

VISUAL ARGUMENTATION & ORNAMENTATION

A visual argument is a form of communication that uses images, photographs, illustrations, charts, graphs, or other visual elements to convey a message or persuade an audience. Unlike traditional arguments that rely primarily on text and logical reasoning, visual arguments leverage visual elements to evoke emotional responses, make complex information more accessible, or present information in a memorable way.

Here are some key characteristics of visual arguments:

- * Visual arguments rely on images, graphics, and visual design elements to communicate their message. These visuals can include photographs, illustrations, infographics, charts, diagrams, and symbols.* Like verbal or written arguments, visual arguments aim to persuade or influence the audience. They may use techniques such as emotional appeal, credibility through visuals, or visual metaphors to make their point.
- * Visual arguments often emphasize clarity and impact. They are designed to quickly convey information or ideas in a way that is easy to understand and memorable.
- * Effective visual arguments take into account their intended audience and tailor the visuals accordingly. They consider how different demographics, cultural backgrounds, or knowledge levels might interpret the visuals.
- * While visual arguments primarily rely on images, they may also include text to provide context, explanations, or additional persuasive elements. The text is typically concise and strategically placed to complement the visuals.
- * Visual arguments are prevalent in advertising, political campaigns, social media posts, scientific presentations, and many other forms of communication where conveying a message visually can be more impactful than relying solely on words.
- * Visuals make arguments just as texts may make arguments. Claims are usually “embedded” within the argument. Oftentimes, they are not as explicit as text-based arguments. One must often consider the context of the visual and its message in order to ascertain the “claim” of the visual argument.

ILLUSTRATIONS AND PAINTINGS

Illustrations and paintings are hand-drawn or digitally composed images.

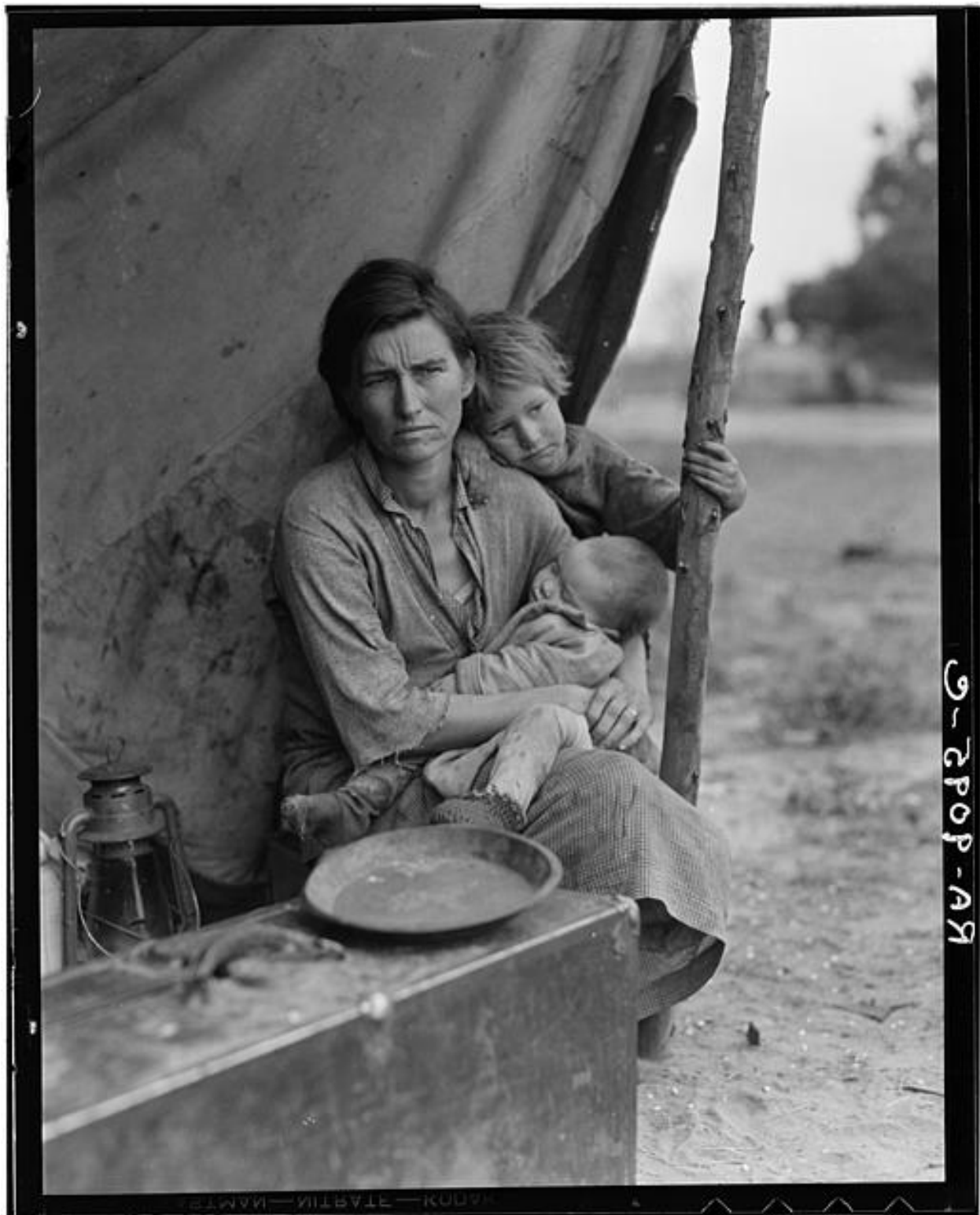
PHOTOGRAPHS (AND PHOTO ESSAYS Photos are images produced by image recording equipment such as a camera or a digital camera, a webcam, or other instrument for capturing a real image.

