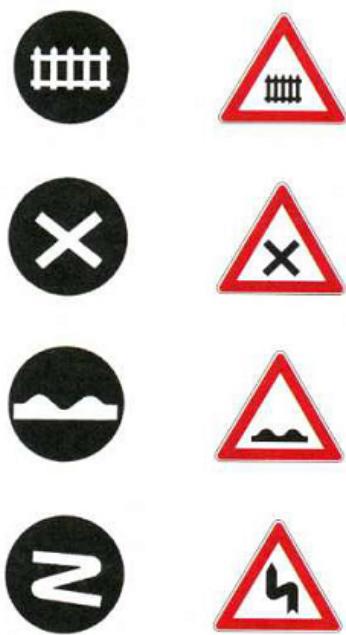


Fig 2 *Original Four Pictorial Traffic Symbols*, 1909.

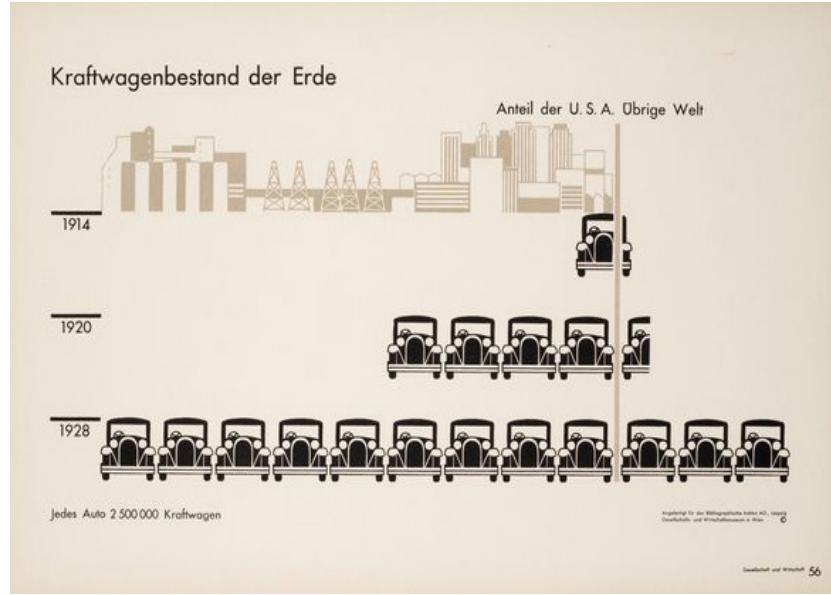


Fig. 3 Neurath & Arntz. *Automobile Production of the World*, 1936.

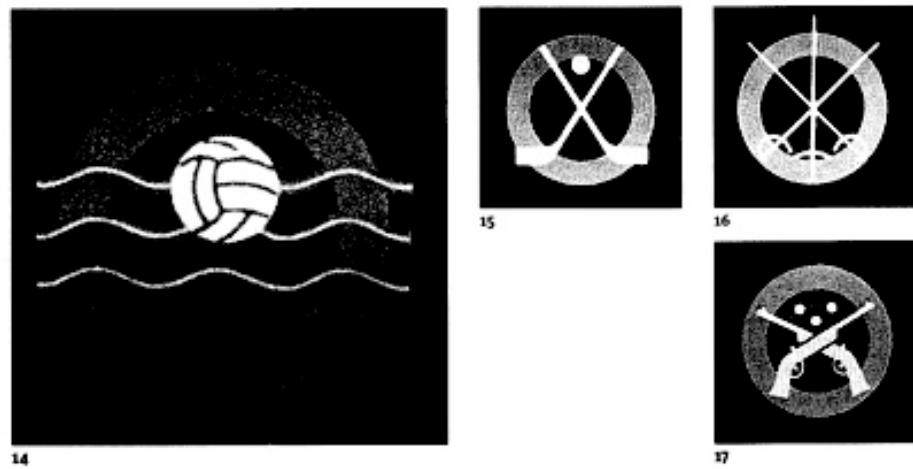


Fig. 4 Unknown. *Berlin Olympic Pictograms*, 1936.



Fig. 5 Masaru Katsumie & Yoshiro Yamashita. *Tokyo Olympic Pictograms*, 1964.

