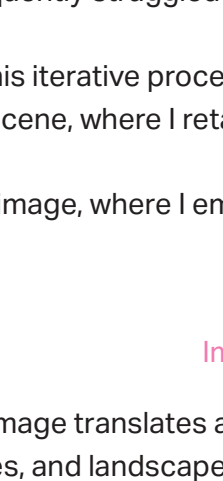


How images of objects function as translations of those objects or become a form of language in themselves?

In the method of contextualizing, we analyzed a Coca-Cola campaign focused on recycled plastic. The campaign's web design featured abundant green visuals, rounded corners, and numerous handcrafted, nostalgic elements. These **visual cues** collectively conveyed the advertisement's message: Coca-Cola remains everyone's preferred choice, and the company is addressing the plastic problem creatively. Essentially, our task involved decoding how various web design elements communicate advertising messages.

To broaden the scope of inquiry, I extended my research into how images convey **message**. I chose a collage advertisement for iteration, aiming to explore multiple perspectives on how we interpret this image [↓].



iterating-0

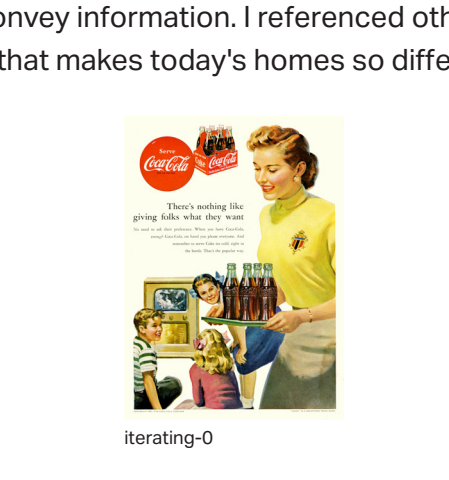
Through replacing, magnifying, and distorting poster elements, I examined how these alterations affected the advertisement's message. Although aware that I was engaged in a **translation** process, I frequently struggled to identify precisely what I was translating.

Throughout this iterative process, my translation object varied:

- The family scene, where I retained the original characters but modified their backgrounds and positions;
- The poster image, where I employed various graphics to represent its proportional relationships.

Images are representations of objects

The poster's image translates a family scene. This mirrors how, from 1500 to 1900, people saw objects, figures, and landscapes in oil paintings as representations of their own **possessions** [✓]. The imagery in advertisements [↑] aims to evoke our identification with the idyllic life of 1960s American middle-class families. Images are simply representations of reality—a form of translation. In advertising, a product's image is strategically placed within this idealized scene, linking specific goods to the concept of a good life [\].



Similarities between 17th-century Dutch still life paintings and modern advertising



The ideal family picture is the key message of the poster.

Merchandise became the actual **subject-matter** of works of art. Here the edible is made visible. Such a painting is a demonstration of more than the virtuosity of the artist. It confirms the owner's wealth and habitual style of living.

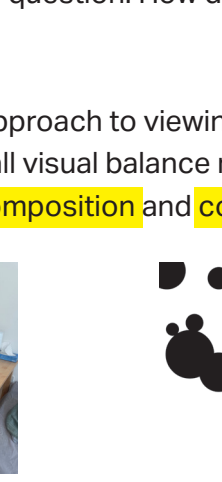
Paintings of animals. Not animals in their natural condition, but livestock whose pedigree is emphasized as a proof of their value, and whose pedigree emphasizes the social status of their owners. (Animals painted like pieces of furniture with four legs.)

Berger, J. (1972). "Episode 3 - Painting and Possessions" in *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books.

Advertising is the oil painting of our age. Both revolve around the concept of property ownership. The key difference lies in their approach: oil paintings confirm existing possession, while advertisements paint a tantalizing picture of a future where we own these coveted items.

Images are symbols

This collage [✓] depicts a well-dressed, attractive white mother serving Coca-Cola to her three children, who are watching television. The advertising slogan reads, "There's nothing like giving folks what they want." As a **collage**, it emphasizes how discrete elements placed together can convey information. I referenced other collage works from the same period, such as "Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?" [\].



