



Twining words and art in academic literature

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Abstract

The problem this article addresses is that academic literature is mainly text-oriented, and this textual alignment can give readers a worded perspective that is limited. Written words excel at describing how something happened and how we should do something. However, visual art also excels at description in ways that words cannot because art provides different perspectives of human feelings and how we see the world. This research endeavors to consider whether including visual art in academic literature can enhance our general understanding of the topics in the literature. Images such as charts and diagrams are already included in academic literature. However, those graphics show data and processes. They intend to describe the information in the literature further rather than convey emotion and meaning as art-based images do. The approach of this article is to analyze two drawings and excerpts from academic literature. The drawings contain poetic text and other words that help connect the drawings to the excerpts. The excerpts and drawings together show how art can help us better understand topics in academic literature. The article is structured so that the excerpt is first provided. Then, the main concepts of the excerpt are identified. Next, the associated drawing is presented, and then an analysis of the connections between the excerpt and the drawing is offered. The article's findings intend to show that visual art, such as drawings, can offer perspectives that words alone cannot provide in academic literature.

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1. Introduction

This article addresses the problem that academic literature is mainly text-oriented. That is, the concepts and explanations in literature are usually represented through words. That textual orientation gives readers a worded perspective that may be limited. This article considers whether adding visual art to literature could offer a greater understanding of the topic by providing different facets of the concepts and explanations discussed in the literature. The written word excels at describing the details of how something happened, how we should do something, and when we should do it. However, visual art also excels at description, but does so in a different way. It can convey our human feelings and what something looks like in ways that words cannot.

This research aims to consider whether visual art included in academic literature can enhance the overall understanding of the topics in the literature. Images, diagrams, and charts are already included in academic literature to help explain findings and results. However, those graphics are built to show data, processes, or descriptions. They are not art-based images that are created to convey emotion and meaning.

The scope of academic literature and visual art is large. Accordingly, this article reduces the scope by focusing on academic literature about art. The article further reduces the scope by focusing on the visual arts of painting and drawing. More specifically, it focuses on two digital drawings the author has created to show how art can help us better understand topics in the academic literature we read.

Within this scope, the objectives of this research are:

- 1) Analyze the perspective that words provide.
- 2) Analyze the perspective that art offers.
- 3) Examine how words can be used to describe art.
- 4) Investigate how words and art are used together.
- 5) Consider how words and art can be used together to explain and depict the concepts in academic literature.

The research considers literature that discusses the association of words and art. More specifically, it employs literature that considers the types of perspectives that words and art can provide. This research hopes to show that visual art, such as drawings or paintings, can provide a perspective that words alone cannot provide in academic literature. Through the combination of words and art, additional perspectives can surface, and a greater understanding of the topics in academic literature may arise.

2. Literature Review

This article discusses the interconnections of art and words and provides examples of how art could be created to enhance the communication of academic literature. In this discussion, two excerpts of academic literature on the similarities between art and everyday creativity (Suereth, 2023) are used in the examples. The combination of art and words is interesting. Levinson (2011) calls this combination a hybrid art form. He proposes that artwork is a hybrid when it has elements that are separate physical forms and that have very different characteristics and backgrounds. Furthermore, he notes that the elements in a hybrid are intentionally combined and assembled. Sarkar (2022) suggests that how we think about the artwork can expand the aesthetic space ordinarily accessible on a flat surface. That is, expanding the aesthetic space can accommodate the combination of art and words that is examined in this article. A result of this combination is that it can provide a greater understanding of the artwork through the different perspectives that art and words can offer the observer. A discussion on the relationship between art and words is provided by Horton (2020). Horton suggests that the text should be designed to work with the visual object rather than be placed hierarchically above it. The author also notes that text can result in a greater understanding of the visual art. Elkins (2023) offers an interesting discussion of his own experiences as a researcher, teacher, and writer of prose that includes images. He notes that writing, as well as creating art, is a challenging endeavor for any of us. Accordingly, he provides ideas and encouragement for the artist and writer. Indeed, encouragement is important in the challenging endeavor of combining art and words in a way that is beneficial for the topic and understandable for the observer. A study by Petry (2018) provides a discussion of the use of words in contemporary art. His discussion includes contemporary artists such as Bruce Nauman and Tracey Emin. Petry also discusses font sizes and placements within art applications. His book, in general, is a valuable resource for considering the twining of words and art.

2.1. Graphic Narratives

The hybridization of media and art forms is discussed by Baetens (2018). He suggests that graphic narrative, consisting of comics and graphic novels, has become an acceptable vehicle of literary storytelling. Baetens' view is interesting because it suggests that graphic narrative can be a viable form of communication in literary contexts. Eisner (2008) suggests that in comics, the words and the image are consumed together by the reader, providing a more holistic experience. Accordingly, the combination of words and images is a form of literature where the images are also a language. This aspect of being a form of literature may suggest that such a form could be considered in various applications.

A duality of words and images exists in comic books, according to Lambeens and Pint (2015). Although such a combination, the authors point out, has existed since Egyptian hieroglyphs. The authors also suggest that this duality is between codes and sensations, where varying degrees of these are represented in words and images. The takeaway is that duality exists in comics and many areas of communication, such as graphic novels and movies, when dialogue is emphasized. It is up to the artist and creator to use the right blend of words and images in a particular situation.

