

Candidate: Ashima Madan

Degree: Master of Computer Science in Interactive Digital Media

Paper Title: Visual Semiotics of Truck Art in India: From Art on Trucks to a Digital Art Style

Supervisor: Robin Fuller

Year: 2018

Abstract

This is a qualitative research of truck art in India, specifically northern region covering the states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana. It uses the typology of semiotics as given by Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, and follows the textual visual approach of semiotic analysis.

The purpose of this research is to apply some basic concepts from the discipline of visual semiotics to study the meaning carried by art on trucks in northern states of India. When put in context with the socio-political, and cultural knowledge of the region, the signs on trucks provide insights into the trucking culture of India and the meaning negotiated by various signs present on trucks. Secondly, this research compares the meaning of individual signs to the meaning of the same signs used in the digital art style inspired by truck art; and the meaning of truck art as a practice to the meaning of choosing this art style for branded merchandise.

The research explores the decorations on trucks as signs that work in multiple layers to negotiate meaning. These signs, cannot be bucketed into the definitions of icon, index, and symbol as they share properties of all. The final meaning of the text is ultimately a result of several decisions and the shared graphic ideology of the readers. The same signs when used digitally as part of an aesthetic style inspired by truck art, change their properties as original intent and symbolism is lost when placed outside the context of the trucking culture.