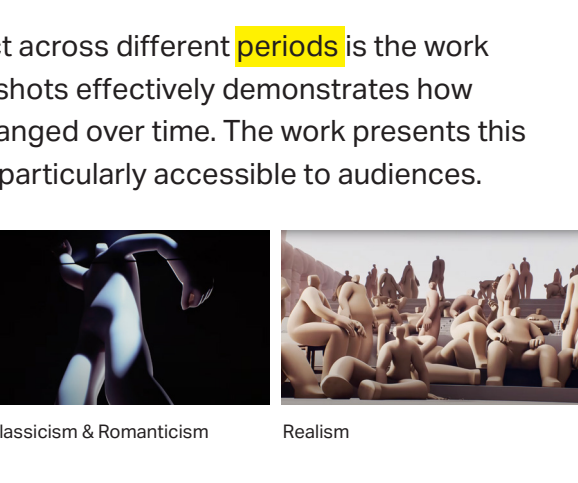
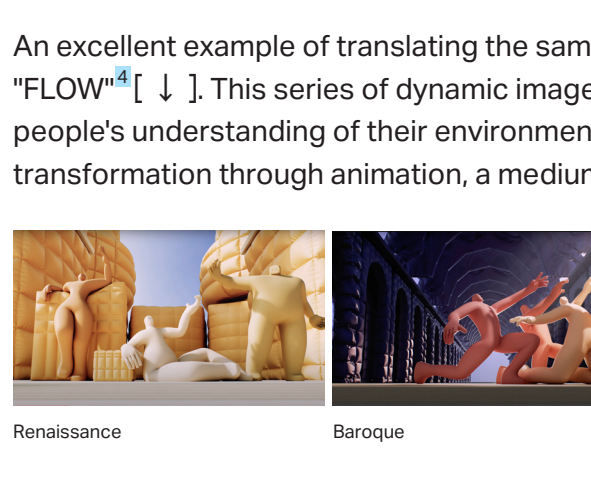
iterating-0



The photograph is taken from Tomorrow's Man magazine, September 1954. The TV is a Stromberg-Carlson, taken from a 1955 advert. Hamilton asserted that the rug was a blow-up from a photograph depicting a crowd on the Whitley Bay beach. The image of planet Earth at the top was cut from Life magazine (Sept 1955).

Reflecting on the collage-making process: An image is taken out of its context, reorganized, and used to form a new narrative. My later methods of reorganizing object images were influenced, to varying degrees, by this 'collage' approach.

Being both an advertisement and a collage, each element in the image stands as an independent **symbol**. Unlike photography, which captures a moment's balance, collage allows for deliberate arrangement. I experiment by adjusting element details—changing clothes' colors, backgrounds, or even replacing characters [✓]—to observe how these alterations affect information transmission. This leads me to question: Must elements be represented by images, or can words or emojis serve the same purpose? [\]

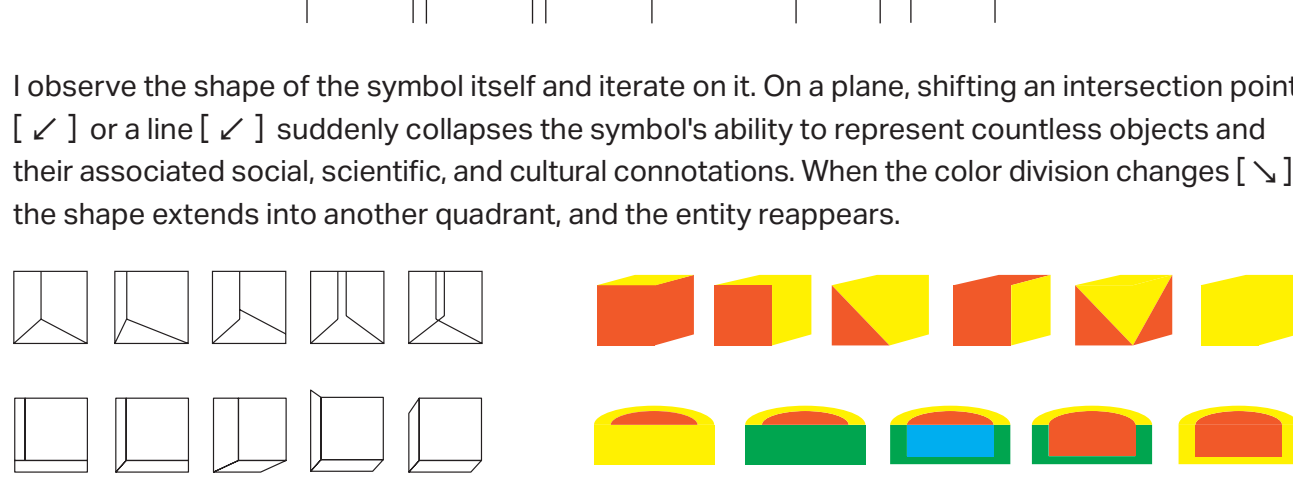


In the context of advertising, the images of objects are representations of commodities. What else can images be?

