Visual Culture: Reading Digital Collage Art

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Abstract. This article intends to share knowledge in reading digital collage art works from the point of view of visual culture. Digital collage art is created by combining virtual images from multiple sources into a new work of art. For researchers and art education, this article can expand its meaning by reading digital college art using a visual culture perspective, especially visual grammar. The object of the study is the digital collage artwork of students of the final semester fine arts education study program uploaded on their portfolio website. A qualitative descriptive approach using visual material and metafunction methods is used in this study. The figure is analyzed from the aspects of the structure of the representation, the system of interaction and composition. The results of the description are analyzed based on metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. Based on the results of the analysis, it was concluded that digital collage art shows a narrative representation structure and gives rise to *seduction* discourse, namely that Images are sensory in nature tempting the viewer by offering pleasure.

Keywords: Visual Culture · Reading Digital Collage Art · Visual Grammar · Metafungsi

1 Introduction

Postmodern art today has a form of work that is very different from modern art. In the past, in making paintings, it had to be made from one of the media such as oil paint, watercolor, acrilick paint on paper or canvas. While this is no longer the case, an artist can choose several types of media, techniques, space utilization, the surface of any object, and even used goods in making works of art. Additionally, the power of technology and digital tools is lawfully employed in the production of a piece of art. In line with Soeteja opinion [1] in postmodernity there was a significant change in the use of techniques and media in artistic work to understand each discourse.

The form of freedom in artwork has a variety of advantages in the current art discourse. Visual products in contemporary culture play an important role in shaping one's cultural identity. This is reinforced by the opinion of Narawati [2] who explained that globalization and information disclosure resulted in artists around the world being more open to displaying the art style they wanted but on the other hand the current also gave rise to the strengthening of identity culture. The industrial world has continuously improved its visual image products and has formed the notion of a structured society.

Since the emergence of visual culture in the early 1970s, the study of discourse analysis has focused primarily on language and its form. Moerdisuroso [3] elaborates that this new field of science includes three schools: the development of art history, opposition to art history, and separation from art history due to the focus on digital technology products. All three are united by the basic understanding that all man-made objects and events are texts, that is, a system of signs for self-declaration and social communication. As is commonly text or language, it is egalitarian, there is no anta-linguistic hierarchy. Various definitions of visual culture Mirzoeff [4]; Rampley [5]; Dikovitskaya [6]; Kress & van Leeuwen [7], positioning paintings, sculptures, graphic arts, architecture, gardening, photography, film, video games, print advertisements, maps, diagrams, tables, billboards, fashion, brands, industrial product objects such as shoes, glasses, vehicles, refrigerators, irons, and all everyday visible objects as text.

Discourse in making art makes the power of each of these art products. The visual product that will be sampled in this study is digital collage art. Digital collage art in a visual setting can be called visual text. Kress and van Leeuwen in the article Moerdisuroso [8] *Social Semiotics and Visual Grammar: A Contemporary Approach to Visual Texts Research.* This article explains in detail the meaning of metafunction aspects and the principles of meaning of the visual system in analyzing visual texts from certain social groups explicitly and implicitly. The use of visual text in objects, events or themes displayed is not limited to social beings, but the possibility of visual forms, figurative, non-figurative, diagrammatic abstractions, maps, icons, socially defined based on motivation, purpose of making, practice of use in the human dimension. Based on Halliday's metafunction principle, text is a source of meaning making which has metafunctions, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. The ideational function is a text dimension that serves to represent elements in the real world as commonly experienced by humans (experiential), and the elements and their interrelationships in the world of logic (conceptual). The interpersonal function is an aspect of the text that reflects the interpersonal relationship between text creators and users. The textual function has the capacity to form a complete relationship internally within the text itself, and externally with a particular context. The metafunction of visual text is read in at least three aspects, namely: representational structure, interaction system, and composition. The ideational function is found in the aspect of representational structure, the interpersonal function is reflected in the interaction system aspect, and the textual function is seen in the compositional aspect. So that the three aspects of metafunction are used as an analytical tool for this digital collage artwork.

When we hear the word collage, it is certainly familiar to our ears, the experience of making artwork starts when sitting in kindergarten, the teacher asks students to do paper scissors and stick them on certain objects. Collage is an amalgamation of two or more visual elements back in popularity these days. The emergence of collage as a form of visual art began in the period *of Synthetic Cubism* by artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in 1912–1914. Collage Art refers to the use of different materials that are combined into a single harmonious unity of form. While traditional collage-making techniques are still used today, contemporary artists have adopted modern technologies and methods in creating their works. Contemporary artists are now experimenting both technically and conceptually because many of the styles and techniques in collage art

are used in film, visual art, and photography. Collage artworks are growing along with the rapid development of technology in the field of design. With increasingly capable technology, the collage can not only be done traditionally, but also digitally by using several graphics processing software such as: Adobe Photoshop, Coreldraw, Adobe Illustrator, and animation.