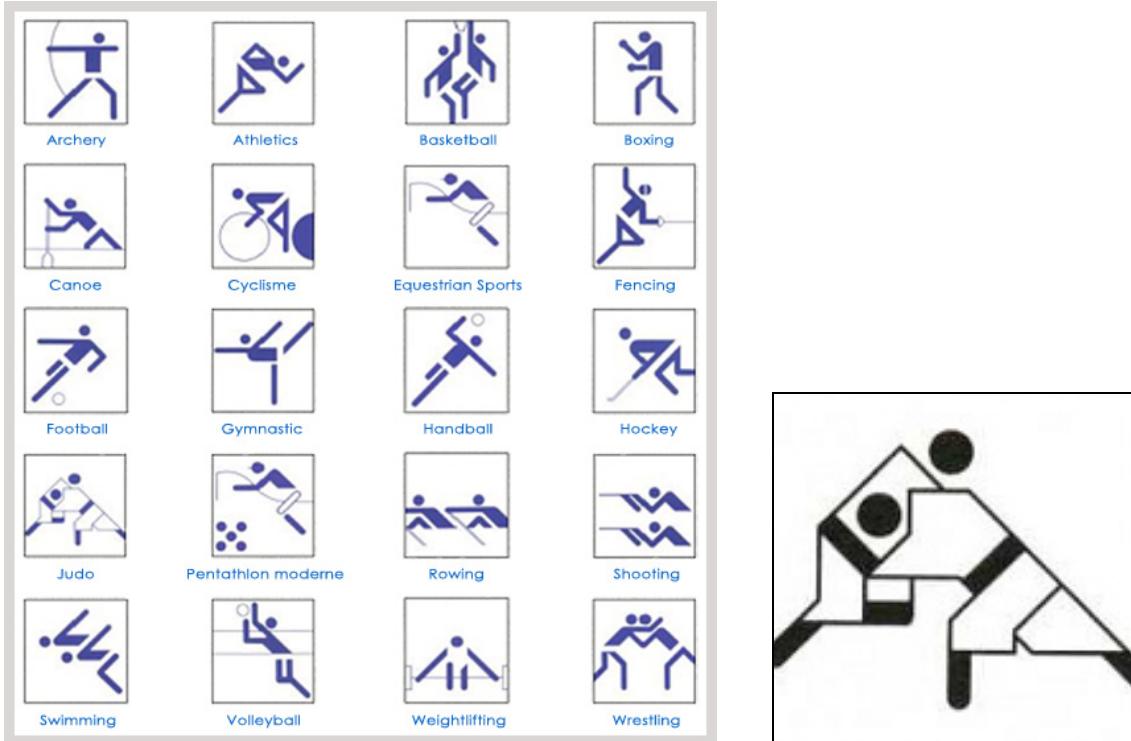


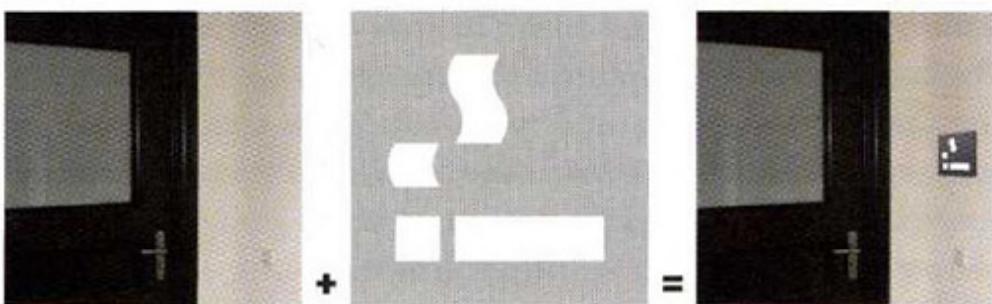
Fig. 6 Otl Aicher. *Munich Olympic Pictograms*, 1972.



Fig. 7 Susanna Koefoed. *International Symbol of Access*, 1968



Fig. 8 New York City Regulatory Sign



Surroundings

+

Icon

=

Smoking Room

The door of a room

A burning cigarette

- The meaning of the pictogram is not 'burning cigarette' but, in the context of its surroundings, it conveys a message; in this room smoking is permitted.
- With the icon of the burning cigarette, it is only possible to talk in terms of a pictogram if it is combined with a particular environment.

Fig 9 Brockett Horne. *Designated Smoking Room as it relates to its environment*



- If a ‘no smoking’ pictogram is stuck on a tree, the meaning is unclear.
- Is smoking forbidden under the tree?
- How far does the ban extend?
- The spatial reference is not set out.



- A fence offers no clear meaning either, as far as the spatial context is concerned.



- In a book, the pictogram has a completely different function. It simply quotes itself. Its effect is not imperative but indicative.



- The ‘no smoking’ pictogram can only be fully understood within a clearly defined space.

Fig. 10 Brockett Horne. “No Smoking Allowed” *Pictogram and spatial ambiguity*

Hierarchy of Color – Traffic & Information Signs



Red - prohibition



Orange – caution/work zones



Yellow - warning



Y/G – populated areas



Green - information



Blue – information/services



Brown - recreation



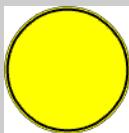
Black - commercial



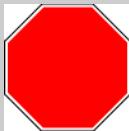
White - regulatory

Fig. 11 *Hierarchy of Color Coding*

Hierarchy of Shape – Traffic Signs



Circle - Exclusively for railroad advance warning signs



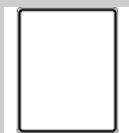
Octagon - Exclusively for STOP signs



Equilateral Triangle, Point Down - Exclusively for YIELD signs



Diamond - Used for warning signs



Rectangle, Longer Dimension Vertical - Used for regulatory signs

Fig. 12 *Hierarchy of Shape–Traffic Signs*

Theory of Visual Cognition – Steven Pinker

-Visual processing runs from the rods and cones in the retina, through intermediate levels representing edges, depths, and surfaces, to a recognition of the objects in front of us.