Photo essays (also called image essays) are collections of images which work together to convey a message, an argument, or to be informative.

Photo essays are another genre of visual argument, where multiple images are used to convey an argument or reveal a persuasive message. In this case, the recognition of “poverty” is part of the essay’s claim.

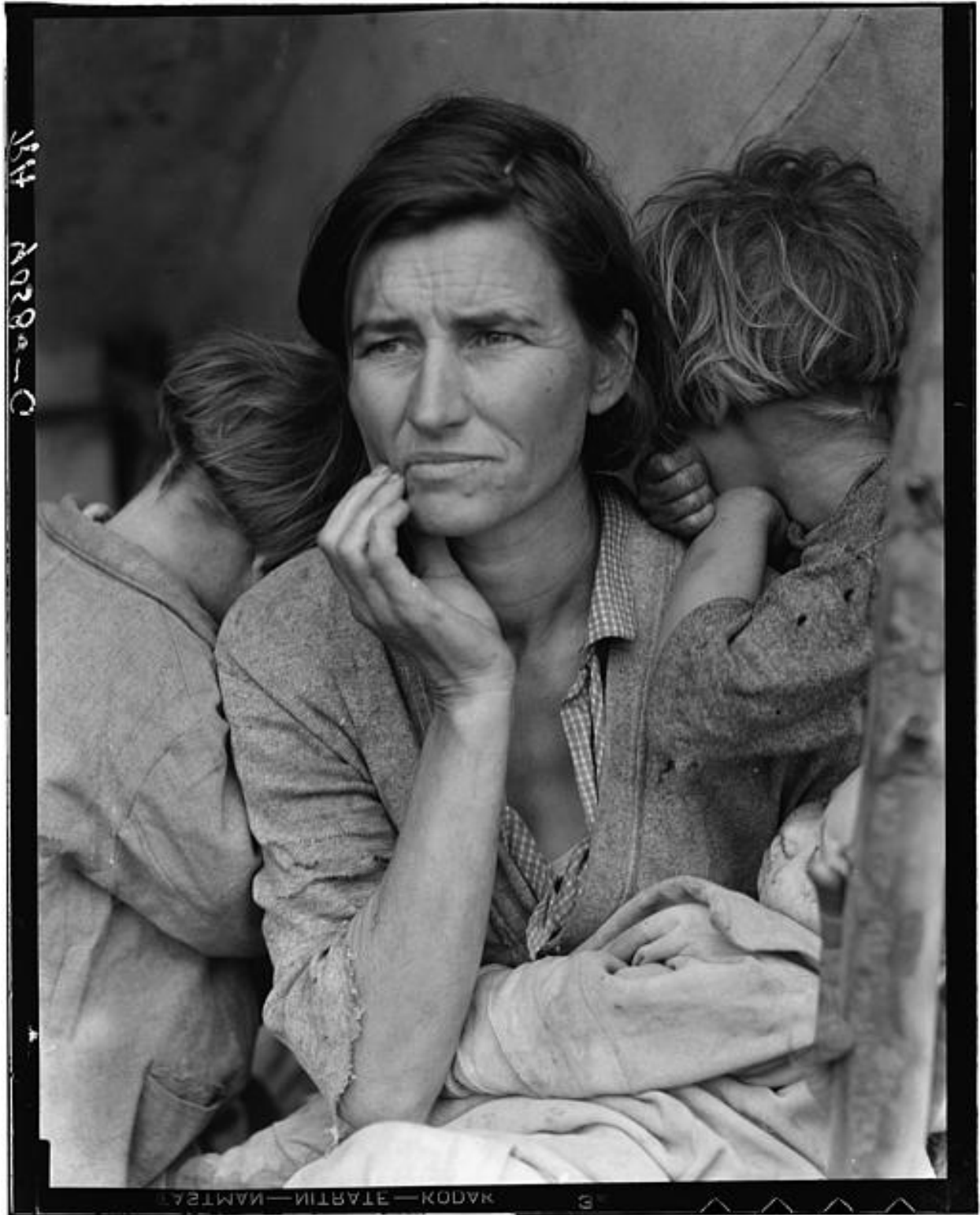
The famous work, *Destitute Pea Pickers in California. Mother of Seven Children. Age Thirty-Two. Nipomo, California* by photographer Dorothea Lange (1936, Feb. or Mar.) is interesting as a visual argument. This photo essay as it appears as a series of photos by Lange is often called, “The Migrant Mother.”