Learning from Painting: Ways of Seeing

I learn how to see through the lens of **painting**, drawing insights from John Berger's "Ways of Seeing" on how we perceive images, both past and present. My interest in art's broader scope stems from a belief that, despite modern education's tendency to compartmentalize disciplines, students of painting, sculpture, photography, graphic design, and related fields all grapple with a common question: How do we observe the world and develop our own system for translating reality?

Another approach to viewing posters is to consider the poster as a whole image, focusing on their overall visual balance rather than their literal meaning. In this iteration, I concentrate on the image's **composition** and **color** distribution [↓].

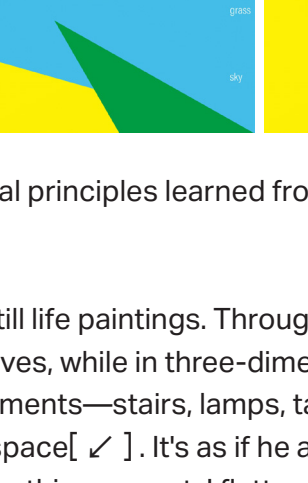


They discovered that when observing nature outdoors, we don't see individual objects with distinct colors. Instead, our eyes—or more accurately, our minds—perceive a vibrant blend of colors merged into a cohesive whole.

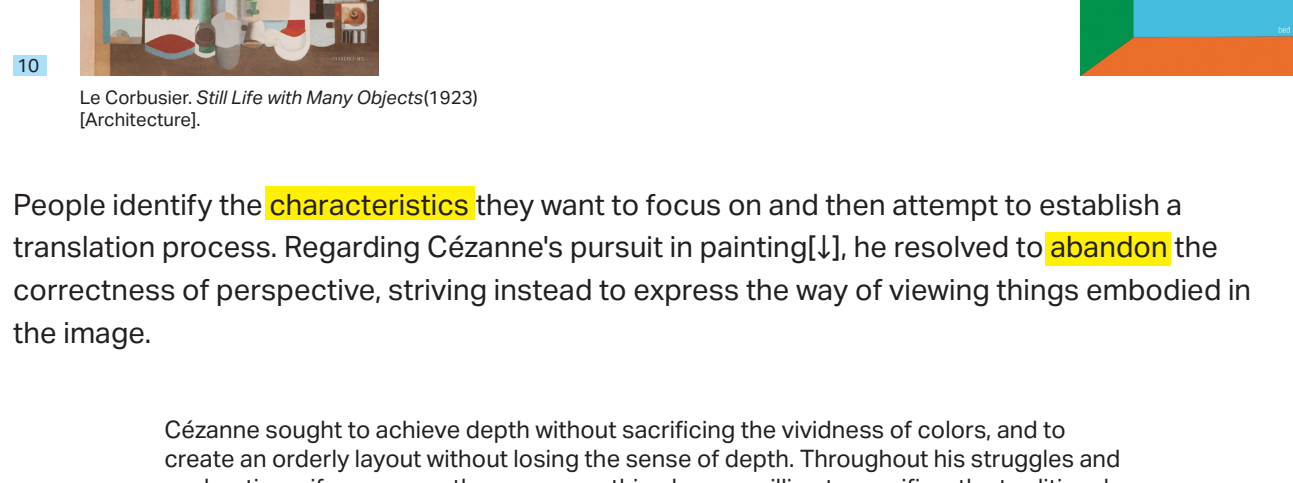
E. H. Gombrich (1950) *The story of arts*. Translated from the English by 范景中 · GuangXi: Art Publisher. Extract p. 514.

Ways of seeing from different decades

My "Iterating-100" project is presented as a large poster [↓], with each iteration displayed in parallel. However, I once envisioned arranging them **chronologically**, reflecting the evolving perspectives on objects from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance, Impressionism, Cubism, and Pop Art. This arrangement would prompt a discussion about the meaning of object images today, in an era where photography is ubiquitous and AI-generated images are commonplace. It also raises questions about how we, as image producers, should view these images.



