Hidden in plain sight - engaging in the visual construction of European identities and narratives through ancient European script

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Welcome
Hidden in plain sight - engaging in the visual construction of European identities and narratives through ancient European script.
Practice-led / Design thinking methodology

Discovery - Design - Test - Implement

repeat process
iterative process

The later is described as 'social' or 'public' design, a process of 'co-creation' resulting in the common good by means of sustainable solutions.' (Viladas 2011, P31)
Like visual design, ancient script deals with visual presentation of meaning and is directly relevant in relation to Frutiger’s interest in archetypes and Neurath’s Isotype collection.
There is obvious affinity between contemporary visual communication design and ancient script because they are based on the same principle of the encoding of meaning to be de-coded by the receiver.
Development of Latin characters

From the hieroglyph to the modern phonetic character A
SYMBOLS OF PICTORIAL STATISTICS
phological Table 1, square and cross), while open is a
with visible stroke endings point to a more abstrac-
ter pictorial use of the sign. Five hundred years of
etration changed the drawing of an ox into the syl-
phonic sign for "ru"

In Cretan inscriptions, ideograms and syllabic signs
could both be used in the same line, which explains why
their definitive deciphering has not yet been achieved.
Since our subject is not linguistics, we restrict our illus-
tration to a few examples of striking signs. It is inter-
testing to contrast the representations of man and wom-
man, comparing them further with the signs for robe and
armor. Legs hidden by clothing were, from the start, a
pictorial expression for the womanly. In the warrior
sign, the robelike shape of the armor is left out in order
to express the masculine form clearly. There is also
much fascination in the various kinds of representa-
tions of animal species (pig, calf, sheep) and in the dver-
cy of statements on the chariot panel from Knossos.

Cretan writing signs have their mysterious effect on
the viewer because their form implies pictorial state-
ments based on objects, while leaving the uninitiated
complete doubt about the explanatory key. It is prob-
able that the refined pictorial signs assembled here were
already largely used as syllabic characters.

Experts still disagree about the extent of influence
Cretan script culture on the Mediterranean region as a
whole.

At all events, the graphic wealth of Cretan script signs
collates such mental power to the uninhibited as to
leave no doubt about the island's cultural value in rela-
tion to the mainland.

Pictorial-syllabic script from Crete, 1500 B.C.

The mysterious area between concrete illustration and abstract sign

4. Hittite pictographic script from Syria

The Hittite people lived in Syria, on the eastern sea-
board of the Mediterranean, in the second millennium
B.C. The examples of writing remaining to us from this
realm consist of very beautiful, distinguished rows of
characters, cut into stone and later scratched into a va-
riety of materials in linear fashion.

It is supposed that the creation of the Hittite picto-
graphic script was stimulated and influenced both by
Egyptian hieroglyphics and by the Mesopotamian cu-
iform script of the neighbors on the opposite bank of
the Euphrates. A relationship with the Cretan picto-
Many of the deciphered words were easily recognizable as an archaic form of Greek. At first Ventris was highly sceptical of this result; like Evans, he was convinced that the Minoan language was unrelated to Greek — related rather to the unknown language of the Etruscans. But over the coming months of 1952–53, Ventris, with the help of John Chadwick, a specialist in early Greek, showed that more and more of the tablets yielded to the ‘Greek solution’. It began to seem that the Minoans and the Mycenaeans of mainland Greece had been speaking and writing Greek centuries before Homer.

In mid-1953 — at the same moment that the structure of DNA was decoded and Everest was climbed — by strange coincidence — Linear B was finally cracked beyond reasonable doubt. Confirmation came from a new tablet found at ancient Pylos on the Greek mainland by the American archaeologist Carl Blegen. As soon as the tablet had been cleaned, Blegen applied the values worked out by Ventris and Chadwick. Suddenly the mute signs, writing pre-dating the Trojan War, were made to speak after more than three millennia of silence.