3 Levels of Awareness:

High:



Intermediate:



Low:



The generalized ‘Big Picture’

Accesses only relevant data from both high and low levels

Detailed scrutiny

Fig. 13 *Theory of Visual Cognition*

How Visual Routines Work – Shimon Ullman

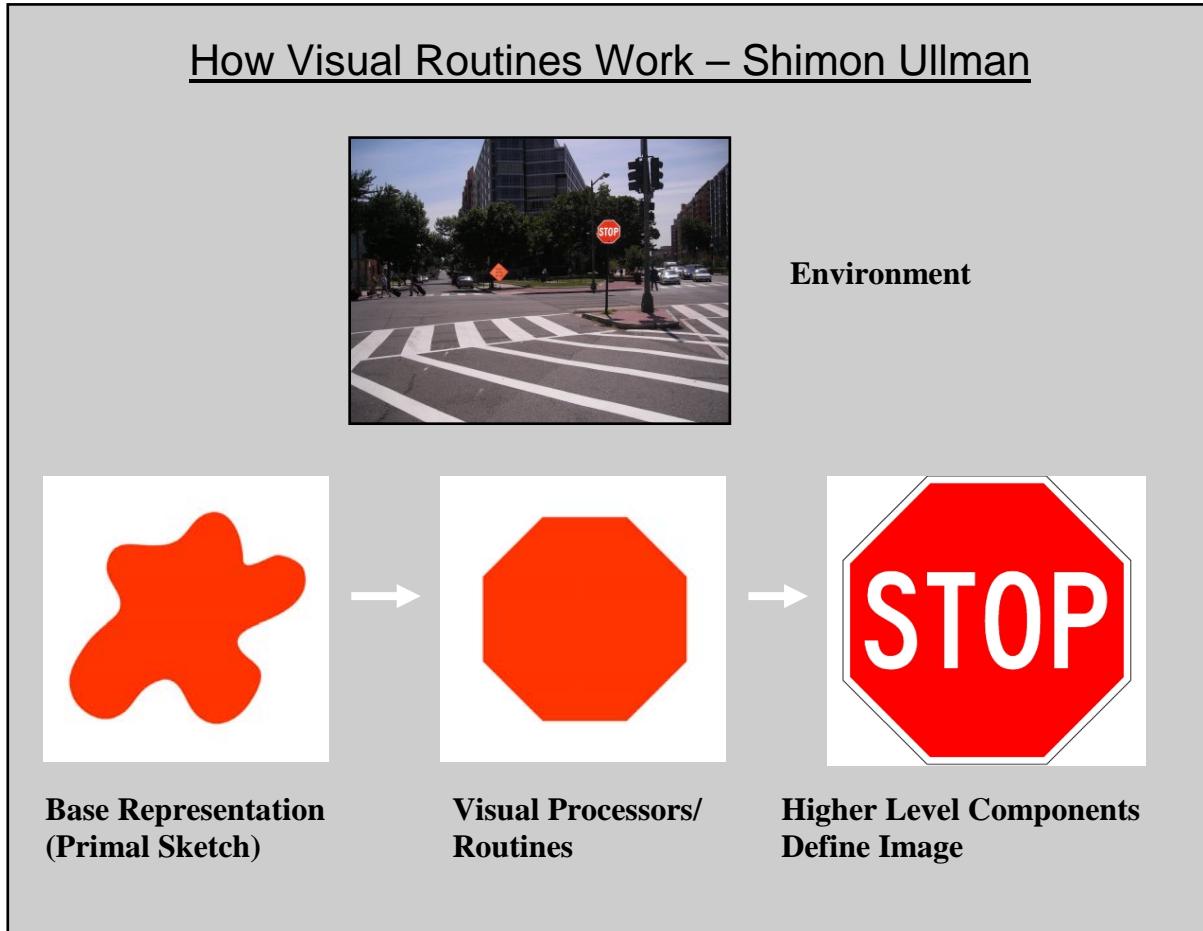


Fig. 14 *How Visual Routines Work*

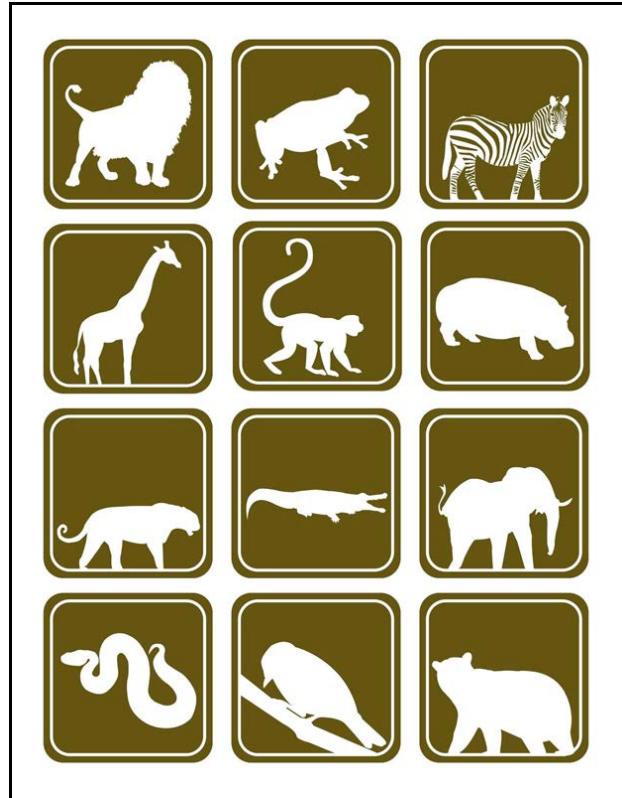


Fig. 15 Silhouetted Zoo Pictograms

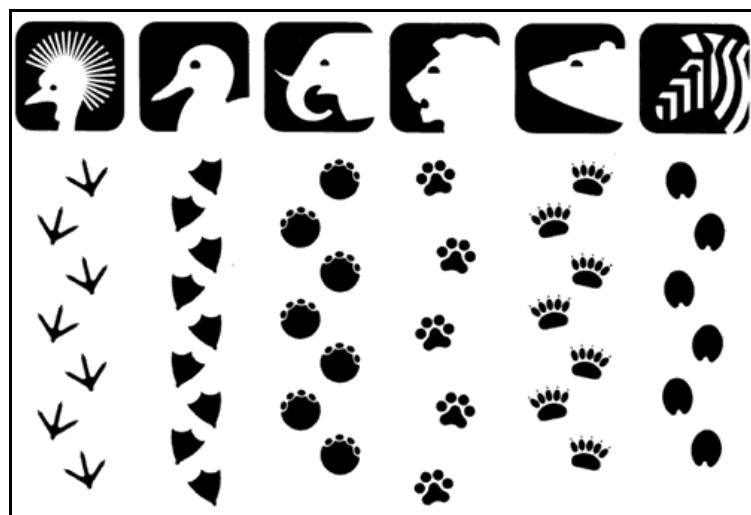


Fig. 16 Zoo Pictograms and Wayfinding Footprint Decals