A similar study analyzing visual objects using the visual systems theory of Kress and van Leeuwen was conducted by Vinakha Naraswas Sriratu [9] in her research "*Representation of the Female Model in the 'Insights' Section of the 147 Men's Magazine Edition*". Her research uses descriptive qualitative methods, and her research results show that visual and verbal modes are based on multimodality in systemic functional linguistics and the transitivity of Halliday's visual grammar which are combined to complement each other to build the image of a female model. Regarding gender issues, his research concluded that the magazine reflected how stereotyped women could become sexual objects depending on the culture of society.

Further similar research was carried out by Chae Kwan Jung [10] in Multimodal Discourse: A Visual Design Analysis of Two Advertising Images applying Kress and van Leeuwen's visual design theory to an advertisement for a Korean fashion magazine entitled 'CeCi'. The results of his research show that image has a grammatical structure that can be analyzed representationally, the dimension of interactive meaning uses Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar theory by interpreting the visual elements of the image, analysis refers to external sources in mythology, advertising and communication. The results of the analysis in his study found that 1) the participants who were represented appeared to be represented as superior figures who had the desired characteristics; 2) the social relations that exist between the participants and the audience seem to support the identity represented; and 3) the identity and relationship suggested in the advertising image may be used to promote the advertiser's products.

Based on the two previous research studies above, it can strengthen the argument that even digital collage artwork can be read from a visual cultural perspective.

2   Research Methods

This research paradigm uses critical theory, with a qualitative descriptive approach with visual materials and metafunctional methods. The object of this research is a digital collage artwork of final semester students of the fine arts education study program which is uploaded on their portfolio website.

College digital artworks are analyzed from the aspects of structural representation, interaction system and composition. Then the description results are analyzed based on metafunction aspects which include ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. Analyzing every aspect of self-declared texts, and communication texts that give rise to seduction discourse. Based on this, digital collage works of art can be read using visual culture.

Fig. 1. Le-serpent x et L'auto guérison by Alika Rahmadhanti.

3   Results and Discussion

3.1   Results

The results of this study are in the form of digital collage artwork data and metafunction aspects which are presented in the image below and the explanation can be seen in Fig. 1.

The image above is a digital collage art work uploaded on a personal website in Gif form. Then the image will be analyzed using the following metafunction analysis table (Table 1).

3.2   Discussion

Ideational Function. The ideational function can be read from the aspect of the representational structure. As stated by Kress and van Leeuwen that the representation structure is divided into two groups. The narrative representational structure is a form of image that shows natural objects as experienced by humans every day. Conceptual narrative structure shows abstract images such as schemas, maps, diagrams which do not exist in nature and the like. The digital art collage works show the appearance of

Table 1. Metafunction aspect findings.

Metafunctional Aspects	Visual Text
1	2
A. Structure Representation	Participants were depicted in the form of a grayish white venus statue shirtless wearing a necklace around the neck, using a cloth drapery covering the lower part of the abdomen to the legs holding a turquoise bag with gold accessories in the left hand and there was a circular red snake in his right hand. The chest part is covered with a shawl. The body is in a middle position and the face is slightly tilted right towards the viewer. The look in the eyes is like looking at a taster covered in fashion glasses. Another illustrated participant was around the image plane above the female figure (goddess venus), filled with five figures of objects consisting of parthenon temple buildings on the upper left, two planets, and clouds arranged vertically. On the left there is a moving abstract texture with a strong space color. The background is filled with space arrays with glittering stars and moving light
Narrative Form	The figures of the goddess venus and other participants depicted seem to be related.
B. Interaction System	
1. Value Information	The direction of the participant's gaze is towards the audience.
2. Social Distancing	The goddess Venus as the subject or the main character in the picture is depicted intact from head to toe.
3. A*ngle*	The position of the subject's body is in the middle of facing the viewer.
C. Composition	
1. Value Information	Where the subject is in the centre of other participants
2. Salience	The subject's body size is in the middle compared to the other figures so that it becomes the center of attention of all participants. Movement of abstract textures using hot colors is the second center of attention after the subject of venus.
3. Framing	The movement of the abstract texture is depicted by the movement and the boundary of the meeting with the coastal water shows separation.

real objects, such as humans in the form of the goddess Venus, snakes, beaches, planets, bags, the Parthenon temple building and imaginative worlds of other planets which can be classified as narrative representational structures.

The structure of the image representation is the same as the structure of verbal language, which consists of active subject-predicate-object sentences. As the beginning of the narrative, the subject in the picture refers to the picture that is depicted most prominently. Based on this understanding, the findings of the visual text in the table can

be narrated into the following active sentences: "Venus comes down to earth with his pet snake to go on vacation".

The influence of visual culture on digital collage art works, in line with its title "*Le-serpent x et L'auto guérison*" which means snake and self-healing. Visual text shows Venus's walking on the chain with her red snake and branded bag. The bag and glasses showed luxury and thered snake s eekor held his hands had the meaning of happiness. So that the visual cultural discourse that can be lifted gambar is sensory can tempt the viewer by offeringan pleasure (*seduction*).