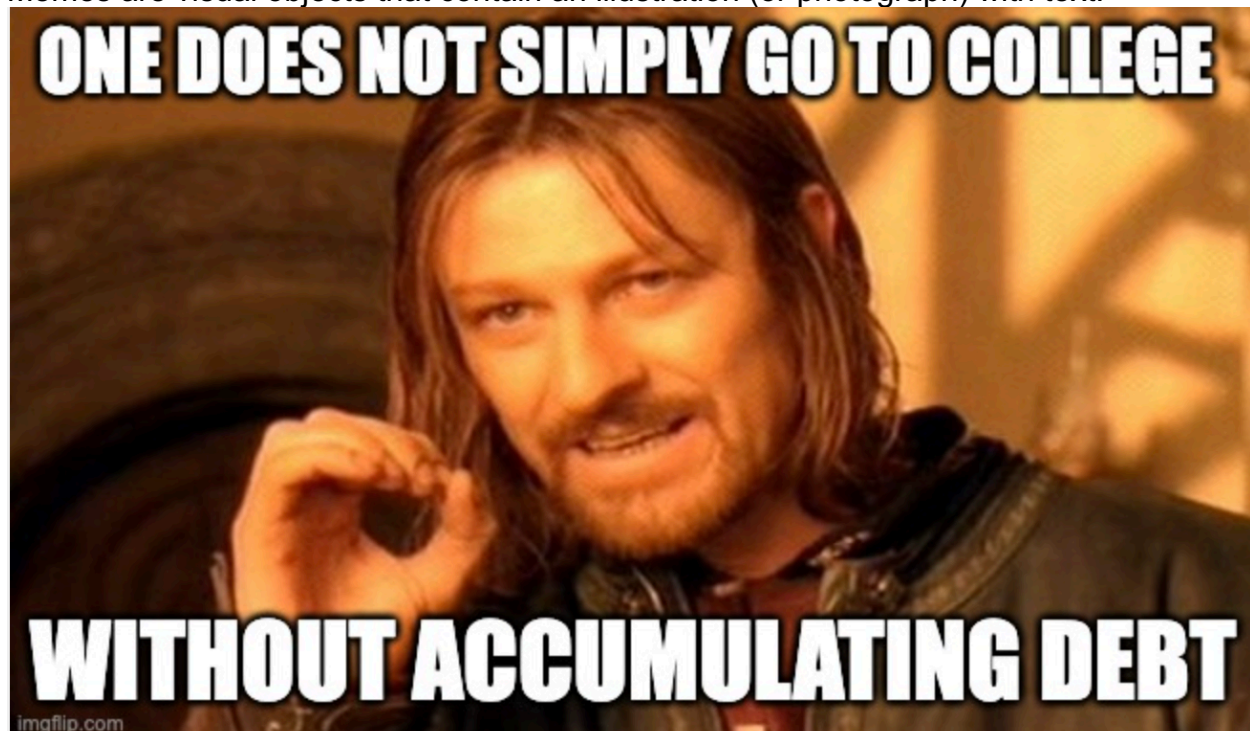
Destitute Pea Pickers in California. Mother of Seven Children. Age Thirty-Two. Nipomo, California. From the U.S. Library of Congress Digital Image Archive. (http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128_migm.html)