Fig. 17 Stylized Zoo Pictograms



Fig. 18 Stylized Aquarium Pictograms



Fig. 19 *Web-based Icons*



Fig. 20 Anonymous. *Capitalism Pictogram*



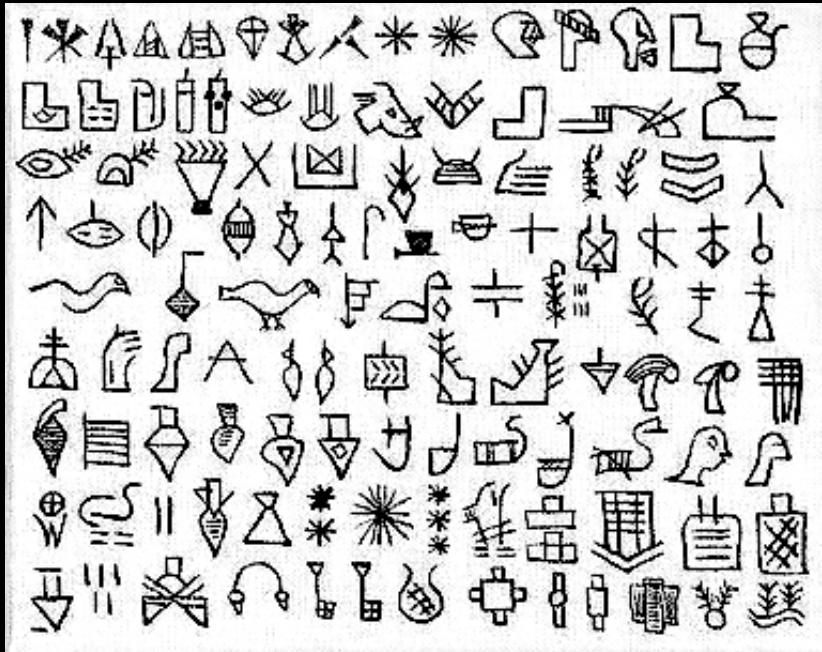
KAMPEN ER IKKE OVER



Fig. 21 Rod Ungoom. *Capitalist Pyramid Pictographic Poster*

PICTOGRAMS





Early Use of Pictograms

Mesopotamian Cuneiforms

A	B	B	C	D	E
F	G	H	H	I	J
K	L	M	N	N	O
P	Q	R	S	T	T
U	V	W	X	Y	Z

Egyptian Hieroglyphics

Original Four Pictorial Traffic Symbols (1909)