The illustrator chooses visual objects based on his knowledge seen through digital information media. Visual culture is particularly visible showing branded necklaces, bags, and glasses, bringing pets, and walking on the beach are products of women's direct culture of consumption in daily life. An imaginative fusion of direct and indirect visual culture emerges the desire to live a luxurious and happy life by contemporary "healing" standards.

Kress and Van Leeuwan [11] explain that there are narrative forms in the structure of narrative representation, namely participant-illustrative relationships and interactive participants which reflect forms of action. In text this visual shows a view in the image looking at the viewer. So that it can be interpreted that there is a direct relationship between the participants gaze and what is illustrated, so that this narrative form is classified as a transactional reaction. The type of narrative form described by the participant establishes a relationship with the viewer to seduce him by offering pleasure (*seduction*).

Interpersonal Functions. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen in Mordisuroso [12] Interpersonal function can be read an interaction system which consists of relationship forms, social distance, and point of view. The form of a relationship that reflects an interactive relationship between participants is illustrated by the object described in two supply relationships or demand relationships. Both of which are characterized by the presence or absence of the gaze that the participant draws to the viewer. The visual text has an illustrated dealer that tells the viewer. This shows that there is a form of desire relationship, namely the offer of image participants to the viewer to establish a relationship by seducing the viewer by offering pleasure (seduction).

Social distance reads the image depicted from the viewer's point of view which is likened to the camera's distance from the object. Near-far shows the value of social-personal relations in an intimate distance which is depicted in the form of a close face. Furthermore, a personal close-up of the object depicted along with several other figures. Then the personal distance can be seen from the head to the fingertips. While other distances can be classified as social distance. In the visual text about Venus, the whole body is depicted standing facing the viewer so that analysis of the relationship according to views, social distance, and point of view shows that the participant is portrayed as someone who is superior to the audience.

The visual system in point of view is read as the placement of imaginary vertical, diagonal, and horizontal axes that cross the image plane. Each axis shows a different social form. The vertical axis is related to the power hierarchy. While the horizontal or diagonal axis can be associated with the alignment of 'they' or 'us'. Subjects in visual text are depicted in a central position with the viewer. This reflects the portrayal of positioning itself as a single object that is the focus of attention.

Textual Functions. Informational value, salience, and framing are three composition sub-aspects that reflect textual values. By placing imaginary horizontal and vertical axes in the center of the image plane, the informational value is contained in the placement of objects in certain zones left-right, up-down, edge-center. The text visual shows a vertical composition, namely the subject Venus is in the center and the back of the beach juts to the right of the body of water on the beach, left is the abstract texture and the top of the outer space. Like the top-down understanding in general, the above can be interpreted as a realm of hope, rational, conceptual, while the bottom means reality, empirical, experience. The illustrator positions himself in the middle zone, which means he is in the realm of reality and hope.

Highlights are participant-drawn elements created to grab the viewer's attention, as a priority, and serve as a starting point for reading the drawing. The research findings show that the visual text has a bulge, namely the subject's body is ideally sized from head to toe and in the left hand there is indeed a bag, and in the right hand there is a red snake coiled which can be interpreted as a sign of happiness that will come in life. Framing is the integration or separation of information in an image, which is marked by blurring or clear boundaries between units of information. Framing also signifies shared ownership or not. The visual text creates a dividing line between the beach and the abstract object to the left of Venus. This reflects the artist firmly framing his imaginary information as his own.

4   Conclusion

After going through a series of studies, this article concludes that metafunctionality can be used in reading digital collage works in line with visual culture in the discourse of seduction, namely sensory images that can seduce the audience by offering pleasure.

The visual text representation of a digital collage work entitled "*Le-serpent x et L'auto guérison*" reflects the ideational function of imaginative depiction of dreams of women's perfection and happiness shown in the image of Venus as a perfect woman physically, emotionally, and knowledgeably. The red snake as a clutch signifies happiness to come in life, which is enhanced by the changing bag, coasters, and lavish necklace. Another pictorial participant reflects the depiction of information that an abstract object is a constantly moving problem, depicting the number of courses many students have passed due to the position behind the drawn participant. Meanwhile, the beach in front of the participants is depicted showing the future they want to do. Through imagination a blend of direct and indirect visual culture, a desire arises to run away from the burdens/problems/tasks that are constantly moving with a moment of refreshment to enjoy life perfectly, luxuriously, and happily according to the current standard "healing". The results of this research will be followed up by providing training to visual arts teachers, as a provision for implementing visual culture in schools.

Authors' Contributions.   For researchers and art education, this article can expand its meaning by reading digital college art using a visual culture perspective, especially visual grammar. In addition, further research will be developed studies on visual culture for prospective fine arts teachers, which will later become further research to strengthen the dissertation.

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