The argument, in this case, is dependent on the understanding of the context. The context (time and space) is the Great Depression era of the United States. The mother, Florence Thompson, seen here is looking past the photographer, while three of her children rest on her. In 1960, Lange gave this account of the experience: I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it. (From: Popular Photography, Feb. 1960).

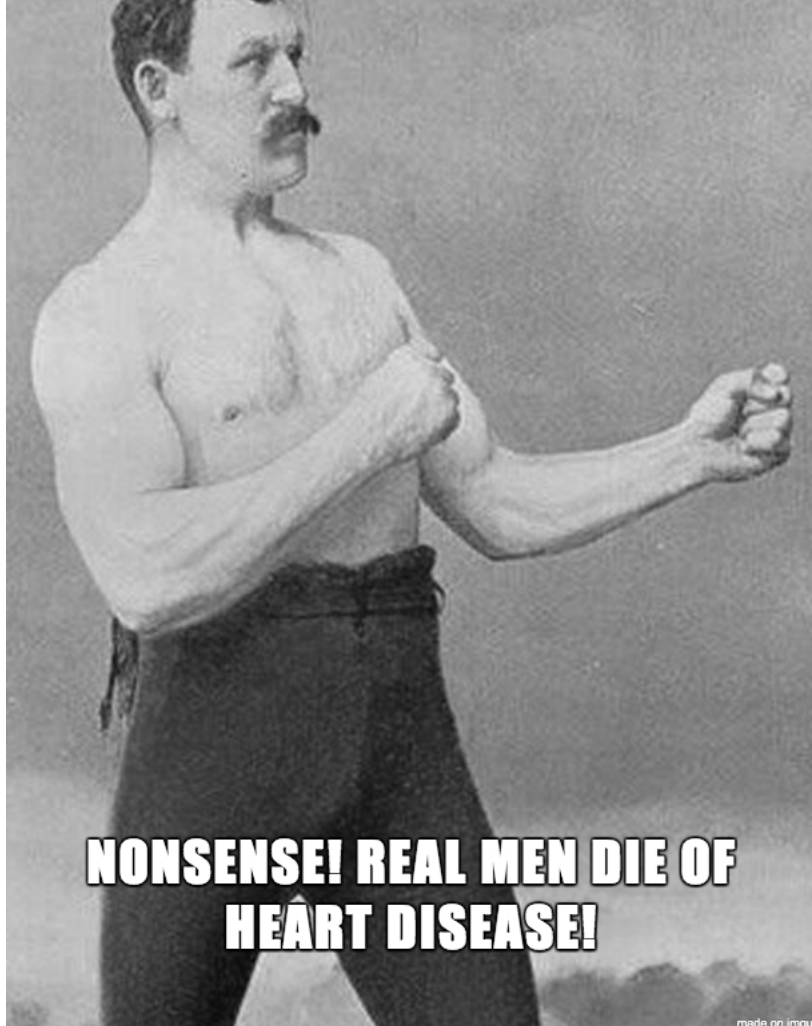
Note: As you may notice, not all photo essays are argumentative. Some are narrative (telling a story or elaborating on a topic). Some may be expository (lending themselves to reveal information in an accessible way, which may be superior to text, offering visual information in place of textual information).