Grade-Level Railroad Crossing



Intersection

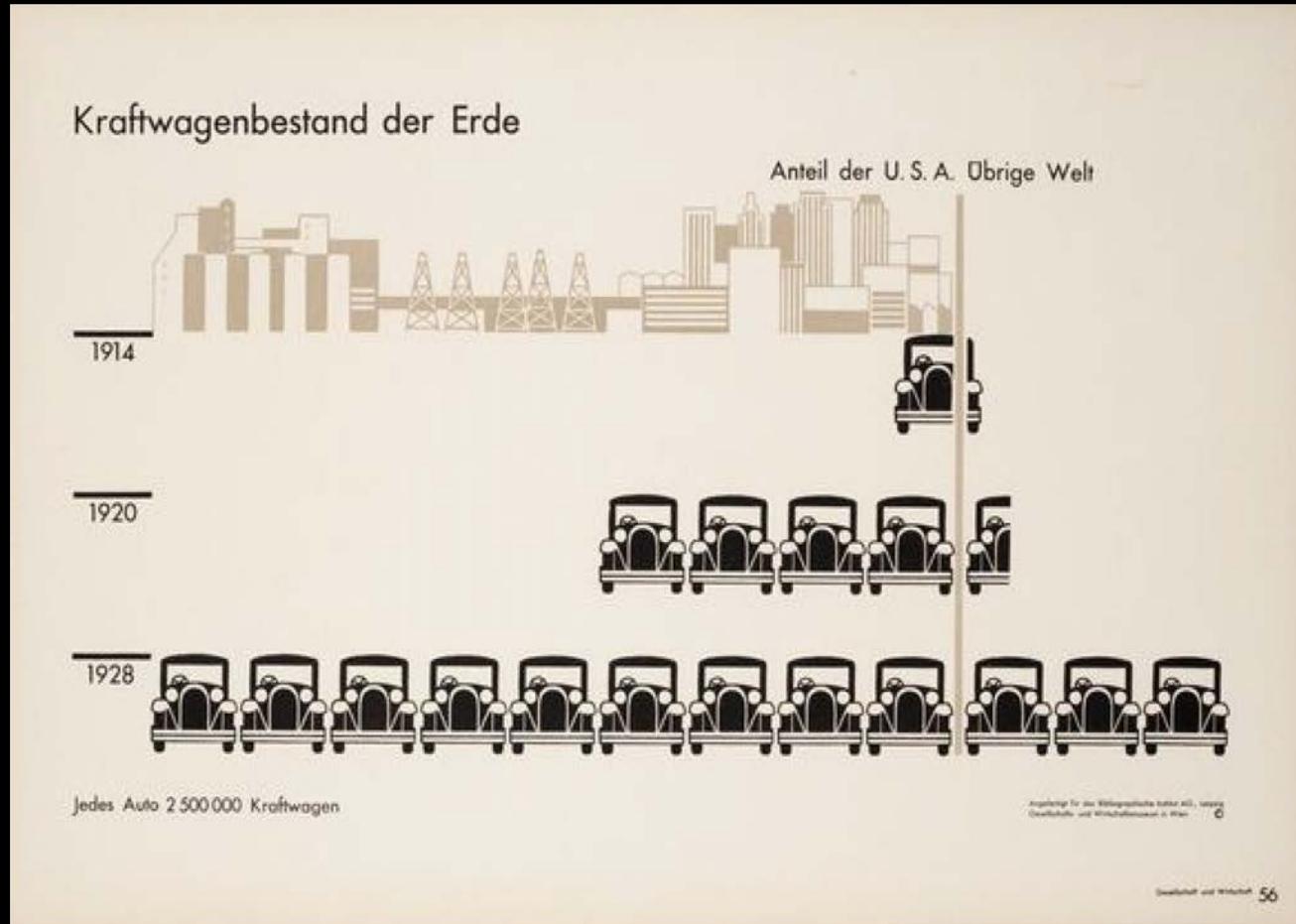


Bump



Curve

International System Of TYpographic Picture Education



(ISOTYPES)

Otto Neurath & Gerd Arntz –
Automobile Production of the World (1936)



1964 Tokyo Olympic Pictograms – Masaru Katzumie & Yoshiro Yamashita



Archery



Athletics



Basketball



Boxing



Canoe



Cyclisme



Equestrian Sports



Fencing



Football



Gymnastic



Handball



Hockey



Judo



Pentathlon moderne



Rowing



Shooting



Swimming



Volleyball



Weightlifting

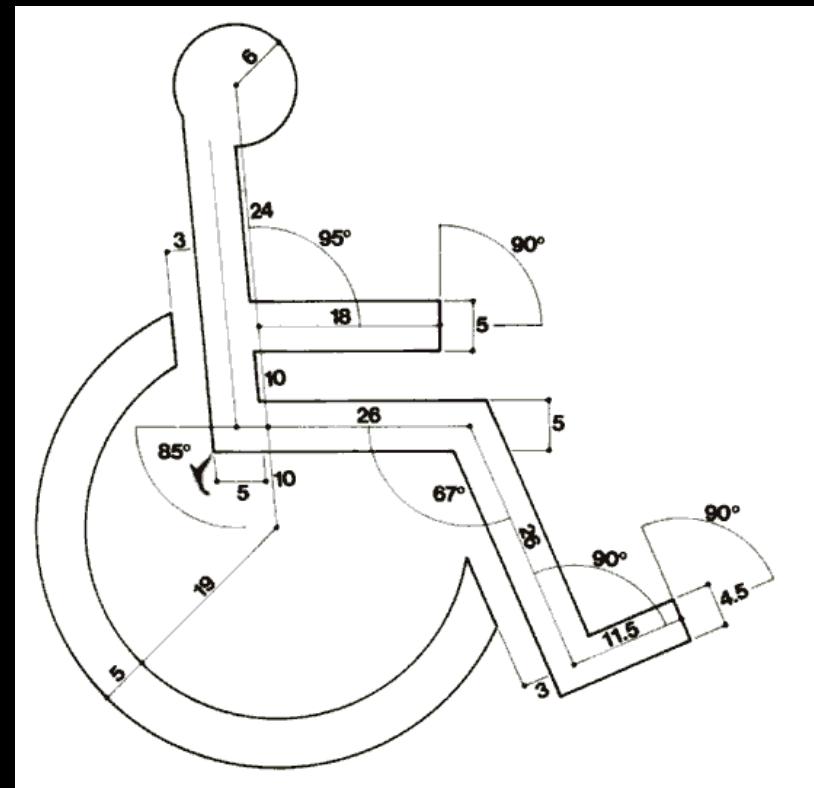


Wrestling



1972 Munich Olympic Pictograms – Otl Aicher

International Symbol of Access (1968)



Designed by Susanne Koefoed

Helvetica Man in Action (1974)