McCloud (1994) discusses the element of abstraction in drawings, specifically in comic drawings. Indeed, the more abstract the art or drawing, the more we must imagine what that artwork means. A very abstract piece of modern art has an ambiguity that requires us to derive meaning and connection to our reality. Even the ubiquitous smiley face in our text messages may cause us to consider the smiling person who sent it. The artwork depicted in the examples in this article is quite detailed, but the drawings' meaning and connection to our everyday reality are ambiguous. Accordingly, the embedded words in the drawings help convey information to guide the observer.

2.2. Literature on Art and Words

Pagliari (2014) offers a rubric for determining whether a graphic novel can be a useful literary vehicle for students. The rubric leans toward characteristics of detailed settings, authentic dialogue, and expressive characters. Although such a rubric may not apply to the association of art and academic literature described

in this article, the characteristics in Pagliaro's rubric may be valid considerations in any form of communication that conveys an account of something, whether through art, words, or both.

Weiss, Hunt, Stryker, McGrath, and Fadda (2014) provide an essay that contains visual accompaniments. These visual additions expand the text and the experience of reading. The authors offer a series of fictitious diary entries interspersed with concept art images where various events and villas have become balkanized. Such work shows how images and text can work together in academic literature. Another example of art and words is shown in a visual essay by Suereth (2024) who describes a need for safeguards in AI systems. However, there is a written narrative that accompanies the images. Rather than the images describing the written text, in this essay, the written text describes the images. The author suggests that the narrative is an introductory example of how images and text can be used to address social issues. The essay is interesting because it offers a pathway for using images and text on topics that may be addressed in academic literature.

Berstrand (2022) employs drawings in an academic article about living spaces. He uses the drawings as interludes to let the reader step back and reflect on the reading. The drawings offer information in a different format than we would receive from pure reading. In a sense, these drawings are interludes not just from the words on the page but also from our old ways of perceiving and understanding. Such drawn interludes can be valuable in discussions requiring us to think in new ways outside our comfort zone.

2.3. Challenges of Art and Words

There are challenges to using art and words together. Stewart (2020) discusses one problem with using words to describe art. The author suggests that such words become fiction because we cannot use words to describe art or our motivations for creating it. Unfortunately, as Stewart points out, words are required to accompany art in galleries and at school. Doubtfire (2020) also discusses the challenge of writing about art. For Doubtfire, students and artists are asked to write about their art for teachers and audiences. Yet, the problem with writing is that it expects a conclusion — a sentence ends an idea, and a paragraph ends a group of ideas. In contrast, the process of creating is not defined by one idea or a contained group of ideas. Instead, that process is often chaotic, and the result is unsettled.

However, writing can be beneficial for art. Guerra-Valiente (2020) suggests that the artist who creates a drawing may not know everything about it. Realizing this separation between creation and explanation may be a way to begin to write about the two. The benefit of writing about the art is that it may help open our thinking about the work and its possibilities. The writing can also help delineate the space of the art. Additionally, the writing can act as a lens that suggests a focus of unfolding understanding for the artist.

Ings (2021) has an interesting approach when writing for creative works. He suggests that not all text benefits a piece of artwork, accurately describes a piece, or works well with it. Some leeway occurs when writing about creative works such that past writing models may not be needed. An example is poetic writing, which is not about writing lines of poetry but can be a form of academic writing that focuses on feelings, rhythm, and ambiguity. Such an approach may benefit our writing about creative works. The approach may also benefit our twining of words and art. That is, we should consider using words that do not follow preconceived notions or writing and accommodate the feelings, rhythm, and ambiguity in the artwork. Wilsher (2020) also discusses writing in the context of art. According to the author, writing about art is challenging. For example, if the writing explains the artwork, then the artwork becomes unimportant. On the other hand, an artwork that is not written about is an artwork that does not exist. In other words, the worst that could happen to an exhibition is that nothing will be written about it. These perspectives about writing and art highlight that writing is a vital way to communicate. In the context of a hybridization of art and text, words written on the canvas can also be vital modes of communication.

However, words are not necessary to communicate effectively. Francis (2022) offers a visual essay that contains no words. The essay aims to show art and design students that visual forms can be effective and even abstract forms can communicate. This visual essay is valuable because it enables artists and writers to see that they can communicate in modes other than writing. By getting off the mainstream highway of the written narrative, a pathway of visual narrative can become possible.

2.4. Nuances of Words

Letters and words are interesting additions to artworks, but we should not forget that numbers also have interesting meanings. Schimmel and Endres (1993) have created an encyclopedia of the different meanings through the history of many numbers. For example, the number seven is associated with magic and power and with the witches of Salem, Massachusetts. The number nine is associated with various aspects of sacredness throughout history and Celtic myths. The number twelve is associated with a closed circle, the signs of the zodiac, and is frequently used in the Old Testament. Using these numbers and others can enrich artwork with meanings that may be difficult to express otherwise.