An excellent example of translating the same subject across different **periods** is the work "FLOW" [↓]. This series of dynamic image screenshots effectively demonstrates how people's understanding of their environment has changed over time. The work presents this transformation through animation, a medium that is particularly accessible to audiences.



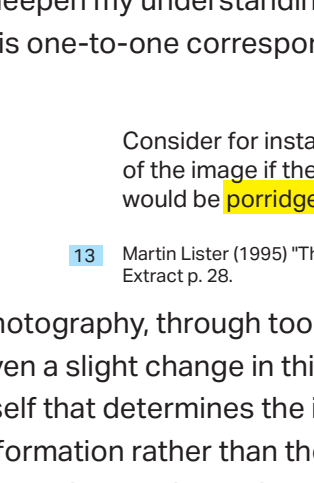
Exploring how external factors have led to changes in the context pursued by each art due to external factors and imagining what individuals have contemplated within that context can lead to many **reflections** on life.

district (2024). *Flow* [Digital art].

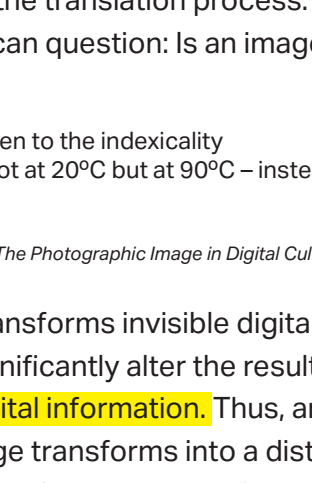
As a visually oriented learner, I'm driven to understand and express—in my own terms—how people have used images throughout history. This reflects my desire to work within a **system** and advance one branch of a larger context.

Symbol

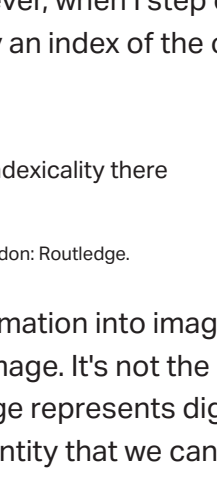
Unlike medieval paintings where all images of Jesus refer to the same figure—allowing us to invariably place the image into the context of Jesus' life as we understand it—a separation began to occur between images and their subjects when people stopped depicting figures from stories or began to independently observe everyday objects. While the image of Jesus equals Jesus in the story, the image of an apple [✓] **detaches** from the apple itself, and the image of Marilyn Monroe [\] departs from the actual Marilyn Monroe. Monroe's image begins to iterate on itself, with images explaining each other, detached from the real person.



Cézanne, P. (1933) *Still Life with Basket of Apples* [Oil on canvas].



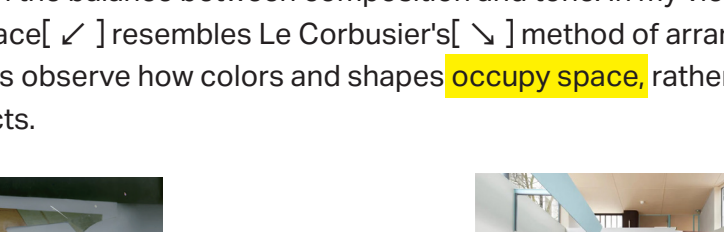
Andy Warhol (1964). *Shot Marilyn* [Silkscreen paintings].