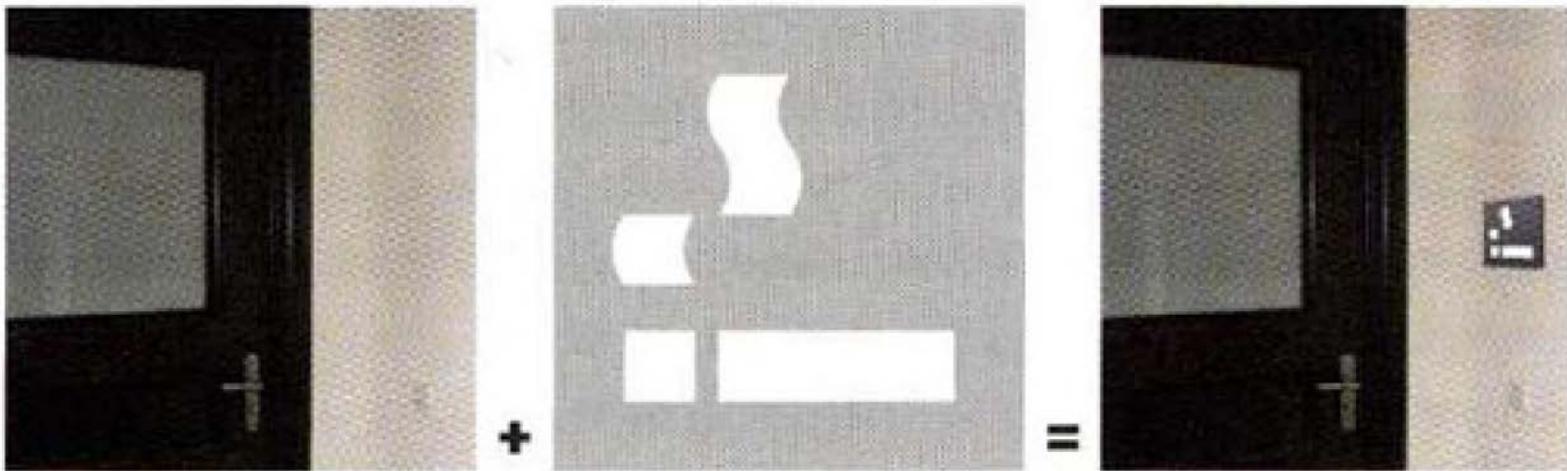
Pictograms – Form & Function

Function:

- Must be self-explanatory
- Must be learned and universally acknowledged
- Must be quickly and clearly understood
- Should be understood independently of writing, words, culture and language
- Should point to one clear fact such as information/direction/prohibition

Form:

- Surroundings + Icon + Symbol (Form and Color) = Indication



Surroundings

+

Icon

=

Smoking Room

The door of a room

A burning cigarette

-The meaning of the pictogram is not 'burning cigarette' but, in the context of its surroundings, it conveys a message; in this room smoking is permitted.

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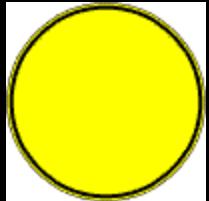


- In a book, the pictogram has a completely different function. It simply quotes itself. Its effect is not imperative but indicative.

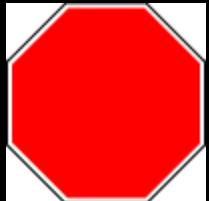


- The 'no smoking' pictogram can only be fully understood within a clearly defined space.

Hierarchy of Shape – Traffic Signs



Circle - Exclusively for railroad advance warning signs



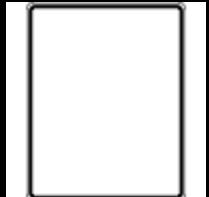
Octagon - Exclusively for STOP signs



Equilateral Triangle, Point Down - Exclusively for YIELD signs

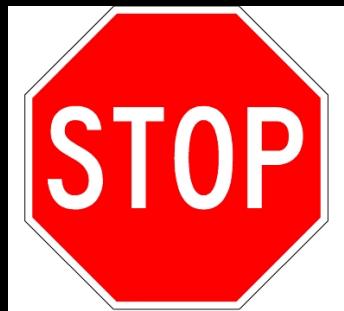


Diamond - Used for warning signs



Rectangle, Longer Dimension Vertical - Used for regulatory signs

Hierarchy of Color – Traffic & Information Signs



Red - prohibition



Orange – caution/work zones



Yellow - warning



Y/G – populated areas



Green - information



Blue – information/
services



Brown - recreation



Black - commercial



White - regulatory

Theory of Visual Cognition – Steven Pinker

-Visual processing runs from the rods and cones in the retina, through intermediate levels representing edges, depths, and surfaces, to a recognition of the objects in front of us.

3 Levels of Awareness:

High:



Intermediate:



Low:



The generalized 'Big Picture'

Accesses only relevant data
from both high and low levels

Detailed scrutiny

Access-Consciousness

- Access Consciousness uses Intermediate-level awareness to access the products of vision, the contents of short-term memory, the systems of rational thought and deliberate decision making.