Blake (2011) describes the hidden meanings in many forms of language, including crosswords, riddles, and biblical texts. Such hidden meanings are an interesting approach to using text in works of art. An artist could use existing text that contains hidden meanings or create their own text that may be more connected to the artwork. Cresswell (2019) discusses hidden messages written into objects and works. The author

specifically discusses messages in fabric, but these messages could also apply to messages in art and text. This concept of hidden messages may fit well with a combination of art and text. For example, word messages with hidden meanings could create layers of meaning and enrichment in an artwork.

O'Kane (2021) discusses how the placement of words is important. That is, words do not live by themselves. Instead, they inform and reveal other words that are close by. Such a focus on location can be valuable when incorporating words into drawings or paintings. The location of the words can affect other words and particular areas of the artwork. Treating the typography as an image can be a valuable way to use the text as art and within art. Chantry (2015) suggests that we should consider drawing letters and words in a way that can be more aligned with the subject matter. This approach of hand drawing is a move away from the mechanistic and pretty typefaces that are ubiquitous today. According to the author, we follow those mechanical forms because we are too concerned about someone having an opinion about our hand-drawn styles.

2.5. Examples of Art and Words

Works from the contemporary artist Tracey Emin were used in the research for this article. Jones (2020) provides a selection of Tracy Emin's diverse work, which can be quite text-oriented and offers a glimpse into Emin's riveting life and lifestyle. Emin's word-oriented artworks show us that the words we use in art can reveal a facet of our own lives, feelings, and inner thoughts. Emin (2013) also provides a collection of her works, including drawings, photography, and paintings. Some of these works incorporate words; the most prominent are her neon signs in a script typeface. Emin's work reminds us that words are a prominent communication method that readily catches our eye and attention.

This article also used artworks from the pop artist Edward Ruscha. His book of illustrations (Ruscha, 1988) are examples of the Ruscha artworks commissioned in 1985 by the Lannan Foundation. Ruscha used words extensively in his artworks, which can be valuable examples of how art and text work together. Another book of Ruscha (2009) artworks includes essays and a history and chronology of his work. Ruscha again shows his attention to words in the art he creates, and accordingly, this book contains excellent examples of the twining of art and words.

Indeed, writing and creating artwork can be challenging. It can be difficult to maintain an awareness of ourselves in the creative process, particularly when a form of word and art hybridization, as discussed in this article, is underway. Adji (2021) suggests a form of reflection that can help connect us to our identity while allowing us to communicate our story on the page. The suggestion offers encouragement and a pathway for approaching challenging hybridizations.

3. Perspectives from Words and Art

We use words because they describe our everyday lives, our human condition, and the world around us. Words are precise, and, in that exactitude, we can describe many things. Words have meanings that are well-known, and we can verify those meanings by simply consulting a dictionary. Words also have sounds, which evoke further meaning through their feel, as I am reminded while plonking my keyboard and realizing that plinking seems to be a more refined manner of writing.

Writing words is a process of expressing our thoughts and feelings; in that sense, it is not simple or easy (O'Kane, 2021). The problem is that we apparently have many thoughts and feelings, and they turn and weave with one another. To make sense of these thoughts and feelings, we must untangle them and reconstruct them into a single inkling that we can write down as a phrase or, when lucky, a sentence.

However, there is more to this complexity than the processes within ourselves. The words we write can be problematic. That is, words connect to and inform one another. They take on meaning from other words nearby and the context of the overall topic in a discussion. Words have sounds that can be soft or guttural, which also provide meaning. As an added complexity, words highlight other words by their mere proximity (O'Kane, 2021).

With this wealth of meaning and the great variety of how words connect to one another, it seems that words should be the ultimate mode of communication in our human world. Yet, fully describing our everyday lives or the world in which we live cannot be achieved through words. For example, we may believe that our written words describe our feelings or special moments in our lives. But it is impossible to use words to describe those human things, never mind our love for a young child, the anguish of war, or the serenity of a quiet meadow. We try hard to express feelings of love and moments of pain. Yet, we realize that such writings will fall short of their desired end — often far short. We can try to describe simpler moments like those in a coffee shop and its rhythmic sounds of plates, cutlery, and conversations. Yet, when we write those words, we do so to conjure images of a place that is much more alive than the words we write and read.

However, there are tremendous benefits to using words. Words provide information that facial gestures, a musical composition, or an artwork cannot convey. Words are essential for describing how things operate, how we can make things, and creating stories we can pass down to younger generations.

Art is distinctly different from words. Where words are defined discourse items with specific meanings, art is ambiguous. Where words can describe how to drive a car, art is challenged to describe processes. Yet,

art excels in other ways of communication. Art can show our feelings in ways that words cannot because art communicates through a different language, and we observe it using different ways of experiencing and understanding.

In this article, art is discussed in the context of written words and specifically in the context of written academic articles. As we have seen throughout human history, both written words and art can stand on their own. In other words, art is not necessary to support the written word, nor are words necessary to support art.

4. Writing about Art

Writing about art is a different endeavor from the type of writing that artists incorporate into their art. Artists are often encouraged to communicate their work through words. For example, art students are asked to explain their work to mentors and audiences. In these situations, the students are encouraged to research areas surrounding their work, and accordingly, their visual work is encircled by words (Doubtfire, 2020).