MEMES

Memes are visual objects that contain an illustration (or photograph) with text.



BEING A VEGAN UNCLOGS ARTERIES?



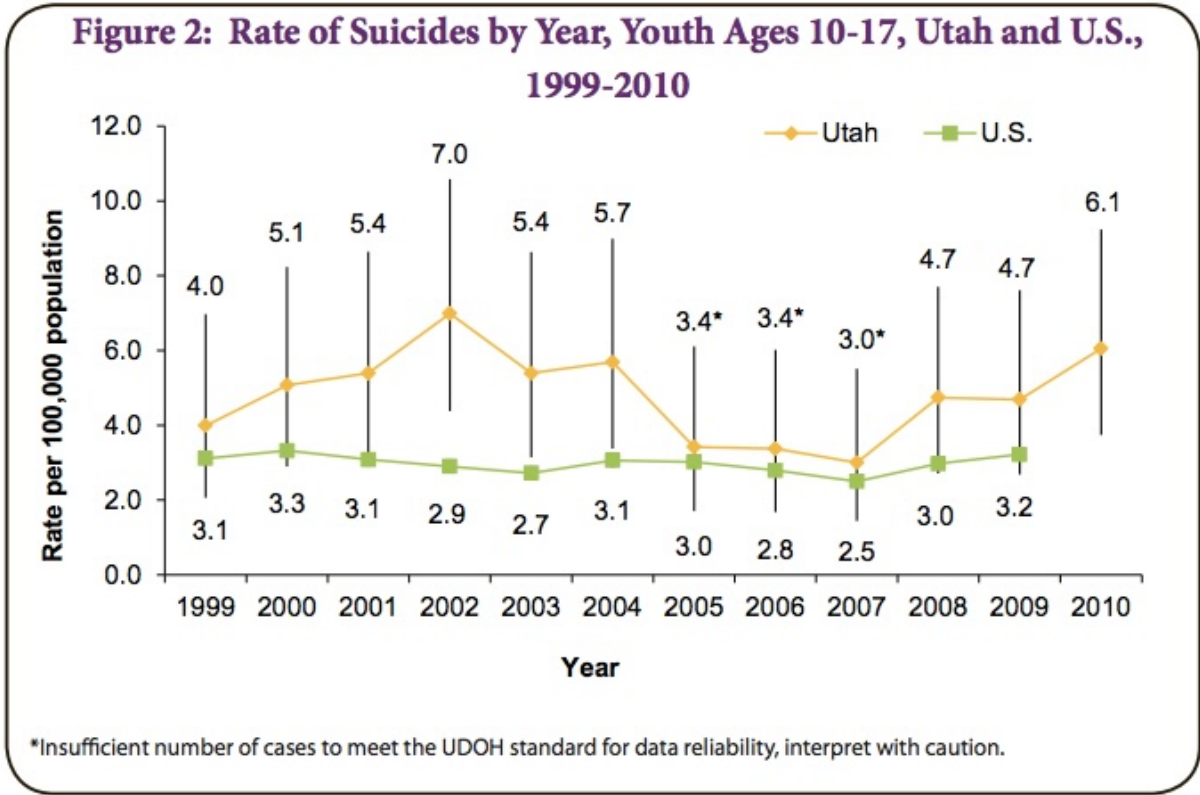
**NONSENSE! REAL MEN DIE OF
HEART DISEASE!**

CARTOONS

Cartoons are typically hand-drawn or digitally-drawn visuals, which do not carry the qualities of photographic subject matter. Early cartoons were one image/graphic representations used typically to lambaste or satirize a topic. Now, it is common for some cartoons to have multiple panels (also called cells), which contain individual drawings used to develop a message or “punch line” (the main point, joke, or theme). Some of the earliest cartoons were political cartoons.

CHARTS

Charts and graphs are informational visuals, which are more traditional in their orientation. Most people are aware of the differences between charts (e.g., pie, bar, scatter plot, etc.); in addition, most spreadsheet software contains a charting/graphing function (which places different variables within a visual orientation).