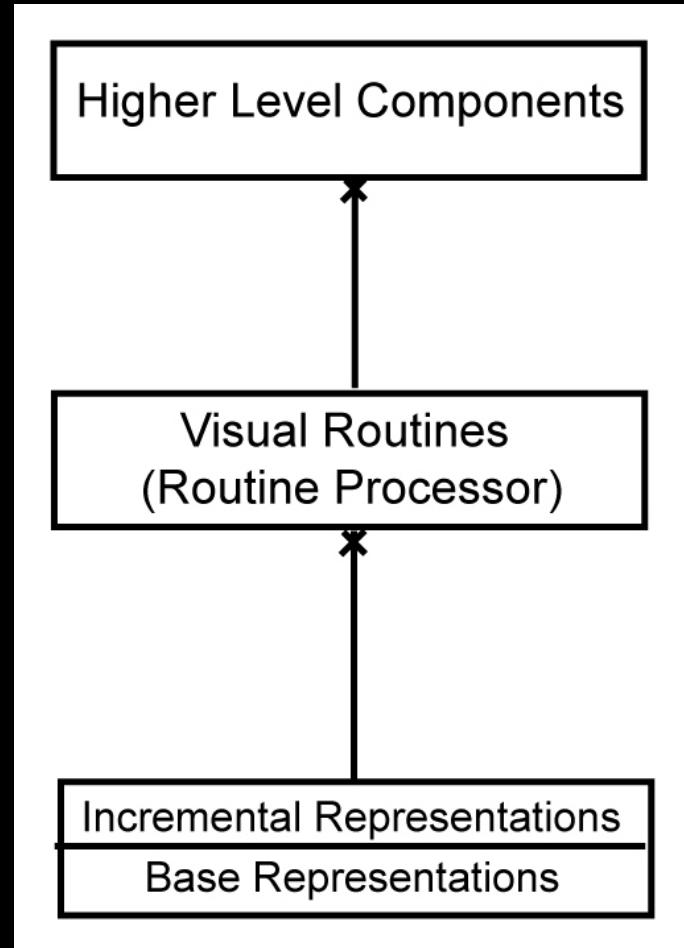
4 Features of Access-Consciousness:

- Sensory Awareness: The colors and shapes of the world in front of us, the sounds and smells that surround us and the physical sensations we experience.
- Focal Attention: Awareness and cognition of the information provided by the senses are rotated into and out of short-term memory and filtered through visual processing
- Emotional Coloring: Sensations cause a specific emotional reaction
- The Will: Based on these first 3 sensations, the 'I' determines behavior and reaction

Visual Routines – How We Perceive Objects

2-Stage Analysis of Visual Information:

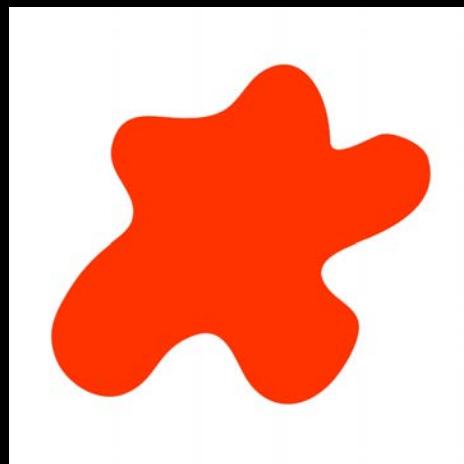
1. Base Representation: Creation of abstracted visual environments/ objects
 2. Visual Routines: Applications to the base representations constructed in Stage 1
- Visual Routines are modified incrementally as more information is processed



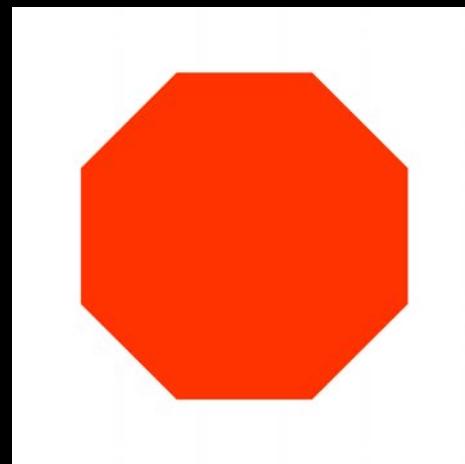
How Visual Routines Work



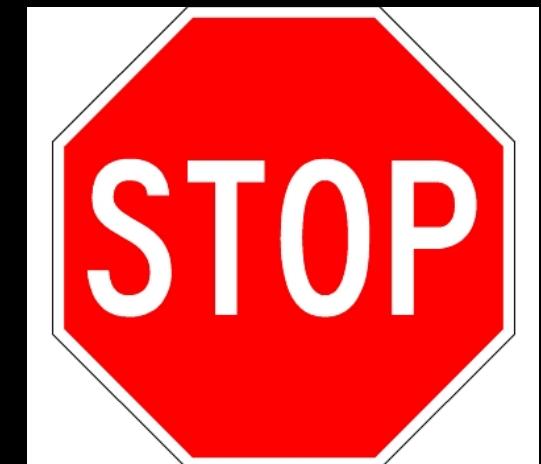
Environment



Base Representation
(Primal Sketch)