However, using words to describe art has challenges. Writing is structured in a way that leans toward concluding things. Accordingly, it is easy to succumb to conclusions when writing about art. Creating conclusions about art is problematic when art does not necessarily have a conclusion. The emphasis on writing conclusions causes some students to emulate this in the texts they create for their art (Doubtfire, 2020).

Another challenge is that a refining of the words is expected to explain the artwork better. Written text is refined through repetitive editing and rewriting. The result is a text that is coherent and persuasive. Yet, refined texts are expected to explain the chaotic process and, at times, the unsettled result of the artwork (Doubtfire, 2020).

Stewart (2020) describes the following negative results that can arise when employing text to describe art:

- The words leave little space for the observer's imagination.
- Trying to describe art through words contradicts the claim that art cannot be described through words.
- Textual narratives in galleries lean toward hyperbole.

These challenges that Stewart portrays highlight a tension between words and art. The tension suggests that art resists the attempt to explain and define it. It also suggests that the space where art exists cannot be reached through words (Guerra-Valiente, 2020).

These challenges underscore the difficulty of writing words to describe the art we create. On the other hand, there is a benefit to writing about art. When we write about the art we create, we open up our thinking about the art. In this thinking, we reflect on our work, and in our contemplation, we see the possibilities of our own story in the work and the possibilities of the work itself (Adji, 2021; Guerra-Valiente, 2020).

Indeed, words may not depict images well, but words can guide us toward different perspectives. An essential aspect of art is that it enables the observer to experience an artwork from one's own viewpoint. This process of experiencing is valuable because it compels the observer to exert effort to reach an understanding. That is, an understanding of the art. However, many possible perspectives exist. Accordingly, the observer may be unsure about how to consider the artwork. In these situations, words that describe the text or are incorporated into the text could nudge the observer in the direction the artist had in mind.

5. Words and Art Together

Words and art have been collaborating for millennia. The ancient Greeks inscribed sculptures with the names of the people depicted in those works. For centuries, the artist's signature has provided artistic and commercial value in paintings (Petry, 2018). In the twentieth century, Cubist artists employed letters, markings, and newspaper clippings, and these textual contributions added meaning to their artwork (Petry, 2018).

Levinson (2011) calls the combination of words and art a hybrid since the two are distinct media with separate histories, and their combination is not natural. In other words, there is some resistance to the combination. According to Guerra-Valiente (2020) this hybridization is valuable because it provides a more complete understanding of the artwork. In a sense, our understanding is more complete because the space of words extends the boundary of a flat canvas, and the space of drawings expands the confines of a prescribed writing format (Sarkar, 2022).

5.1. Words and Art are Different

Words provide a different type of information compared to drawings. Both words and drawings convey information, but the information we receive from them differs. For example, the information we receive from a textual description of a drawn apple is different from the symbolic meaning of that drawing (Petry, 2018).

The difference between words and art suggests a contrast between verbalization and art. Awareness of the contrast is significant because it enables the artist to realize that verbalization and art inform each other and can thus benefit each other. The artist who formulates and creates a drawing may not know everything

about it, which indicates a separation between verbalization and the drawing. Realizing this separation can begin a verbalization of the work and a reverberation between the two that informs each other (Guerra-Valiente, 2020).

Words arranged on an artwork are available for us to consume using our usual way of reading. Yet, these words are also marks on the canvas; in that sense, they have an additional meaning as elements of the composition. This combination of words to be read and marks to be observed creates a fluid dynamic. According to Petry (2018) the result is a constant flux of words to be read and marks to be observed. For the reader or observer, such textual artworks have a tension between reading for meaning and observing for meaning (Petry, 2018).

5.2. Considering Ways of Combining Words and Art

The combination of words and art can occur in a variety of ways. An interesting arrangement is to embed hidden codes and meanings into artworks and everyday objects. Cresswell (2019) describes how codes and meanings can be written into various articles of vintage clothing. These aged clothes already have meaning due to their human bonds and the wornness of their fabric. However, Cresswell enhances their meaning by artfully adding stitching and handwriting on the cloth.

Cresswell's infusion of words into vintage clothing invites us to consider how we can combine art and words. Poetic writing emphasizes feeling, rhythm, and ambiguity, and because of these qualities, it may be valuable when combined with art. For example, in an artwork of visual imagery and words, a poetic style can help the observer see possibilities in the artwork. Rather than the boundaries that conventional writing delineates, the open nature of poetic writing reveals the possibilities of what the art can become (Ings, 2021).

6. Combining Words and Art in Academic Literature

This section shows how words and art can be used together in various ways to help explain topics in academic literature. The section shows two examples of combining words and art in academic literature. Both examples have an interconnection of words and art. Each example contains:

- An excerpt from an academic article that discusses art.
- A drawing that depicts the article excerpt.
- The drawing contains words in a poetic style.
- The drawing contains characters and a short dialogue.