This is not the Greek of Homer, still less the classical Greek of Euripides — in modern English it is not the English of Chaucer or Shakespeare. There proved to be nothing of literary value in Linear B; the tablets merely recorded prosaic details of palace administration, such as lists of names and their trades — shepherd, porter, brickmason, etc. — and lists of goods. Linear B tells us not one word about the names of kings and the deeds of heroes. But Greek it certainly was. As Ventris remarked at the time, with characteristic modesty, his former classics master Patrick Hunter:

*Not quite the Greek you thought we’d arrive at?*  
*Best wishes* — Michael
Visual Translations of Ancient Heritage

Re-contextualising ancient European script through contemporary visual communication methods and media.
Linear A

Linear B

- The oldest un-deciphered and deciphered scripts in Europe
- Linear A is Minoan and only found on Crete
- Linear B is thought to be the follow on script of Linear A and is Mycenaean script.
- Identified in Knossos Crete by Arthur Evans turn of the century.
- Deciphered by Michael Ventris
Melanie Levick-Parkin
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Visual Communication

Jonathan Wood
Senior Lecturer in
Motion and Multimedia Design

Dr. Georgia Flouda
Heraklion Archaeological Museum
Fellow, Centre for Hellenic Studies
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ARDC Art & Design Research Centre
Sheffield Institute of Arts
Sheffield Hallam University
The Purpose

of this practice led research project was to apply a design anthropology approach to the visual re-contextualisation of ancient European script, using contemporary visual communication practices and media strategies in order to explore opportunities for creative engagement with archaeological knowledge.
From Artifact to Experience

Meredith Davis (2012:208)
Move forwards 1 space

Did you Know:
The Phaistos Disk was discovered in 1908.
Linear Bash

A Linear-B symbols have been mixed together and need to be matched together within 15 moves.

Match at least 3 symbols in a row to gain points.

Match more in succession to gain an exponential and score even more points.

Stuck? Tap shuffle to rearrange the pieces at the cost of one move.

Target: 9000
Moves: 9
Score: 2160
Observation of Linear B Session

- MA Archaeology University of Sheffield
- Professor John Bennet
- Basement Lab
The MA Archaeology students are here to re-create Linear B tablets. In the middle of the table is a big slab of clay and examples of replica tablets produced by John Bennet in previous years. These examples have a variety of shapes, some oblong, some more tablet-shaped, and all are full of Linear B inscriptions. The tablets have all been fired and their colour ranges from the light brown of oven-fired clay, to the irregular dark brown/black of clay fired in an open fire as an experiment, to emulate the accidental firing of the originals. Quite few of the tablets are broken.
After the initial welcome and setting down, Angela cuts a piece of sley for every student, while John explain to the students the nature of the task about to be commenced. He asks them to start by creating a piece of table, in any shape they wish and to then transcribe their name in Linear B into the wet sley, using one of the writing instruments provided. He demonstrates the moulding of a sample tablet and writes some instructions for the Linear B sley onto the whiteboard.
Language takes its significance of a linguistic expression from embedding the world, it transforms the world into something that can be thought of and talked about. (Suchman, 2007:77)
Archaeology can grant us access to our history by allowing us encounters with remnants of the past, but how these remnants are translated for us, read by us and what we believe that they tell us is intimately tied up with the context of our own contemporary culture.
scripts and discuss how their meaning relates to young peoples lives today and how they might be visually presented to make them suitable for todays media environment.

I hereby give permission for my child to participate in and contribute to the ADRC Visual Translations research project 2nd May 2015

Childs name:

Parent/Carer:

Signature:
3 Part Brief

- Working with the script in ink
- Ideas generation for contemporary meaning
- Generating of new symbols in vinyl and perspex
Britisch School of Archaeology
Die Judenrose ist an ihrer Spitze gebogen. Sie sieht aus wie ein Sechser...
'Interpretation involves intellectual confrontation with language and other cultural products. In the spirit of interpretation, meaning is not an innate quality of forms or an automatic reaction of the brain; it is discovered by relating signs to one’s own personal and cultural experience, and to other signs. Images take meaning from stylistic and iconic conventions, from other images, and form words, as well as from natural objects. To interpret is to recognize that signs are not an absolute, neutral, and fixed, but are, rather, in historical flux. ‘

(Lupton:1986)
Thank you!
If you are interested in this type of ‘stuff’, please do get in touch:

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