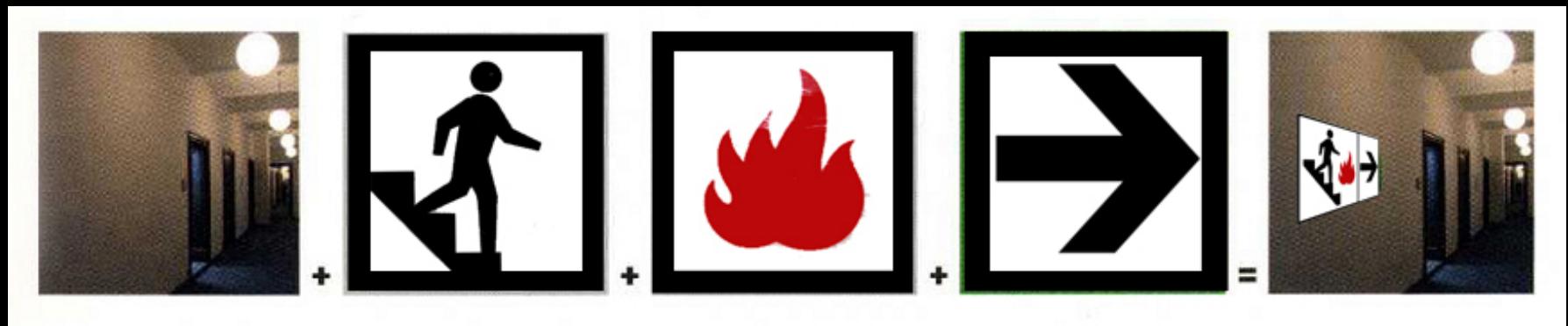
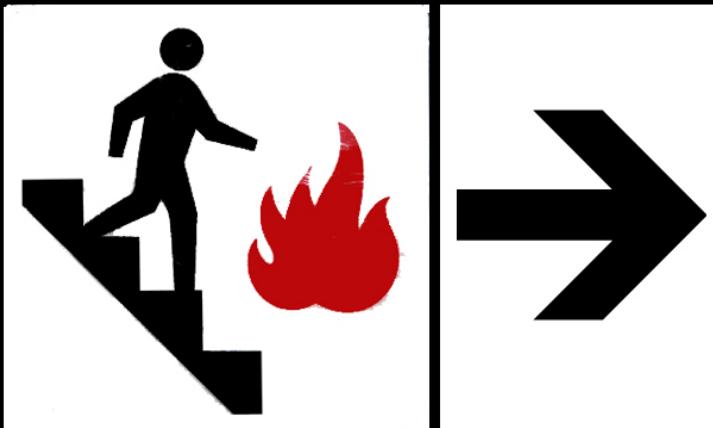


Visual Processors/
Routines



Higher Level Components
Define Image

Comprehension – Visual Routines and Access-Consciousness



Surroundings –
A corridor

Icon –
Person using
stairs

Icon/Symbol –
Fire +
Color red

Icon –
A directional
arrow

Comprehension -
In case of fire,
this is the
direction to stairs

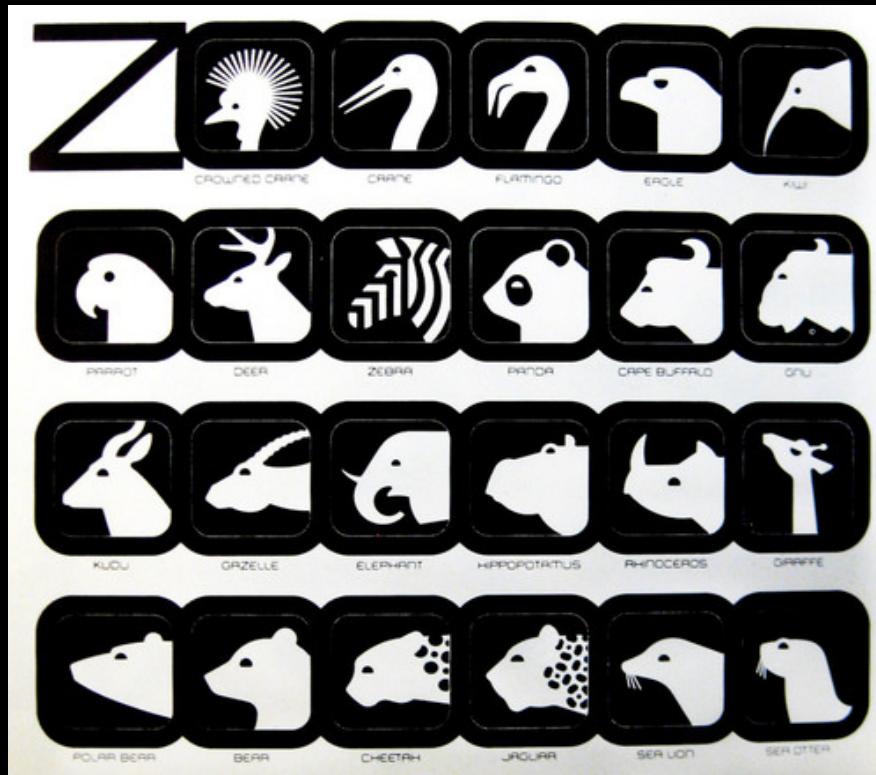
Aesthetics

A trend has now developed for experimental individuality. If in the past pictograms had the task of guiding the will and knowledge, there is now increasing emphasis on suggestive (emotional) influence.



Source: Stick Figure Museum of Western Painting

Aesthetic & Functional Comparisons







Art & Rebellion



Because of the universal acceptance and understanding of the pictographic form, Pictograms have become a successful vehicle for political and social commentary.