6.1. Example One

6.1.1. Article Excerpt

The context of this excerpt is that in our hurried modern world, a disconnect exists between art and our everyday lives:

The distance between fine arts and our everyday lives can seem immense. That is, it can be challenging to appreciate the aesthetics of art when it is difficult to associate art with our everyday lives. However, our everyday lives already contain a wealth of aesthetic experiences. These experiences are broad because we can like or dislike many different things.

Aesthetics can be viewed as an appreciation of the world around us, marking our degree of liking or disliking something. For example, an aesthetics of art could indicate how much we appreciate a traditional painting by Renoir or pop art by Warhol. Aesthetics can also apply to how much we like church steeples, bridges, and everyday furniture. For instance, you may like all types of steeples, only covered wooden bridges, and everyday furniture when handcrafted (Suereth, 2023).

6.1.2. Main Concept in the Excerpt

Identifying the central concept in the excerpt can help us determine the poetic phrases we can use to depict the excerpt.

In the excerpt above, the main topic is aesthetics, which is a complex subject, and accordingly, many facets of aesthetics can be addressed.

The excerpt mentions four aspects of aesthetics.

- 1) The difficulty of appreciating the aesthetics of art in our busy modern lives.
- 2) The appreciation of the aesthetics of well-known artworks.
- 3) The appreciation of the aesthetics of things in our daily lives.
- 4) The things we like in our everyday world.

Any of these aspects could be a good starting point for developing a perspective that gives observers and readers an alternative view of the excerpt.

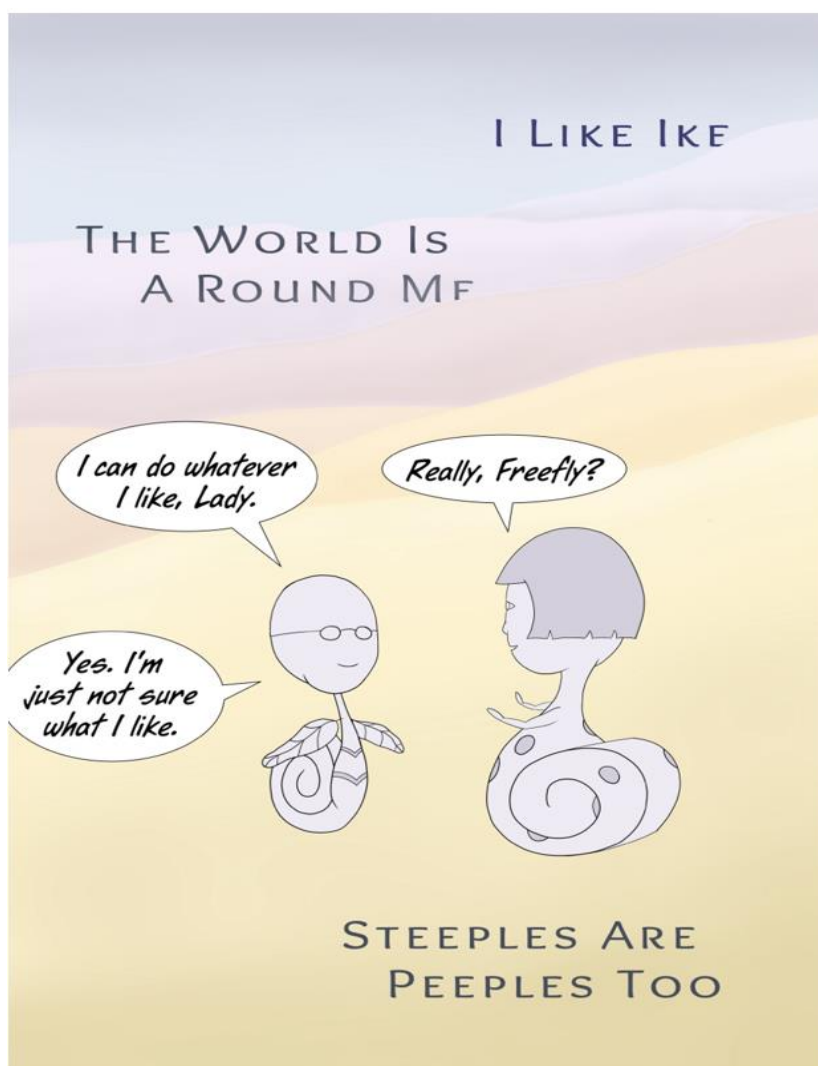


Figure 1. An artwork on aesthetics. Drawing by the author.

6.1.3. The Poetic Phrases

The drawing associated with this excerpt of aesthetics contains three poetic phrases created to convey alternative viewpoints (Figure 1). You may notice that these phrases do not have an academic nature. The informality and ambiguity contrast against the formal style of the excerpt's written text.

A contrast can be valuable in several ways. First, it provides a different view of the excerpt, which is beneficial because providing a similar view could be redundant and offer no additional insight. Second, it urges the observer or reader to connect the poles of the contrast and thus create an understanding between the drawing and the excerpt. Third, it employs a different way of observing and reading and, thus, a different way of experiencing and understanding the concepts in the excerpt. Here are the text phrases in this drawing and a short explanation of each phrase.