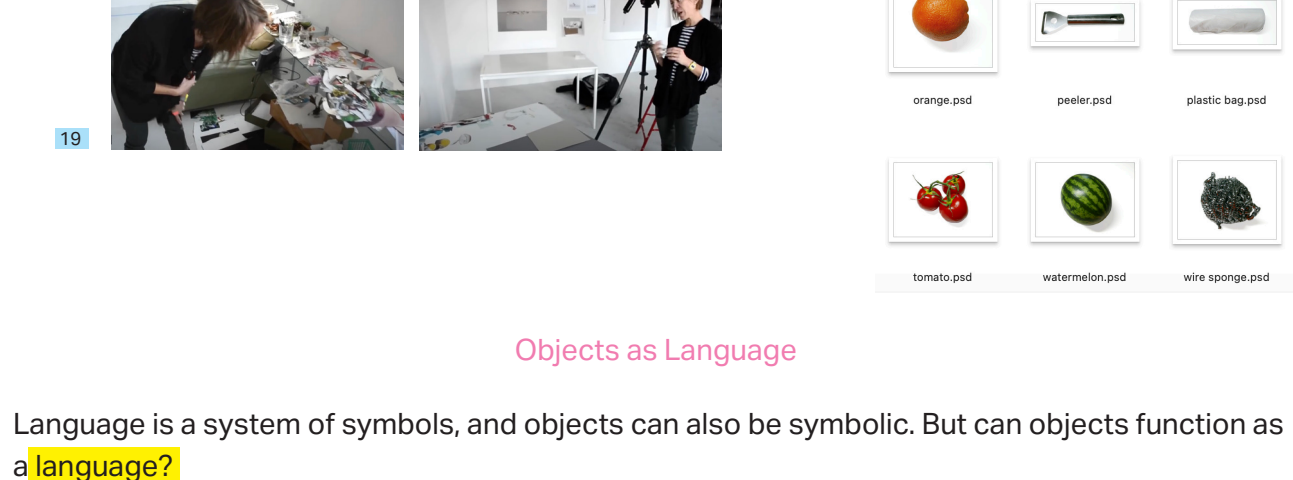
Korman, G. (1953). *Marilyn Monroe* [Photograph].

Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe evolved into a symbol. To grasp the concept of a symbol, we must also consider what isn't one. This exploration leads me to question the nature of symbols themselves.

A symbol points to an object, and objects exist in space. When depicting objects in space, we use the principle of **vanishing point perspective**. This principle must be followed when translating an object into a symbol. If the outline drawn by lines or colors can no longer be interpreted using vanishing point perspective, it ceases to be a symbol [↓] and loses its function of representing an object.



I observe the shape of the symbol itself and iterate on it. On a plane, shifting an intersection point [✓] or a line [✓] suddenly collapses the symbol's ability to represent countless objects and its associated social, scientific, and cultural connotations. When the color division changes [\], the shape extends into another quadrant, and the entity reappears.



Shapes mutually explain each other—some as symbols pointing to objects, others remaining as mere **shapes**. Yet, the difference in their forms is remarkably subtle.

Shape

Over the years my work became more abstract. I have no idea why. I have no idea because I have no idea what I'm doing in general. The heart wants what it wants.

An **abstract work** is a thing, not a picture of a thing. I like both things and pictures of things. Lately I have been making more things than pictures. But it might change in the future. Who knows?

Rafaël Rozendaal. *Things and Pictures of Things*.

As symbols transform into shapes, we're left gazing at mere forms. The complex information vanishes, leaving our minds spacious. Colors, the positioning of shapes, and the logic behind dynamic changes take center stage.

I like it when I'm somewhere and I'm not thinking too much. Just observing, not making any decisions. Kind of bored and **staring** at something, looking around, until something presents itself. These moments are the starting points of my work. Whether the work is abstract or figurative, they come from the same "state-of-mind".

Rafaël Rozendaal. *Things and Pictures of Things*.

I observe the sky, houses, grass, and trees [↓]. Sometimes I lie on the grass, sometimes I sit up, and the triangular shapes and upright things in my field of vision. Sometimes I imagine directly convey my feelings, without excess information. The triangle isn't merely an image of a tree, but the thing itself.

An example of applying organizational principles learned from painting to other forms is Le Corbusier's work.

Like Le Corbusier, I initially studied still life paintings. Through Cubism, Le Corbusier learned to view objects from multiple perspectives, while in three-dimensional space, perspective naturally shifts. I believe he treated spatial elements—stairs, lamps, tables, and more—equally, blurring the line between furniture and physical space [✓]. It's as if he arranged these elements like bottles and glasses on a table [✓]. Adopting this concept, I flatten spatial elements, seeing trees, houses, and grass as **equal** components [\]. Similarly, I view chairs, tables, and beds as identical elements: hexahedrons viewed from specific angles [\].

Le Corbusier. *Villa La Roche* (1923-25) [Architecture].

Le Corbusier. *Still Life with Many Objects* (1923) [Architecture].