Utah Department of Health: Violence & Injury Prevention Program “Suicide in Utah County 2006-2010. Youth” Document. Source: <http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp/pdf/FactSheets/Youth.pdf>

This chart makes the claim that Utah has a significant problem with suicide: Suicides are higher in Utah than in the U.S. overall. Note: The asterisk at the bottom contains a note questioning the validity of the data and its reliability. However, the data is actually fairly accurate when compared to other data sets.

The online pamphlet containing this information suggests: Utah’s youth suicide rate has been consistently higher than the national rate for more than a decade. Utah had the 17th highest teen suicide rate in the U.S. for the years 1999-2010. Statistical Source: CDC, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), 2005-2009 data [cited 2012 July]

SCULPTURE/ARCHITECTURE

Sculptures (and even architecture) are physically embodied items with visual characteristics. That is, they send messages visually and tactilely (that is, physically through the sense of touch). As architecture can be looked upon as a large sculpture, sculptures are not necessarily architectural. Thus, one of the only differences between the two is that architecture must be large enough to inhabit or be within.... Example: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (2004) Peter Eisenmann. Concrete.





The Eisenmann Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, Germany Description: The memorial consists of a 19,000 m² (4.7-acre) site covered with 2,711 concrete slabs or "stelae", arranged in a grid pattern on a sloping field. The stelae are 2.38 m (7 ft 10 in) long, 0.95 m (3 ft 1 in) wide and vary in height from 0.2 to 4.8 m (7.9 in to 15 ft 9.0 in). They are organized in rows, 54 of them going north-south, and 87 heading east-west at right angles but set slightly askew.[2][3] An attached underground "Place of Information" (German: Ort der Information) holds the names of all known Jewish Holocaust victims, obtained from the Israeli Museum Yad Vashem.

The memorial was designed by architect Peter Eisenman and engineer Buro Happold. The stelae are "designed to produce an uneasy, confusing atmosphere, and the whole sculpture aims to represent a supposedly ordered system that has lost touch with human reason." However, more impressive is the sheer size of the stelae.

As one enters the sculpture, they step into stelae of increasing depth. At their most shallow, the stelae resemble coffins. One gets the feeling of being surrounded by multiple people who have died. At a point, a person is almost lost inside of the stelae, as they tower at 15 feet. If thinking about death, one begins to feel the sheer magnitude of the holocaust and its effect on the Jewish population of the era. While a claim is difficult to state explicitly, one can see and even feel the semblance of a claim: too many people were lost to the foolishness of the holocaust.

VISUAL ORNAMENTATION

VISUAL ORNAMENTATION & SYMBOLISM

VISUAL REPETITION refers to lines, objects, shapes, images, etc. which are intentionally repeated in a single visual (e.g. Andy Warhol's Campbell Soup Cans):



The image above also contains elements of VISUAL PARALLELISM (that is, the intentional repetition of visual elements of the same-size or length in different parts of the visual).

VISUAL METAPHOR refers to intentionally taking advantage of sign-signifier relationship and symbolism to compare two unlike things, where your object may seem to have an apparent meaning, although the meaning is underneath such a visual (e.g. using a tree to present genealogical information, or structuring an individual in a hierarchy representing such a tree):



VISUAL ALLUSION refers to intentionally borrowing the visual structure, shape, type, or other visual feature of another person's work (usually famous or popular), you are creating a visual allusion.

VISUAL METONOMY refers to intentionally using a piece of something related/connected to the subject matter to present the topic matter.



VISUAL SYNCEDOCHE refers to intentionally using some part of the subject matter to present the topic.



VISUAL SYMBOLISM

Symbolism refers to meaning that can be attributed to an association with something familiar.

For example, red roses are often used for expressing love. The rose, in essence, is a symbol of someone's affection. The symbolism is used to express something that is not necessarily physically tangible, but more or less, again, an association with something. Another symbol is a black cat. For generations, the black cat has been a visual symbol of "bad luck" or even something fortuitous leading to death. As a symbol, the black cat is potent; however, in reality, a cat is just a cat (regardless of color).

Visuals may contain symbolism, or elements of symbolism, which evoke meaning. Symbolism may be displayed through color, motion, angle, topic/subject, etc. Symbolism, depending on its context, orientation/position, and message, may be ironic, direct, or indirect. Oftentimes, symbolism is deliberate.