6.1.3.1. I like Ike

This short rhyming phrase was part of an advertising promotion for the 1952 United States presidential campaign of Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose nickname was Ike. The phrase directs our focus to the word like and prompts us to consider why we like something or someone.

6.1.3.2. The World is a Round Me

The phrases in this drawing are wordplays. Here, the wordplay refers to the words "appreciating the world around us" in the excerpt. This phrase aims to initiate an image of ourselves in the world. The wordplay causes us to pause and ensure we read the words correctly. In this pausing, we may also consider how we live the world.

6.1.3.3. Steeples are Peeples Too

This phrase is another wordplay and includes a spelling alternative. The steeples are referenced in the excerpt. The alternative spelling may cause us to pause. The phrase in conjunction with the excerpt may suggest that people are individuals with unique characteristics and are available to be liked.

An interesting aspect of these short phrases is that they are unusual and ambiguous. The phrases require the observer or reader to notice the words, pause for a moment to re-center and experience them, and then derive an interpretation of them.

The phrases in this drawing were created in the block text style of Edward Ruscha, who employed words in many of his works. Specifically, the drawing in this article uses words in a similar style to Ruscha's Words #4 (Ruscha, 1988) plate 57) and A Particular Kind of Heaven (Ruscha, 2009).

6.1.4. The Characters and Setting

In the drawing, the characters are Lady, who has ladybug features, and Freefly, who has butterfly attributes. Lady and Freefly have human-like faces, but their bodies suggest they come from another realm. The setting of the dialogue between Lady and Freefly also has an unreal quality. For example, the hills have an endless gradation that is not normal on our planet or possibly on any other. The hills are colored in a way that is not found in ordinary landscapes, regardless of the hue of the evening sky. In a sense, the characters and setting have a dreamlike quality.

6.1.5. The Dialogue in the Drawing

The drawing can be viewed as an enhanced comic panel with a large and ambiguous setting. This drawing has speech balloons and a comic-style font, as comic panels do. The dialogue between the characters also has a comic feel because it is short and simplistic. Here, the dialogue is on aesthetics. It is about what we like, in a quite simple form. The lack of detail in the dialogue suggests that it is shallow and ambiguous. However, as readers of the dialogue and observers of the setting, we take the simplicity of the characters, the setting, and the dialogue and embellish them with our own experience. In other words, we fill in the holes where needed to make the simplistic drawing more real or comfortable for us. For example, we imagine the characters with various levels of experience, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Through our imaginations, the artwork can take on a multitude of realities.

6.2. Example Two

6.2.1. Article Excerpt

The context of this excerpt is that art and our daily lives contain a rhythm:

In a painting, a single canvas contains a resonance and rhythm that the painter expresses in the work. That is, it communicates a language of resonance that touches us. It depicts a range of rhythms in the exchange of small talk at a café and the larger cycle of woodland seasons.

In our daily lives, there is also a rhythm that is not easy to notice. There is a pace to our daily lives, a flow to how we move through our work, and a pattern to our social interactions. Such a pattern can be seen when passing the same people on a busy sidewalk. Even the regularity of waiting in a coffee shop queue has a pattern of movement, while the banter in the background has a particular flow.

The creative activity that occurs within these rhythms — in the practice of painting a woodland scene or in the banter of a café lounge — is not readily apparent or even visible. However, that creative activity is crucial in the evolving cadence of the artwork and our daily lives (Suereth, 2023).

6.2.2. Main Concept in the Excerpt

This excerpt's main topic is the rhythm that emerges from everyday life on bustling city streets and small coffee shops. This rhythm weaves in subtle ways throughout our daily lives, making these rhythms challenging to discern. These rhythms are also in our daily activities of driving to the store or picking up kids at school. As part of our everyday lives, these rhythms become part of the regularity of living where the ordinary things in our world become so commonplace that they become lost.