People identify the **characteristics** they want to focus on and then attempt to establish a translation process. Regarding Cézanne's pursuit in painting [↓], he resolved to **abandon** the correctness of perspective, striving instead to express the way of viewing things embodied in the image.

Cézanne sought to achieve depth without sacrificing the vividness of colors, and to create an orderly layout without losing the sense of depth. Throughout his struggles and explorations, if necessary, there was one thing he was willing to sacrifice: the traditional "correctness" of contours.

E. H. Gombrich (1950) *The story of arts*. Translated from the English by 范景中 · GuangXi: Art Publisher. Extract p. 543.

Hiroshi Sugimoto has an "Architecture"¹⁸ series [↓] and a "Mathematical Forms"¹⁹ series [↓]. The buildings in the Architecture series appear timeless because they reveal a fundamental beauty of shape and mathematics.

The translation between "the changing shape" [\] and the photograph [✓] mirrors Hiroshi Sugimoto's two series of works. Both explore the **interplay** between objects and shapes—one series begins with objects, while the other starts with **mathematical** forms.

Images are not indices of objects

Image as object

From the historical context of painting and art in general, I've learned how we use images to translate objects and distinguish between the object itself, its image, and its symbol.

The crucial logic of translation lies in perspective, where vanishing points shape both the form of objects and the viewer's position.

I deepen my understanding by engaging in the translation process. However, when I step outside this one-to-one correspondence logic, we can question: Is an image truly an index of the object?

Consider for instance what would happen to the indexicality of the image if the film chemistry was not at 20°C but at 90°C – instead of indexicality there would be **porridge**!

Martin Lister (1995) "The Porridge of the Index" in *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*. London: Routledge. Extract p. 28.

Photography, through tools and science, transforms invisible digital information into images. Even a slight change in this process can significantly alter the resulting image. It's not the object itself that determines the image, but the **digital information**. Thus, an image represents digital information rather than the object. The image transforms into a distinct entity that we can manipulate in physical space, rather than merely interpreting the information it contains.

Laura Letinsky also draws inspiration from still life paintings. Her compositions gradually evolve, detaching from specific scenes [✓] and transitioning to a flat plane [✓]. In this process, objects are **replaced** by images of objects [\] to construct the picture. This transformation, in my view, amplifies the interplay of colors and shapes within the composition. As a result, we no longer perceive it as a fleeting scene, but as a deliberate arrangement of visual elements.

Laura's subject of study is Morandi. Morandi [↑] painted numerous bottles and jars, focusing not on content but on the balance between composition and tone. In my view, Laura's placement of food images in space [✓] resembles Le Corbusier's [\] method of arranging architectural elements. Both artists observe how colors and shapes **occupy space**, rather than focusing on the meaning of objects.

This approach represents a reversal of my previous **working method**. Rather than isolating colors and compositions from existing images, I now observe the technique of objects before arranging them in the picture. My process mirrors Laura's colors and shapes of collecting food remnants from her home, studio, and streets, then using these existing materials—either as objects or photographs—to compose the picture [✓]. I've restricted my material sources to my room [\], challenging myself to evoke new meanings through combinations rather than constantly introducing new objects.

Objects as Language

Language is a system of symbols, and objects can also be symbolic. But can objects function as a **language**?

In the project "Language of Things,"²⁰ Uta Eisenreich created connections between objects and sounds, matching each object to a specific pronunciation. This system is rooted in the everyday context of objects. For instance, a "cactus plant" [↓] is paired with a sound resembling a startled yelp when pricked, while a "deflating balloon" [↓] is matched with the hiss of escaping air.

In the ALPHABET AS INFRASTRUCTURE exercise, our group experimented with objects [✓] as a form of language, treating them as visual metaphors. By **combining** objects, we created precise definitions [↓]. This approach parallels the structure of Chinese, a pictographic writing system [\]. Each Chinese character comprises various symbols representing common elements from antiquity—such as trees, grass, earth, fire, people, birds, and beasts. The meaning of each character stems from the unique combination of these elements.

We've discussed two approaches to using objects as language: one associates objects with contextual sounds, while the other utilizes object-based **narratives**.

Text explains itself by relying on other words to establish anchors. For example, "water" could mean someone needs water or water is overflowing—it's ambiguous (reminiscent of Wittgenstein's language games). The same applies to images. This process resembles passing the parcel: we take information from image A and use it to understand image B.