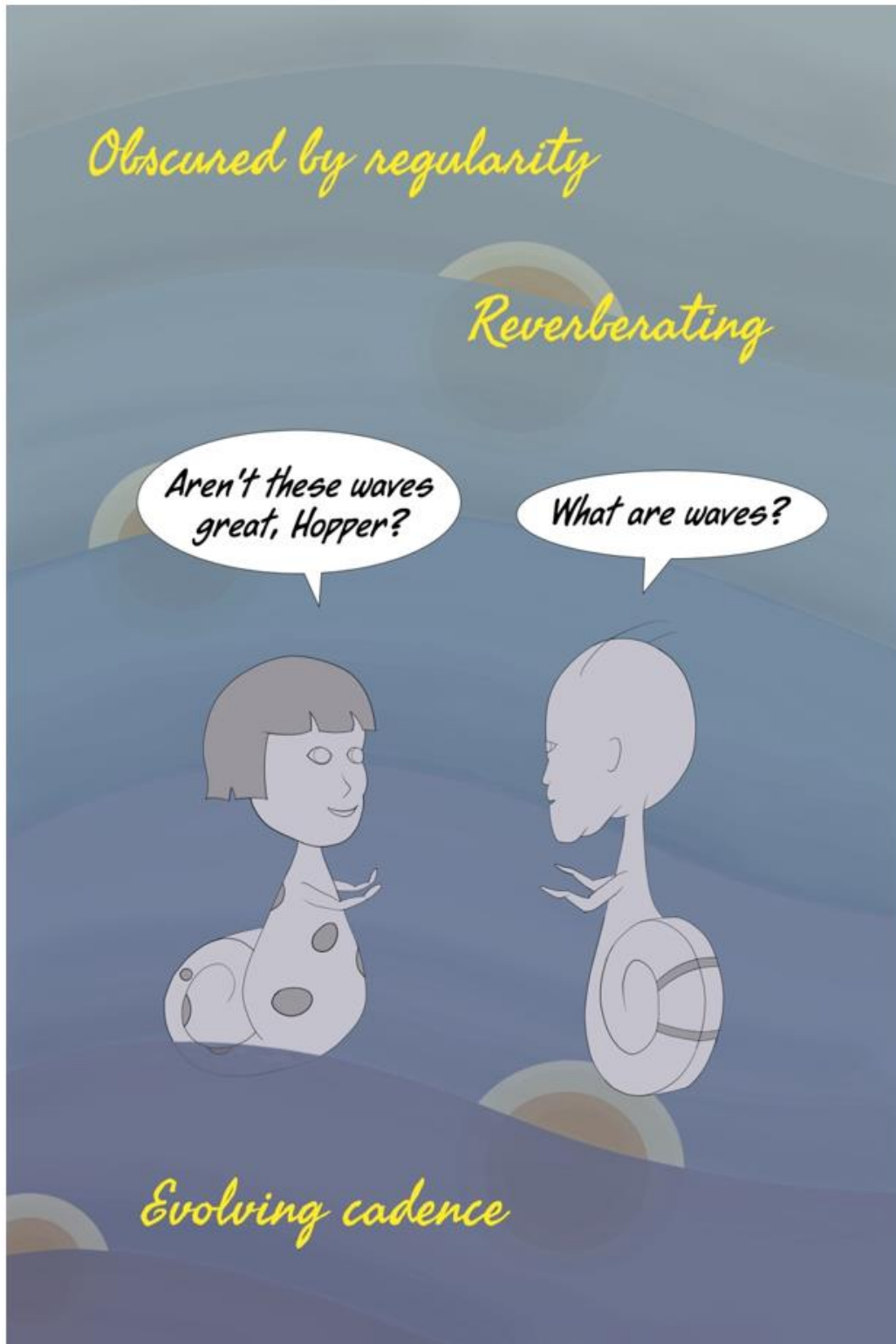


Figure 2. An artwork on rhythms. Drawing by the author.

6.2.3. The Poetic Phrases

In this excerpt of rhythm, the associated drawing also contains poetic phrases (Figure 2). These phrases and the drawing have a style that is different from the previous example. However, the expected result is the same. The phrases provide a contrast of perspective and allow the observer and reader to experience and understand in a different way. Here are the rhythm phrases with a short description of each one.

6.2.3.1. Obscured by Regularity

The subtle rhythms in our everyday lives make it hard to notice them. The challenge of recognizing these rhythms increases because they have become ingrained into our daily living and are thus commonplace — so routine that they have become inconspicuous. This phrase about regularity highlights our disregard of the rhythms in our ordinary lives. The phrase is a contradiction because we expect regularity to make things more visible to us. Through this unexpected contradiction, we pause to consider the phrase, which may trigger the observer or reader to notice the hidden rhythms around them.

6.2.3.2. Reverberating

Unlike the phrases in the previous example on aesthetics, there is no wordplay in these phrases. However, the word reverberating has an onomatopoeic quality that reads and sounds like the resonance it describes. This word does not necessarily offer a different perspective from the rhythms discussed in this excerpt, but it focuses on rhythm in the sound and feeling of its singleness. Words in artworks do not have to provide alternative perspectives. A simple emphasis may be satisfactory as a focal direction for the observer or reader.

6.2.3.3. Evolving Cadence

This phrase seems to describe itself through the circularity of the word evolving and the two-step movement of cadence. It is another way to describe the movement of rhythm and provides, like the word reverberating, a focus on the main point in the excerpt. Additionally, cadence has a feel of the word dance and could suggest a movement between the characters in the dialogue.

The phrases in this drawing were created in the script font (Emin, 2013) and neon styles (Jones, 2020) used by the artist Tracey Emin, who employed words in many of her works. In particular, this drawing uses words in a similar style to Emin's Just Love Me, created in red neon (Jones, 2020).

6.2.4. The Characters and Setting

In this drawing, we again have Lady, and a new character named Hopper who has grasshopper characteristics.

The setting is a sea of waves, though these are not the waves we would find at a seaside resort.

Instead, we can imagine that these waves are composed of everyday living where sensory content flows around and through bodies in another realm.

In a sense, the characters and setting represent an alternative perspective, one that enables us to acknowledge that different views are possible.

In this drawing, the depiction of another realm extends the idea of an ambiguous artwork. The depiction expands our perspectives and thus opens up possibilities. That is, possibilities beyond the social, physical, and psychological limits in our real lives — beyond the constraints in which we are constantly immersed.

6.2.5. The Dialogue in the Drawing

This dialogue, like its associated excerpt and drawing, is about rhythm. More specifically, the dialogue is about acknowledging the rhythm — noticing its existence and possibly even participating in it. As observers and readers, we experience the fantasy of the setting and the ambiguous wording of the short dialogue. In a way, we fill in the holes of the setting and the dialogue with suppositions from our own experiences and desires. In this sense, we build a world from the characters and their dialogue. However, it is a world that occurs in their realm, in the setting in which the characters and dialogue exist.

7. Challenges of Combining Text and Art

There are certainly challenges to combining art and words. One of these challenges is that visual art has a non-textual nature. Visual art excels because it expresses an experience and understanding that words cannot convey. However, an artwork becomes unimportant if the writing can explain it (Wilsher, 2020).

Other challenges also exist. For example, some art does not work well with words. According to Ings (2021) not all text benefits an artwork, accurately describes it, or works well with it. Another challenge is that when we try to interpret an artwork through words, those words may inaccurately change the meaning of the art. According to Guerra-Valiente (2020) words are “unable to express the inner experience of drawing or even the resulting object.”

On the other hand, words are often needed when explaining art. Wilsher (2020) suggests that an artwork that is not written about does not exist. For Wilsher, a practice-only art thesis is unrealistic, and the worst that could happen with an exhibition is that nothing will be written about it. However, we can approach the explanation of art from a different perspective. How we write about art does not have to adhere to traditional standards. According to Ings (2021) we do not have to follow preconceived models when writing about creative works.

8. Benefits of Combining Text and Art

One benefit of combining words and art is that they inform one another. For example, words can inject focus, humor, and history into the art, while art can offer a setting, a foundation, and an atmosphere for the words. In this correspondence between words and art, the words should be designed to work with the art rather than position itself above it. In this way, the words offer a revealing and a greater understanding of the art (Horton, 2020).

Several other benefits also emerge. For example, the words and art together bring depth to the artwork. That is, words help us understand the possibilities of the art. Accordingly, the words and the art together create a layered process of communication that moves toward a more complete form of the art (Guerra-Valiente, 2020).

Another benefit is that words promote a focus. A function of words is that they delineate the space of possibility and, accordingly, the possibility of the art. However, by using certain words that frame the art, the artist guides the observer toward pathways the artist wants to underscore. The words also can act as a lens that focuses on different aspects of the art, and thus provides different experiences as the artwork unfolds for the observer (Guerra-Valiente, 2020).

In the context of written articles and books, drawings can offer a change of pace within the written text. In this sense, drawings can act as interludes in the exercise of reading (Berstrand, 2022). For example, drawings can allow the text to breathe by creating space between topics and during transitions. Drawings also give the reader a respite from the effort required when the literature is dense or complex. Here, the drawings can also be a space of calibration, a means to re-center ourselves with the material, or simply give our analyzing mind a break.

9. Conclusion

This article began by describing how words are precise, can describe many things, and have well-defined meanings. Writing words to describe our feelings or a moment with a loved one is challenging because words can only give us a limited view based on the meaning of the words we use. The article delineated how art is different from words because it communicates through visual imagery that can be ambiguous. Through this ambiguity, we apply our own feelings and experiences to the art. The article described how words and art have been collaborating since the time of ancient Greece. Words embedded into art can act as markings on the canvas and become part of the visual imagery of the art. Words and art provide a contrast, and together, they enable the observer to see the work from different perspectives.

The article discussed the challenges of writing about our own art. It explained that words tend to move toward conclusions but that art does not necessarily have conclusions. It explained that words require refinement through editing and rewriting, but that refined text is challenged to depict the unsettled nature of art.

The article then described ways of combining words and art. It focused on two examples that use drawings to help explain excerpts from academic literature. The drawings in these examples are composed of comic-style images and dialogue. The setting in the drawings includes poetic phrases created in the text styles of Edward Ruscha and Tracey Emin. The examples include a narrative about the main topic in the excerpts, a detailed explanation of the poetic phrases, a description of the characters and setting in the drawing, and an analysis of the dialogue. Finally, the article discussed the challenges and benefits of combining art and words.

This article showed that words and visual art provide different perspectives of ourselves and the world around us. Accordingly, it is difficult, if not impossible, to fully explain an artwork through words. Likewise, explaining a written essay through art is just as challenging. However, since they provide different perspectives, using both words and art together can offer a more complete way to communicate our ideas and experiences. A special moment in our day or a peaceful morning at a meadow are examples of where words and imagery together could convey a more complete account.

Based on these findings, words and art together can provide the reader or observer with a greater range of perspectives than just words or art alone. The combination of words and art can be useful where topics are complex or should be viewed in different ways. This article aimed to determine whether art, combined with academic literature, could enhance the understanding of topics in the literature. According to the findings in this article, adding art to an academic article can provide further perspectives and, thus, a greater understanding of the complex topics discussed in academic literature. Further research could consider different types of drawings to determine whether those drawings could provide different forms of perspectives. Another consideration could be to employ poetry instead of drawings, which could provide another form of imagery and perspective.

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